

STUDENTS' READING PREFERENCES AND INFLUENCING FACTORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Yulmiati Yulmiati¹,

¹ Universitas Adzkia, Indonesia,

✉ (e-mail) yulmiati@adzkia.ac.id

Lira Hayu Afdetis Mana²,

² Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat, Indonesia,

✉ (e-mail) lirahayu@upgrisba.ac.id

Melvina Melvina³

³ Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat, Indonesia,

✉ (e-mail) melvina.stkipgrisumbar@gmail.com,

Yelfiza⁴

⁴ Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat, Indonesia,

✉ (e-mail) yelfiza@stkip-pgri-sumbar.ac.id

Receive in	Revised in	Accepted in
13 April 2026	25 May 2026	28 May 2026

ABSTRACT

The changing landscape of reading in the digital era has significantly reshaped students' reading behaviours, making it an essential area of academic inquiry. Despite extensive research on literacy, limited studies have comprehensively examined how shifting media environments influence students' reading preferences alongside the underlying factors driving these changes. This study aims to analyze students' reading preferences and investigate the factors affecting their choices in academic reading practices. Employing a quantitative descriptive design for reading preferences and qualitative design for affecting factors. The data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 154 university students and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to identify patterns of reading preferences and interview to see the influencing factors. The findings reveal that students tend to prefer digital reading materials because of their accessibility, convenience, flexibility, and multimedia features. However, printed materials remain important for deep comprehension, concentration, and long-duration reading. The study also found that technological familiarity, academic workload, time efficiency, personal motivation, and accessibility significantly influence students' reading preferences. The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive examination of both reading format preferences and the multidimensional factors shaping students' reading behaviour within contemporary academic contexts. The study highlights the importance of integrating digital and print resources in higher education to support diverse learning needs and promote more effective literacy development strategies.

Keywords: Reading, Reading Preferences, Influencing Factors.

INTRODUCTION

Reading has long been recognized as a cornerstone of academic success and lifelong learning (Khoiri, Suyono, & Harsiati, 2025). Through reading, students gain access to knowledge and expand their understanding of the world beyond their immediate experiences. In formal education, reading is not merely a subject but a medium through which almost all other subjects are taught (Yulmiati, Daud, & Autila, 2024). However, in the last decade, the landscape of reading has undergone significant transformation. Rapid technological advancements, the proliferation of digital media, and shifting patterns of information consumption have redefined how students engage with texts (Mills, Unsworth, & Scholes,). What was once dominated by printed books and extended reading sessions is now increasingly mediated by screens, hyperlinks, multimedia, and social platforms (Pikhart et al., (2023). This transformation raises important questions about students' reading preferences and the factors that shape them.

Ideally, students are expected to develop strong reading habits characterized by deep comprehension, sustained attention, and critical engagement with diverse texts (Lin, 2025). Reading literacy, as defined by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA),

refers to the ability to understand, use, evaluate, reflect on, and engage with texts to achieve one's goals and participate in society (PISA, 2021). In this ideal scenario, students not only read frequently but also read strategically and thoughtfully across formats. Nevertheless, empirical evidence suggests a growing gap between this ideal and current realities. Numerous studies report a decline in voluntary reading for pleasure among adolescents, accompanied by an increase in fragmented digital reading practices (Chen & Xiao, 2024; Li, 2023; Liao et al., 2024). Students are spending more time scrolling through short-form content, engaging with social media updates, and consuming information in snippets rather than immersing themselves in longer, complex texts (Brown et al., 2025).

This shift does not necessarily imply that students are reading less in quantitative terms; rather, the nature and quality of reading appear to be changing. Digital reading environments offer advantages such as accessibility, interactivity, and multimodality (Segers, Cho & Naumann, 2025). Digital texts can enhance engagement when integrated thoughtfully into learning contexts (Baron, 2021). However, research also indicates that reading on screens may encourage skimming and superficial processing,

potentially affecting comprehension and retention (Delgado et al., 2018). These findings highlight a tension between technological innovation and the cultivation of deep reading skills. The changing landscape of reading thus presents both opportunities and challenges for educators and policymakers.

