

Full Length Research

READING HABIT OF STUDENTS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AT KARNATAKA STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY (KSOU): A STUDY

¹Poornima and ²Dr. Adithya Kumari H

¹Research Scholar, Dept. of Library & Information Science, University of Mysore, Mysore

²Associate Professor, Dept. of Library & Information Science, University of Mysore, Mysore

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In the present study an attempt is made to assess the time spent on reading and extent of reading various resources by students of distance education for different purposes. The sample was made up of 1005 students who were sampled from various disciplines of KSOU with different programmes. Questionnaire was the instrument used to collect data for the study, which elicited the information on time spent per day on reading and to what extent they read different type of books. Data analysis was done using chi-square tests and contingency table analysis. Results revealed that majority of the sample respondents spent less than 1 hour per day on reading. More than 70% of the respondents read books for education purpose to a moderate to great extent. Further, male respondents read more books for education purpose than females, and unemployed ones read more than employed ones. Approximately 60% of the respondents read the books for gaining information, male respondents read more books for education than females, and unemployed ones read more than employed ones. A large majority of 85% of the respondents read books for recreation purpose to a moderate to a great extent. Again, extent of reading for gaining knowledge varies from a moderate to a great extent of 92%. About 76% of the respondents indicated that they read books for employment purpose to a moderate to a great extent, and female respondents were keener to read employment books than male respondents.

Keywords: Reading habit, distance education students

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is a key to a wealth of experience that links people in a way far beyond distance or time. Reading provides experience to the individual so that he may expand his horizons, identify, extend and intensify his interest and gain deeper understanding of himself and other human being and of the world. Reading is important

for students in general in order to cope with new knowledge in a changing world— that of the technological age. The ability to read is at the heart of self education and lifelong learning. Reading is a very important issue which is not only about enjoyment but a necessity; the basic tool of education (Mokatsi, 2005). According to the

Report of the Commission on Reading (Anderson et al., 1985), reading is considered as a cornerstone for success, not just in schools, but also throughout the adult life of an individual. Reading has been the passion of the greatest personalities of all times. Humans have been reading since ages and thus words of knowledge have been passed on through generations. The reading habit influences in the promotion of one's personal development in particular and social progress in general. Regular and systematic reading sharpens the intellect, refines the emotions, elevates tastes and provides perspectives for one's living; and thereby prepares a person for an effective participation in the social, religious, cultural and political life. Reading fires the imagination of the person. It adds new sight to eyes and new wisdom to mind. Reading loads the mind with new software (Satija, 2002).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Time Spent in Reading

Sarit and Rosy (1999) found in a few survey on reading habits in Malaysia showcased that tertiary level students spent less time reading than they used to before joining the university. Graduate ESL students spent more time reading academic materials than did their undergraduate counterparts (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 1994). Sheorey and Mokhtari (1994) examined the reading habits of 85 college students enrolled in an elective development reading course at a large university in the Midwestern USA. They reported that students read an average of 4.75 hours per week. Blackwood et al. (1991) studied the pleasure reading habits of 333 college seniors enrolled at a small, public, US Liberal Arts University. The findings reported that they read for pleasure about 2.5 hours each week during academic session and slightly more during vacations. The majority were reading for pleasure-reading primarily newspapers. In another study, Tella & Akande (2007) disclose that the majority of the students (53.3%) spent between 1-2 hours per day on reading. Karim & Hasan (2007) identify that the students spend about 7 to 9 hours per week on average to read. Kaur & Thiyagarajah (1999) reveals that while many students prefer spending as much as 3-5 hours per week in reading yet the breakdown of the responses indicate that (69.8%) of them spend this amount of time on literary works, (28.6%) on newspapers and (25.4%) on novels.

Students' Reading Habit and Reading Materials

Pandian (2000) found that the majority of university students are "reluctant" readers in English language materials. Based on his study, the Chinese were behind