Theoretical perspectives provide a framework for understanding these changes. From a sociocultural standpoint, literacy practices are shaped by social contexts, cultural norms, and technological tools (Chan et al., 2025). Students' reading preferences are influenced not only by individual motivation but also by their surrounding environments, including family habits, school expectations, peer culture, and digital ecosystems (Nwagwu & Maxwell, 2025). Self-Determination Theory suggests that intrinsic motivation, involving autonomy, competence, and relatedness, plays a critical role in sustaining reading engagement (Alamer et al. 2025). When students perceive reading as meaningful and aligned with their interests, they are more likely to engage deeply. Conversely, when reading is perceived as a compulsory academic task detached from their lived experiences, motivation may decline.

Recent research underscores the multifaceted factors influencing students'

reading preferences. Personal factors such as gender, self-efficacy, and prior achievement have been found to correlate with reading habits (Míguez Álvarez, Agrelo-Costas & Mociño-González, 2023; Olay et al., 2023). Environmental factors, including parental involvement and access to reading materials, also play a crucial role (Abimbola, Shabi & Aramide, 2021; Amirtharaj, Raghavan & Arulappan, 2023). In the digital era, technological factors have become increasingly salient. Access to smartphones, tablets, and high-speed internet expands opportunities for reading, yet it also introduces distractions and competition for attention (Rico-Juan, Pena-Acuna & Navarro-Martinez, 2024). Studies indicate that multitasking and constant notifications can disrupt sustained reading and reduce comprehension (Pettoello-Mantovani et al., 2025). Additionally, algorithm-driven content delivery systems may shape reading choices by prioritizing trending or sensational materials over substantive texts.

Previous studies on reading preference have provided valuable insights, yet several gaps remain that warrant further investigation. For instance, OECD (2019) highlighted that students' reading engagement is strongly associated with academic achievement, but the report

primarily focused on large-scale quantitative data without deeply exploring individual motivational factors behind reading choices (Guo et al., 2020). Similarly, Clark and Teravainen-Goff (2020) examined young people's reading habits and found a decline in voluntary reading, yet their study centered more on frequency rather than the nuanced preferences across different types of reading materials. In another study, Wirayuda et al. (2025) discussed the shift from print to digital reading, emphasizing changes in reading behavior in the digital age, but it did not fully address how these shifts influence deeper comprehension or long-term reading interest. Taken together, these studies suggest that while reading preference has been widely explored, there is still limited research discussed the factor affecting reading preference within specific educational contexts, which creates a meaningful gap for further study.

In many educational contexts, including developing countries, efforts to improve reading literacy often emphasize standardized assessment outcomes without sufficiently considering students' evolving reading environments (Yulmiati et al., 2025). The assumption that increasing access to digital devices will automatically enhance literacy may overlook critical issues related to reading quality and depth.

Moreover, educators may struggle to design instructional strategies that bridge traditional literacy goals with contemporary reading practices (Minor & Muhammad, 2023). Without empirical insight into students' actual preferences and the factors influencing them, interventions risk being misaligned with learners' realities.

Understanding students' reading preferences is not merely an academic exercise; it is a crucial step toward designing responsive literacy practices. In an era characterized by information abundance and rapid technological change, the ability to navigate texts critically and thoughtfully is more essential than ever (Al-khresheh, 2024). If educational systems are to prepare students for active participation in knowledge societies, they must acknowledge and adapt to the evolving reading landscape.

Although previous studies have widely discussed digital literacy and reading behavior, most have primarily focused on either the advantages of digital reading or general literacy trends without specifically examining how students navigate preferences between print and digital formats in academic contexts. In addition, limited attention has been given to the combination of technological, academic, and motivational factors that

simultaneously shape these preferences. This gap highlights the need for a more focused investigation into students' reading preferences and the underlying factors influencing their choices, particularly in the rapidly evolving digital learning environment of higher education.