the Indian and Malay students as habitual readers in the English language. However, it cannot be said that Chinese students do not read, as many available reading materials are in Chinese. A study conducted by Nor Shahriza and Amelia (2007) focused on the gender and choice of reading material by university students revealed that university students spend a significant amount of time reading newspapers, academic books and websites. Ifedili (2009) examined the reading culture among students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The major findings affirmed that there was a high decline rate in the reading culture among the students in the tertiary institution; 60% of students read prescribed textbooks only during examination period; browsing and watching television have taken most of students' time for reading and very few students (21%) buy novels to read for knowledge and pleasure. In a study by Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi & Lean (2011) 66% of the respondents claim that they read in order to pass exams; 40% claim to read because they think they should, additional 40% read because they are interested in a topic or subject, while only 10% read because they think reading is fun. Kendrick (1999) indicated that the majority of middle school boys do not read and do not enjoy reading unless required by their teachers. Ogunrombi and Adio (1995) examined 600 students in 10 secondary schools in Nigeria to detect the factors that affected students' reading habits and found that home conditions did interfere with reading. Since few schools had libraries and trained librarians or teacher librarians, nor equipment and, nor new materials other than textbooks were available for students to read, they suggested public libraries to be established and stocked for students. Yilmaz (2000) finds that the majority of the students (77.8%) don't have reading habits whereas the smallest ratio (6.5%) belongs to the heavy readers. Igun & Adogbeji (2007) report that nearly two-thirds (61.5%) of postgraduate students are motivated for study & reading primarily by the desire for knowledge and skills, while (22.5%) study mainly to pass their examinations and tests and for self development. Cabral & Tavares (2002) study concerning the students reading habits reflects that students read for academic purposes (97.8%) almost as much as they use reading as a hobby (97.2%). The study of Hassell & Rodge (2007) depict that (72%) of the students are reading in their leisure time in which 22% read constantly and (50%) read when they get a chance.

Factors influencing the reading habit

For the past few decades, many researchers have devoted efforts to examining learners' reading habits (e.g. Allen, 1986; Anderson, Higgins, & Wurster, 1985; Cheng, Shen, Chou, & Hung, 1997; Dimitrijevic, & Gunton, 1975; Gallik, 1999; Hashway, Duke, & Farmer, 1993; Lamme,

1976; Mokhtari, & Sheorey, 1994; Scales, & Biggs, 1987; Scales, & Rhee, 2001; Sikiotis, 1981; Watson, 1978; Womack, & Chandler, 1992). With their endeavours, these researchers have discovered that reading habits are associated with students' gender, age, educational background, academic performance and professional growth. Herman (1972) emphasized that status, age, group, sex and information needs of the library users influence reading habit. It is lack of appreciation and understanding of good books and failure to derive pleasure from the habit of reading that affects educational growth. The factors affecting the reading habits are: nature of the reader, needs of a reader, nature of information required educational qualifications of a reader, cost of reading material and way of interaction of users and information. Additionally, based on Mikulecky's (1979) study, demographic variables such as race, income, and employment status have little predictive value for reading habits, and the gender of the reader slightly predicts reading habits and attitudes. With their efforts, these researchers have discovered that reading habits are correlated with gender, age, educational background, academic performance and professional growth.

Influence of Gender on Reading Habit

With their endeavors, researchers have discovered that reading habits are associated with students' gender (e.g. Stanchfield & Fraim, 1979; Scales & Biggs, 1987; Scales & Rhee, 2001; Snyder, 1981), age (e.g. Fusco, 1986; Platt, 1986; Sikiotis, 1981) and employment status (e.g. Hashway, Duke, & Farmer, 1993; Mikulecky, 1979; Ogunrombi & Adio, 1995). Reading has increasingly been the object of empirical and theoretical investigations since a long past. Norvell (1950) as cited by Hanna & Marriana (1960) identifies that sex and age are the two principal factors affecting reading habits. In the respect of gender, boys and girls do read differently. Boys' reading interest increased for automobiles, occupations, music, and travel, but decreased for outer space (Stanchfield & Fraim, 1979). Girls read significantly more books than boys did (Snyder, 1981). Girls select topics of an affective nature more than boys, while boys choose topics related to physical activity more than girls (McKenna, 1986). Topics liked by both sexes included cartoons and comic books, weird but true stories, rock stars, ghosts, magic, stories about famous people and exploring the unknown. Further, girls tend to be moderate and heavy book readers, while boys tend to be either light readers or non-readers (Patterson, 1986). Clark & Foster (2005) reports that girls enjoy reading greater than boys and boys tend to hold more negative attitudes towards reading than girls. McKenna, Kearn & Ellsworth (1995) and Hassell & Rodge (2007) reveal that girls have more favourable

attitudes than boys for both recreational and academic reading. Hopper (2005) depicts that (67%) of girls were reading compared with (54%) of boys. Sahai (1970) results make visible that more than (90%) of the users read newspapers and magazines and the percentage of women is higher than the men. Kendrick (1999) discovers that over half (56%) of the middle grade boys do not enjoy reading and (86%) of them complain that parents do not read with them. Moyes (2000), Stenberg (2001), Ross (2002) and Abram (2007) report female as more heavy reader than male. Hastings & Henry (2006) reveal that more than half of respondents (56%) spend less than an hour a day on reading and (13%) says that they do not read at all. Scales and Biggs (1987) found that more females than males read advertisements without difficulty. Scales and Rhee (2001) also discovered that gender, race, and education were predictors for adult participants' reading habits, while education and race were predictors for reading pattern. They reported that more females than males like to read the Bible and magazine, while more males than females like to read reports and manuals.

Influence of Age on Reading Habit

Reading interest or preferences seemed to be differed with different age levels. Mellon (1990) surveyed the leisure reading choices of rural teenagers and found that their reasons for leisure reading were for entertainment and for acquiring information. Magazines and newspapers were found to be the most preferred reading materials of teenagers. It has also been shown that informational reading was the main purpose for adult reading and their most popular books are: adventure, crime, social problems, novels, politics, and sports in ranking sequence. Platt (1986) reviewed several selected studies on reading preferences of adolescents, and concluded that adolescents do read extensively in books, periodicals, and newspapers. Graduate and undergraduate students' reading behaviors are slightly varied. Hall (1989) examines 285 freshmen at a large southern urban university. Over 70% of all students favored reading magazines and newspapers most and novels least, and half of the students read the sports, entertainment and front-page sections of the newspaper regularly. A study by Shen (2006) in Taiwan indicated that the reasons for leisure reading were for entertainment and acquiring information. Magazines and newspapers were found to be the most preferred reading materials of young adults. Over 70% of undergraduate students preferred to read magazines and newspapers to novels with half of them reading the sports and entertainment news regularly.

Influence of employment status on reading habit

Mikulecky's (1979) study reported that working women are maintaining their positive reading attitudes and habits. Further, the amount of job related reading seems to be on the increase. A study by McKool and Gespass (2009) reveals that only about half of the teachers surveyed read for more than ten minutes a day in their free time. While these teachers advise parents of their students to read daily to their children, to allow their children to see them enjoy reading, and to talk about books with their children, it becomes apparent that many teachers do not take their own advice. There seems to be a disconnect between their "preaching" and their practice.

The students of distance education need to read all kinds of texts and information materials to make them ready for the course content and examinations. The present study was designed to analyse the general reading habits of distance education learners of Karnataka State Open University and how age, gender and their professional status would influence their reading habits. Review of literature clearly highlighted the study habits, usage, etc. But, no thorough investigation has been done on reading habits of distance education learners during their leisure time. Hence, the present study is conceptualized and it is hypothesized that distance education learners vary in their reading habits during leisure time and demographic variables have significant influence over reading habits.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the extent of reading habit among students in Karnataka State Open University (KSOU).
2. To know time spent for reading books containing different information.
3. To know purpose of reading various sources of information.

METHODOLOGY

In the present study the researcher employed questionnaire method to collect data for the study. The structure of the questionnaire was made up of only close-ended items as it offered the respondents fixed alternative responses. The questionnaire elicited information on number of hours spent on reading and other questions elicited information on extent of reading books on education, information, recreation, knowledge, and employment and the responses were measured on 4 point scale-not at all, to a little extent, to a moderate extent, and to a great extent. The sample was made up

of 1005 students who were sampled from various disciplines of KSOU with different programmes. The choice of respondents from each programme was done using the stratified sampling procedure. The students pursuing various courses at the various levels were stratified into gender, age and their employment status. A follow up visit was made to the students at the study centres to interact with them and to establish rapport for the conduct of the study. In all, almost 9 months were used for distribution and collection of the questionnaires and had a response rate of 83.75%. Once the data were collected, they were subjected to statistical analysis like chi-square test and contingency table analysis. Of the 1005 sample selected 412 were males and 593 were females. Age group analysis indicated 452 of them were below 25 years, 296 were in the age group of 26-30 years, 122 were in between the age group of 31-35 years, 71 were in the age group of 36-40 years, and remaining 64 were in the age group of above 40 years. 509 respondents were employed and remaining 496 were unemployed.