This study responds to these challenges by examining the changing landscape of reading through an analysis of students' reading preferences and the factors that influence them. It seeks to understand reading as a dynamic, context-sensitive practice shaped by motivation, access, culture, and technology. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach, which considers multiple influencing dimensions simultaneously and explores how they converge to shape students' reading choices.

The objective of this research is threefold. First, it aims to identify

prevailing patterns in students' reading preferences, including purposes for reading, the preferred times, environment, selecting material, printed or digital, and genres. Second, it seeks to analyze cost, context, availability of reading material, time and time management, examination, lack of guidance, personal interest, workload factors that influence these preferences. Third, it endeavours to provide evidence-based recommendations for educators and policymakers to foster meaningful and sustainable reading engagement in contemporary contexts. By addressing these objectives, the study contributes new insights into how educational stakeholders can balance the affordances of digital innovation with the enduring importance of deep, reflective reading.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1. Reading Preferences in the Digital Era

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed how students engage with reading materials. Reading is no longer confined to printed texts but increasingly involves digital platforms that offer flexibility,

accessibility, and interactivity. According to Mizrachi & Salaz (2022), students today demonstrate a growing inclination toward digital reading due to its convenience, although this shift often raises concerns regarding comprehension and sustained attention. Meanwhile, Liao et al. (2024) found that readers tend to comprehend texts better in print than on screens,

suggesting that medium plays a critical role in shaping reading outcomes. These findings indicate a dynamic and evolving landscape of reading preferences, where both print and digital formats coexist with distinct advantages and limitations.

From a theoretical perspective by Rosenblatt, reading preference can be understood through the lens of reader-response theory, which emphasizes the interaction between the reader and the text (Savolainen, 2020). This interaction is influenced by individual purposes, contexts, and prior experiences. Moreover, the socio-cognitive theory, by Bandura, highlights that reading behaviors are shaped by both personal and environmental factors (Ushpa & Ganchala, 2022). These frameworks provide a foundation for understanding how students develop preferences in selecting and engaging with reading materials.

In the context of this study, reading preferences are viewed as students' tendencies and choices regarding how, when, why, and what they read in academic settings. Therefore, this study examines several dimensions of reading preferences, including reading purposes, preferred reading time, reading environment, selection of reading materials, preferences

for printed or digital texts, and preferred genres of academic reading. These dimensions are important because they represent the main variables investigated in this research and reflect students' actual academic reading behaviours in the digital era.

Furthermore, previous studies on digital reading have mostly focused on comparisons between printed and digital reading comprehension, technological adaptation, or students' frequency of reading (Vargas, et al., 2024; Rico-Juan, J. Pena-Acuna & Navarro-Martinez, 2024; Chen, Lin & Chen, 2023). Limited studies have comprehensively examined multiple dimensions of reading preferences simultaneously while also exploring the factors influencing those preferences among university students, particularly in Indonesian higher education contexts. This study attempts to fill this gap by providing a more comprehensive analysis of students' reading preferences and the factors affecting them.

2. Dimensions of Reading Preferences

Reading preferences are multidimensional and influenced by various situational and personal factors. One important dimension is the purpose of reading. Students may read for academic

requirements, personal enjoyment, or information seeking, each of which shapes their choice of materials (Yulmiati et al., 2024). The purpose of reading significantly affects the depth of engagement, with academic reading often requiring more critical and analytical approaches.

Another key aspect is the right time and environment for reading. Research suggests that students' reading effectiveness is influenced by temporal and environmental conditions, such as quiet settings and uninterrupted time (Singh et al., 2023). A conducive reading environment enhances concentration and comprehension, while distractions can reduce reading efficiency.

The preference for printed or digital reading materials is also a central dimension. While digital texts are favored for their accessibility and cost-effectiveness, printed texts are often preferred for deep reading and comprehension (Shanmugam, 2020). In addition, students' preferences in selecting reading materials are influenced by relevance and interest level. This aligns with findings by AlTwijri & Abdelhalim, (2026), who emphasize that students are more engaged when they perceive reading

materials as meaningful and relevant to their needs.

Furthermore, the types of academic texts preferred by students vary depending on their academic or non-academic demands (Nwagwu & Maxwell, 2025). Students often favor concise and structured texts, such as popular scientific, research reports, papers, textbooks, etc (Mizrachi & Salaz, 2022). In other side they also preferred non-academic genres, such as News and popular articles, short stories, novels, poetry, comics, etc (Yulmiati, Zaim, & Atmazaki, 2022) This tendency reflects the need for efficiency in managing academic workloads while maintaining comprehension.

These dimensions collectively serve as the main variables investigated in this study. By examining these interconnected dimensions, this research provides a broader understanding of students' academic reading preferences rather than focusing only on reading frequency or media format.

3. Factors Affecting Reading Interest

Reading interest is determined by a complex interplay of internal and external factors. One significant factor is cost, as the affordability of books and access to digital resources can influence students' reading

habits. With the increasing availability of open-access materials, students are more likely to engage with reading when financial barriers are minimized (PISA, 2021).

Context also plays a crucial role in shaping reading interest. Social and academic environments, including peer influence and institutional support, can either encourage or hinder reading behaviours (Rahmania, 2024). In addition, the availability of reading materials is a determining factor. Limited access to books or digital resources can restrict students' opportunities to develop consistent reading habits.

Time and time management are equally important factors. Students often face competing academic and personal responsibilities, which can limit the time allocated for reading (Wigfield et al., 2016). Effective time management strategies are therefore essential to foster regular reading practices. Examination pressure also influences reading behaviour, as students may prioritize reading materials that are directly related to assessments rather than reading for broader knowledge.

Another critical factor is the lack of guidance. Without proper support from educators, students may struggle to

develop effective reading strategies or identify suitable materials (Vaughn, Boardman & Klingner, 2024).

Although this perspective originates from linguistic studies, it underscores the importance of individual differences and contextual influences, which are also relevant in reading practices. Finally, personal interest is one of the strongest predictors of reading engagement. Students are more likely to read when they are intrinsically motivated and interested in the topic (Aslan, 2022).

Overall, the literature suggests that reading preferences and interests are conducted by multiple interconnected factors. While digital technology has expanded access to reading materials, individual motivations, environmental conditions, and institutional support remain crucial in determining students' reading behaviours.

These dimensions collectively serve as the main variables investigated in this study. By examining these interconnected dimensions, this research provides a broader understanding of students' academic reading preferences rather than focusing only on reading frequency or media format.

.METHODS

Respondents

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine students' reading preferences and the factors influencing those preferences in the current digital era. The respondents consisted of 154 students enrolled in the Primary School Teacher Education (*PGSD*) program at Universitas Adzka. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on several specific criteria: (1) they were actively enrolled undergraduate students in the *PGSD* program, (2) they had completed at least one semester of study to ensure sufficient exposure to academic reading activities, (3) they regularly engaged with both printed and digital academic materials as part of their coursework, and (4) they were willing to participate voluntarily in the study. These criteria were established to ensure that the selected respondents possessed relevant academic reading experiences aligned with the objectives of the research. All respondents participated voluntarily, and their identities were kept confidential to ensure ethical research practices.

Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire designed to identify students' reading preferences and interview to capture the factors influencing those preferences. The reading preferences instrument was developed based on six key indicators: (1) purpose of reading preference, (2) the right time preference, (3) the right environment preference, (4) reading on printed or digital preference, (5) selecting reading material preferences, and (6) types of academic text preference. Meanwhile, the instrument identifying influencing factors included seven indicators: (1) cost, (2) context, (3) availability of reading materials or books, (4) time and time management, (5) examination, (6) lack of guidance, and (7) personal interest. All items of the questionnaire were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree to assess the degree of agreement among respondents.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was first reviewed by experts in the fields of language education and educational

research to evaluate the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the items in relation to the research objectives. The data of validation results from experts can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Validation Results of the Questionnaire

Expert	Score	Criteria
Language Education Expert	90.8	Very Valid
Educational Research Expert	93.3	Very Valid
Validation Score	92,1	Very Valid

Item validity was also analyzed using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation. The results showed that all 33 items were valid, as the obtained r-values exceeded the critical r-table value ($r = 0.320$, N in try out = 38, $p < .05$).

The internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's Alpha through IBM SPSS Statistics. The reliability analysis showed that the instrument achieved a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.85, indicating a high level of reliability and confirming that the questionnaire was suitable for use in this study.

Data collection procedures

Data were collected through an online survey distributed to the respondents

over a specified period. The use of an online platform facilitated efficient data gathering and allowed respondents to complete the questionnaire at their convenience. Clear instructions were provided to ensure that participants understood each item before responding. The data collection process adhered to ethical considerations, including informed consent and the assurance that responses would be used solely for academic purposes.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis through software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) using the Likert scale in 5 point format, Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means, were employed to summarize the general trends of students' reading preferences. Qualitative analysis using and the influencing factors. The results of these analyses were then interpreted to provide a comprehensive understanding of how students navigate reading choices in both print and digital contexts.

The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using thematic

analysis to identify the main factors influencing students' reading preferences. The interview recordings were first transcribed into written form to ensure accuracy and completeness of the data. The next step involved coding the data by

highlighting important statements and recurring ideas. Finally, the identified themes were interpreted and discussed in relation to previous studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study aimed to explore students' reading preferences across multiple dimensions, including purpose of reading, preferred reading time, reading environment, format (printed vs. digital), material selection, and types of texts. The results are presented descriptively using percentage scores and categorized into levels ranging from low to very high.

1. Students' Purpose of Reading Preference

The findings reveal that students demonstrate a strong inclination toward reading for academic and cognitive development purposes. The highest mean scores were observed in the indicators "reading to gain more knowledge related to academic fields" (M = 4.6, Very High), "reading to prepare for exams or assignments" (M = 4.5, Very High), and

"reading helps improve critical thinking skills" (M = 4.5, Very High). These results suggest that reading is largely perceived as a tool for academic success and intellectual growth.

Additionally, students reported a very high preference for reading to explore different perspectives (M = 4.2), indicating an openness to diverse viewpoints. Meanwhile, reading for personal enjoyment (M = 3.9) and staying updated on current issues (M = 3.8) were categorized as high, reflecting that affective and informational motivations also play a meaningful role.

Interestingly, the lowest score appeared in the statement "I read to fulfill course requirements only" (M = 2.6, Low). This suggests that students do not perceive reading merely as an obligation, but rather as an intrinsically or instrumentally valuable activity beyond compulsory academic tasks.

2. Students' Right Time Preference

In terms of preferred reading time, students showed a strong tendency to read at night ($M = 4.2$, Very High). This indicates that quiet and uninterrupted conditions during night-time may facilitate better concentration. Reading during free time without a fixed schedule ($M = 4.0$) was also highly preferred, suggesting flexibility in reading habits.

Other indicators such as reading in the morning ($M = 3.4$), focusing better on weekends ($M = 3.2$), dependency on academic deadlines ($M = 3.3$), and setting a specific daily reading time ($M = 3.3$) were all categorized as high. These findings indicate that although students show flexibility, their reading habits are still moderately structured around time availability and academic demands.

3. Students' Right Environment Preference

The results clearly demonstrate that environmental factors significantly influence students' reading preferences. The highest scores were found in "reading in a quiet environment" ($M = 4.6$, Very High) and "reading better when alone" ($M = 4.6$, Very High). These findings highlight the importance of minimal distractions for effective reading.

Students also showed a very high preference for reading at home ($M = 4.2$), suggesting that familiarity and comfort enhance reading engagement. Reading in libraries ($M = 3.5$) and open spaces such as parks ($M = 3.6$) were rated high, indicating moderate acceptance of alternative reading environments.

Conversely, reading in noisy environments such as cafes received a low score ($M = 2.6$), emphasizing that noise significantly hinders reading concentration.