Analysis of Data

Number of hours spent for reading:

Table 1 exhibits that a majority of the respondents (537; 53.43%) indicated that they spent less than one hour per day for reading, followed by 368 (36.62%) respondents who indicated that they read 1-2 hours, 54 (5.37%) of them indicated 3-4 hours, 36 (3.58%) of them indicated that they spent 5-6 hours and remaining 10 (1%) indicated that they spent more than 6 hours per day in reading. Further, chi-square test revealed there exist a significant difference between these groups of frequencies ($X^2=1124.88$; $p=.000$). However, no significant associations were observed between gender and responses, age groups and responses and employment status as the obtained contingency coefficients failed to reach the significance levels.

Extent of Reading books for Education Purpose

Table 2 shows that there are 431 (42.89%) respondents indicated that they read the education books to a great extent, 295 (29.35%) of them indicated to a moderate extent, 277 (27.56%) of them indicated to a little extent and remaining 2 (0.20%) indicated they not at all read education books. Further, chi-square test revealed a significant difference between these groups of frequencies ($X^2=386.12$; $p=.000$). Gender-wise comparison revealed a significant association ($CC=.097$, $p=.024$), where we find that male respondents read education books more than female respondents.

Table 1. Gender, Age group and Employment Status-wise Distribution of Respondents on Number of Hours Spent on Reading

Hours Spent for Reading	Gender		Age groups (in years)					Employed		Total
	Male	Female	<25	26-30	31-35	36-40	40+	Yes	No	
Less than 1 hour	200	337	229	164	64	40	40	267	270	537
	48.54%	56.83%	50.66%	55.41%	52.46%	56.34%	62.5%	52.46%	54.44%	53.43%
1-2 Hours	161	207	177	107	41	23	20	188	180	368
	39.08%	34.91%	39.16%	36.15%	33.61%	32.39%	31.3%	36.94%	36.29%	36.62%
3-4 hrs	27	27	27	16	7	3	1	34	20	54
	6.55%	4.55%	5.97%	5.41%	5.74%	4.23%	1.6%	6.68%	4.03%	5.37%
5-6 hrs	20	16	15	6	9	4	2	16	20	36
	4.85%	2.70%	3.32%	2.03%	7.38%	5.63%	3.1%	3.14%	4.03%	3.58%
More than 6 hours	4	6	4	3	1	1	1	4	6	10
	0.97%	1.01%	0.88%	1.01%	0.82%	1.41%	1.6%	0.79%	1.21%	1.00%

Table 2. Gender, Age group and Employment status-wise User Opinion on Extent of their Reading books for Education Purpose

Responses	Gender		Age groups (in years)					Employed		Total	
	Male	Female	<25	26-30	31-35	36-40	40+	Yes	No		
Not at all	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	
	0.49%	0.0%	0.44%	0.0%	0.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	0.40%	0.20%	
To a little extent	96	181	125	83	31	20	18	168	109	277	
	23.30%	30.52%	27.65%	28.04%	25.41%	28.2%	28.13%	33.01%	21.98%	27.56%	
To a Moderate extent	132	163	132	88	34	20	21	128	167	295	
	32.04%	27.49%	29.20%	29.73%	27.87%	28.2%	32.81%	25.15%	33.67%	29.35%	
To a great extent	182	249	193	125	57	31	25	213	218	431	
	44.17%	41.99%	42.70%	42.23%	46.72%	43.7%	39.06%	41.85%	43.95%	42.89%	
Total	412	593	452	296	122	71	64	509	496	1005	
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Test statistics	CC=.097; p=.024		CC=.061; p=.987					CC=.138; p=.000		X ² =386.12; p=.000	

However, age groups did not have significant association with the response patterns. Employment status had a significant association (CC=.138; p=.000), where we find that those who were unemployed read more education books than employed ones.

Extent of reading books for information

Table 3 shows that 388 (38.61%) respondents indicated that to a little extent they read books on information, 345 (34.33%) respondents indicated that they read the education books to a moderate extent, 260 (25.87%)

Table 3. Gender, Age group and Employment Status-wise User Opinion on their extent of reading books for Information

Responses	Gender		Age groups (in years)					Employed		Total
	Male	Female	<25	26-30	31-35	36-40	40+	Yes	No	
Not at all	8	4	4	4	1	3	0	4	8	12
	1.94%	0.67%	0.88%	1.35%	0.82%	4.23%	.0%	0.79%	1.61%	1.19%
To a little extent	129	259	181	120	41	22	24	230	158	388
	31.31%	43.68%	40.04%	40.54%	33.61%	30.99%	37.50%	45.19%	31.85%	38.61%
To a Moderate extent	149	196	162	92	45	24	22	156	189	345
	36.17%	33.05%	35.84%	31.08%	36.89%	33.80%	34.38%	30.65%	38.10%	34.33%
To a great extent	126	134	105	80	35	22	18	119	141	260
	30.58%	22.60%	23.23%	27.03%	28.69%	30.99%	28.13%	23.38%	28.43%	25.87%
Total	412	593	452	296	122	71	64	509	496	1005
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Test statistics	CC=.138; p=.000		CC=.114; p=.352					CC=.138; p=.000		X ² =337.54; p=.000

indicated to a great extent, and remaining 12 (1.19%) indicated they not at all read books on information. Further, chi-square test revealed a significant difference between these groups of frequencies ($X^2=337.54$; $p=.000$). The gender-wise comparison revealed a significant association ($CC=.138$, $p=.000$), where we find that male respondents read informational books more than female respondents. However, age groups did not have significant association with the response patterns. Employment status had a significant association ($CC=.138$; $p=.000$), where we find that those who were unemployed read more information books than employed ones.

Extent of reading books for Recreation:

It is found from the table 4 that 512 (50.95%) respondents indicated that they read the books for recreation to a great extent, 351 (34.93%) of them indicated to a moderate extent, 118 (11.74%) of them indicated to a little extent and remaining 24 (2.39%) indicated they not at all read books for recreation purpose. Further, chi-square test revealed a significant difference between these groups of frequencies ($X^2=586.43$; $p=.000$). However, no significant associations were observed between gender and responses, age groups and responses and employment status as the obtained contingency coefficients failed to reach the significance levels.

Extent of reading books on knowledge

It is found from the table 5 that 476 (47.36%)

respondents indicated that they read the books on knowledge to a great extent, 451 (44.88%) of them indicated to a moderate extent, 61 (6.07%) of them indicated to a little extent and remaining 17 (1.69%) indicated they not at all read books to gain knowledge. Further, chi-square test revealed a significant difference between these groups of frequencies ($X^2=722.32$; $p=.000$). However, no significant associations were observed between gender and responses, age groups and responses and employment status as the obtained contingency coefficients failed to reach the significance levels.

Extent of reading books for Employment:

Table 6 exhibits that 652 (64.88%) of the respondents indicated that they read the books on employment to a great extent, 115 (11.44%) indicated to a moderate extent, 109 (10.85%) of them indicated to a little extent and remaining 129 (12.84%) indicated that they not at all read for employment purpose. Further, chi-square test revealed a significant difference between these groups of frequencies ($X^2=853.14$; $p=.000$). Gender-wise comparison revealed a significant association ($CC=.099$, $p=.019$), where we find that female respondents read employment books more than male respondents. However, age groups and employment status did not have significant association with the response patterns.

DISCUSSION

Main findings of the study are as follows:

Table 4. Gender, Age group and Employment Status-wise User Opinion on Extent of Reading for Recreation

Responses	Gender		Age groups (in years)					Employed		Total	
	Male	Female	<25	26-30	31-35	36-40	40+	Yes	No		
Not at all	9	15	10	6	2	1	5	11	13	24	
	2.18%	2.53%	2.21%	2.03%	1.64%	1.41%	7.81%	2.16%	2.62%	2.39%	
To a little extent	47	71	61	33	10	6	8	64	54	118	
	11.41%	11.97%	13.50%	11.15%	8.20%	8.45%	12.50%	12.57%	10.89%	11.74%	
To a Moderate extent	154	197	148	109	48	29	17	190	161	351	
	37.38%	33.22%	32.74%	36.82%	39.34%	40.85%	26.56%	37.33%	32.46%	34.93%	
To a great extent	202	310	233	148	62	35	34	244	268	512	
	49.03%	52.28%	51.55%	50.00%	50.82%	49.30%	53.13%	47.94%	54.03%	50.95%	
Total	412	593	452	296	122	71	64	509	496	1005	
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Test statistics	CC=.043; p=.595		CC=.124; p=.204					CC=.066; p=.224		X ² =586.43; p=.000	

Table 5. Gender, Age group and Employment Status-wise User Opinion on Extent of Reading for Gaining Knowledge