4. Printed vs. Digital Reading Preference

The findings indicate a balanced preference between printed and digital reading formats. Students reported high agreement with all indicators, including preference for printed books ($M = 3.8$), convenience of digital reading ($M = 3.8$), better comprehension with printed texts ($M = 3.9$), ease of carrying e-books ($M = 3.8$), and equal use of both formats ($M = 3.9$).

These results suggest that students adopt a hybrid reading approach, leveraging the strengths of both formats depending on context and purpose.

5. Selecting Reading Material

Preferences

Students' material selection preferences show a strong inclination toward personal interest ($M = 4.1$, Very High). This indicates that intrinsic motivation plays a central role in reading engagement. Other factors such as relevance to coursework ($M = 4.0$), preference for shorter texts ($M = 3.9$), reliance on digital platforms ($M = 3.9$), and following trends ($M = 3.8$) were all rated high.

Recommendations from lecturers or peers ($M = 3.7$) and consideration of author credibility ($M = 3.6$) were also influential, though slightly less dominant. Overall, students demonstrate a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic considerations when selecting reading materials.

6. Types of Text Preferences

The data on text types reveal a diverse range of preferences. Among academic texts, textbooks (45%), popular scientific articles (38%), and papers (32%) were the most preferred. Meanwhile, scientific essays (8%) and theses (11%) were less favored.

For non-academic texts, students showed strong interest in short stories (62%), novels (61%), motivational writing (43%), and comics (35%). This

indicates that students balance academic reading with recreational reading, with a clear preference for engaging and narrative-based content.

Influencing Factors of Students' Reading Preferences

The findings of this study are based on qualitative data obtained from in-depth interviews with ten university students. The analysis reveals that students' reading preferences are not formed in isolation; rather, they are shaped by a combination of personal, academic, and environmental factors. From the interview data, eight major themes emerged: cost, context, availability of reading materials, time management, examination pressure, lack of guidance, personal interest, and academic workload. These themes illustrate how students continuously negotiate between their desire to read and the realities of their daily lives.

1. Cost as a Limiting Factor

Cost appears as one of the most immediate barriers influencing students' reading preferences. Most participants expressed reluctance to purchase printed books due to their high prices. Instead, they tend to rely on free digital materials, which are perceived as more practical and affordable. One student shared that buying books feels like "a luxury," while

another noted that even digital subscriptions can be financially burdensome. As a result, students' reading choices are often constrained not by interest, but by what is economically accessible. This finding suggests that financial considerations significantly shape not only how students read but also what they read.

2. Context and Reading Environment

The broader environment in which students are situated also plays an important role. Several participants described their surroundings as “not supportive” of reading habits. This lack of a reading culture—whether at home, on campus, or among peers—reduces motivation and limits exposure to diverse reading materials. Without an environment that encourages reading, students are less likely to develop consistent reading practices. This highlights that reading is not purely an individual activity, but one that is socially influenced.

3. Availability and Accessibility of Reading Materials

Closely related to cost and context is the issue of availability. Many students reported difficulties in accessing relevant books, both in physical libraries and digital platforms. Limited collections and restricted access to e-books were

frequently mentioned as barriers. In some cases, students simply read what is available rather than what they truly prefer. This indicates that accessibility directly shapes reading preferences, often narrowing students' choices and limiting opportunities for exploration.

4. Time Constraints and Time Management

Time emerged as one of the most dominant factors affecting reading behaviour. Almost all participants mentioned their struggle to balance reading with other responsibilities. Busy schedules, extracurricular activities, and personal commitments leave little room for reading beyond academic requirements. For many students, reading becomes a low priority activity. One participant admitted, “I want to read more, but I just don't have the time.” This reflects a common tension between intention and practice, where positive attitudes toward reading do not always translate into actual behaviour.

5. Examination Pressure

Examination demands significantly influence the purpose and nature of students' reading. Many participants reported that they primarily read to prepare for exams rather than for personal enrichment. This instrumental approach to reading reduces engagement and limits

exposure to non-academic texts. Students tend to focus only on materials that are directly relevant to assessments, often neglecting other forms of reading that could broaden their perspectives. This finding suggests that assessment systems indirectly shape reading preferences by prioritizing performance over exploration.