Responses	Gender		Age groups (in years)					Employed		Total	
	Male	Female	<25	26-30	31-35	36-40	40+	Yes	No		
Not at all	5	12	7	4	4	1	1	7	10	17	
	1.21%	2.02%	1.55%	1.35%	3.28%	1.41%	1.56%	1.38%	2.02%	1.69%	
To a little extent	27	34	27	21	6	3	4	26	35	61	
	6.55%	5.73%	5.97%	7.09%	4.92%	4.23%	6.25%	5.11%	7.06%	6.07%	
To a Moderate extent	170	281	211	141	49	30	20	246	205	451	
	41.26%	47.39%	46.68%	47.64%	40.16%	42.25%	31.25%	48.33%	41.33%	44.88%	
To a great extent	210	266	207	130	63	37	39	230	246	476	
	50.97%	44.86%	45.80%	43.92%	51.64%	52.11%	60.94%	45.19%	49.60%	47.36%	
Total	412	593	452	296	122	71	64	509	496	1005	
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Test statistics	CC=.071; p=.160		CC=.108; p=.465					CC=.077; p=.114		X ² =722.32; p=.000	

- Majority of the respondents (537; 53.43%) spent less than 1 hour per day on reading.
- More than 70% of the respondents read books on education to a moderate to great extent. Further, male respondents read more books on education than females, and unemployed ones read more

than employed ones.

- Approximately 60% of the respondents read the books on information, male respondents read more books on information than females, and unemployed ones read more than employed ones.
- A large majority of 85% of the respondents read

Table 6. Gender, Age groups and Employment Status-wise User Opinion on Extent of Reading for Employment Purpose

Response s	Gender		Age groups (in years)					Employed		Total
	Male	Female	<25	26-30	31-35	36-40	40+	Yes	No	
Not at all	65	64	62	38	15	6	8	55	74	129
	15.78%	10.79%	13.72%	12.84%	12.30%	8.45%	12.50%	10.81%	14.92%	12.84%
To a little extent	51	58	40	40	12	12	5	50	59	109
	12.38%	9.78%	8.85%	13.51%	9.84%	16.90%	7.81%	9.82%	11.90%	10.85%
To a Moderate extent	51	64	63	23	17	7	5	60	55	115
	12.38%	10.79%	13.94%	7.77%	13.93%	9.86%	7.81%	11.79%	11.09%	11.44%
To a great extent	245	407	287	195	78	46	46	344	308	652
	59.47%	68.63%	63.50%	65.88%	63.93%	64.79%	71.88%	67.58%	62.10%	64.88%
Total	412	593	452	296	122	71	64	509	496	1005
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Test statistics	CC=.099; p=.019		CC=.126; p=.182					CC=.074; p=.134		X ² =853.14; p=.000

books on recreation to a moderate to a great extent.

- Again, knowledge books were read to a moderate to a great extent of 92%.
- About 76% of the respondents indicated that they read employment books to a moderate to a great extent, and female respondents were keener to read employment books than male respondents.

SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The distance learners should be motivated and encouraged to read more hours to gain aesthetic pleasure and knowledge about the real world. Such positive effects of reading are also acknowledged as efficient on their academic success and performances in the exams. The above findings of this study lead us to conclude that female students included in the sample need to improve their reading books on education and information. It is important to encourage the reading habit among women in rural societies so that they grow mentally, realize their full uniqueness and powers in all spheres of life. To foster reading habit, it is necessary to establish rural libraries. Organization of mobile libraries is also useful to promote the habit of reading. Further it is found that unemployed read more books on information and education. The results seem to conform to the previous researchers in that (1) different gender tend to read differently (McKenna, 1986; Stanchfield & Fraim, 1979; Patterson, 1986), (2) the topics of interest varied with age level (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 1994) and (3) employment status has little predictive value on reading

habits (Mikulecky, 1979).

CONCLUSION

Reading, which is a long-term habit starting with the very early ages, is the prominent gateway to the knowledge room. The activity of reading is regarded as a habit when it is repeatedly carried out. In measurable terms reading habits is often considered in terms of the amount of materials being read, the frequency of reading as well as the average time spent on reading (Wagner, 2002). From the above findings it is clear that respondents from distance education preferred to read books for different purposes such as to gain knowledge, recreation, employment, education. To conclude, fostering reading habits among students is no easy task. Therefore, in order to improve the reading skill and the education performance of distance education students in general, it is important that the teachers, librarians and government should be fully involved.

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