6. Lack of Guidance

Another important factor is the lack of guidance in selecting appropriate reading materials. Several students expressed uncertainty about where to find reliable and relevant sources, particularly for academic reading. Without proper direction from lecturers or mentors, students may feel overwhelmed by the abundance of information available, especially online. This often leads them to choose easier or more familiar materials, rather than more challenging or enriching texts. The absence of guidance thus limits both the quality and diversity of students' reading experiences.

7. Personal Interest and Media Preferences

Personal interest remains a key driver of reading preferences, but it is often in competition with other forms of media. While some students genuinely enjoy reading, others admitted that they prefer watching videos or listening to podcasts. These alternative media are

perceived as more engaging, less time-consuming, and easier to access. This shift reflects a broader change in the reading landscape, where traditional reading competes with multimedia content for students' attention. As a result, reading is sometimes deprioritized unless it aligns strongly with personal interests.

8. Academic Workload and Fatigue

Finally, academic workload significantly affects students' willingness to read. Heavy assignments, deadlines, and academic responsibilities often lead to physical and mental fatigue. Many participants reported feeling too tired to engage in reading after completing their academic tasks. In such conditions, reading is no longer seen as a relaxing or enjoyable activity, but rather as an additional burden. This finding emphasizes the need to consider students' overall workload when promoting reading habits.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into students' reading preferences and the influencing factors.

1. Reading as Both Academic and Intrinsic Activity

The strong preference for reading to gain knowledge, prepare for exams, and enhance critical thinking aligns with the theory of instrumental motivation, where

learners engage in reading to achieve specific academic goals. However, the high scores in reading for enjoyment and exploring perspectives suggest the presence of intrinsic motivation, which is crucial for sustainable reading habits.

This finding is consistent with previous research by Dimitropoulou et al. (2025), who emphasized that students with both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations tend to exhibit higher reading engagement and comprehension. Similarly, Phan (2025) found that intrinsic motivation significantly predicts deeper processing and better academic outcomes.

The low agreement with reading solely for course requirements further reinforces that students value reading beyond obligation. This reflects a positive reading culture, where reading is seen as meaningful rather than burdensome.

2. Flexibility in Reading Time and Self-Regulated Learning

The preference for nighttime reading and flexible schedules suggests that students practice elements of self-regulated learning. According to Geng & Su (2025), self-regulated learners actively control their learning processes, including time management.

The findings also indicate that while students are flexible, academic deadlines

still influence their reading habits. This supports Apridayani, Han & Waluyo (2023) framework, which highlights the role of external factors in shaping self-regulation.

Interestingly, the lack of a fixed daily reading schedule may indicate a potential area for improvement. Studies by Talwar et al. (2023) suggest that consistent reading routines are associated with higher literacy development.

3. The Importance of Reading Environment

The strong preference for quiet and solitary environments supports cognitive load theory, which suggests that minimizing distractions enhances information processing. The findings align with Skulmowski & Xu (2022), who argued that extraneous cognitive load, such as noise, can hinder learning efficiency.

The preference for reading at home also reflects the role of comfort and psychological safety in learning. Previous research by Azizi, Namaziandost & Rezai (2022) found that students who have access to comfortable reading environments are more likely to engage in reading activities. The rejection of noisy environments like cafes further confirms

that concentration is a critical factor in reading effectiveness.

4. Hybrid Reading in the Digital Era

The balanced preference for printed and digital reading reflects the evolving nature of literacy in the digital age. Students' ability to use both formats interchangeably indicates digital literacy competence.

This finding is consistent with Li & Yan (2024), who found that while students appreciate the convenience of digital texts, they often prefer printed materials for deeper comprehension. Similarly, Delgado & Salmerón (2022) reported that comprehension tends to be slightly higher with printed texts, especially for longer or complex materials.

The results suggest that students are not replacing traditional reading with digital reading, but rather integrating both into their learning strategies.

5. Role of Interest and Autonomy in Material Selection

The dominance of personal interest in selecting reading materials highlights the importance of reader autonomy. According to Guo, Lin & Akhter (2025) self-determination theory, autonomy enhances intrinsic motivation and engagement.

The influence of coursework relevance and social recommendations indicates that both personal and contextual factors shape reading choices. This aligns with Firmansyah & Saepuloh (2022) social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the role of social influence in behavior.

The reliance on digital platforms and trending topics also reflects modern reading habits shaped by technology and social media. *Loh and Sun (2019)* found that digital environments significantly influence reading preferences, particularly among younger learners.

6. Preference for Narrative and Engaging Texts

The strong preference for short stories, novels, and motivational texts suggests that students are drawn to narrative and emotionally engaging content. This supports *Bruner's (1991)* theory that narrative forms are fundamental to human cognition and understanding.

The relatively lower preference for formal academic texts such as theses and scientific essays indicates that these materials may be perceived as complex or less engaging. This finding is consistent with *Othman (2024)*, who reported that students often struggle with dense

academic texts due to cognitive and linguistic challenges.

However, the continued interest in textbooks and scientific articles shows that students still recognize the importance of academic reading, even if it is less preferred.

Moreover, the results of this study also demonstrate that students' reading preferences are shaped by a dynamic interaction of multiple factors. Economic limitations, limited access to resources, and unsupportive environments create structural barriers that restrict students' reading choices. At the same time, academic pressures and workload redefine reading as a task-oriented activity, reducing opportunities for leisure and exploratory reading.

In addition, the growing preference for digital and multimedia content reflects a shift in how students engage with information. While digital access has the potential to enhance reading opportunities, it also introduces new challenges, such as distraction and reduced attention span. In this context, intrinsic motivation alone is not sufficient to sustain reading habits; it must be supported by accessible resources, effective guidance, and a conducive environment.

These findings suggest that efforts to improve students' reading habits should adopt a holistic approach. Providing affordable and accessible reading materials, fostering supportive reading environments, offering clear guidance, and balancing academic demands are all crucial steps. By addressing these interconnected factors, educators and institutions can better support students in developing meaningful and sustainable reading practices.

Implications for Teaching and Learning

These findings have several important implications. First, educators should integrate both academic and engaging reading materials to balance cognitive and affective needs. Second, providing flexible reading opportunities and promoting self-regulated learning strategies can enhance reading habits. Third, creating supportive reading environments—both physically and psychologically—can improve reading effectiveness. Finally, incorporating both printed and digital resources can cater to diverse student preferences and learning contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored students' reading preferences and the factors influencing those preferences in higher education. The findings revealed that most students tend to prefer digital reading materials because they are more accessible, practical, and flexible for academic purposes. However, printed materials are still favored by some students, particularly for deep comprehension, concentration, and longer reading activities. The study also identified several major factors influencing reading preferences, including academic demands, personal interest, technological accessibility, time management, reading environment, and the availability of reading resources. These findings indicate that students' reading behaviors are shaped by the interaction between cognitive needs, learning contexts, and technological developments in the digital era.

The main contribution of this study lies in its comprehensive examination of reading preferences by combining both behavioral patterns and influencing factors within the context of higher education. Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on the comparison between printed and digital reading formats, this research

highlights how personal, academic, and technological factors simultaneously shape students' reading choices and habits. Therefore, this study offers a broader perspective on the changing landscape of reading among university students.

Furthermore, this research emphasizes that reading should not only be viewed as an academic obligation, but also as a dynamic and contextual practice influenced by motivation, accessibility, and individual preferences. The findings provide practical implications for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers to develop more adaptive reading strategies, provide balanced access to both printed and digital materials, and create learning environments that support students' reading engagement.

Finally, future research is recommended to involve participants from different academic disciplines and educational institutions to obtain broader insights into students' reading behaviors. Further studies may also investigate the relationship between reading preferences, digital literacy, and academic achievement to better understand how reading practices continue to evolve in the digital age.

REFERENCES

- Abid, N., Aslam, S., Alghamdi, A. A., & Kumar, T. (2023). Relationships among students' reading habits, study skills, and academic achievement in English at the secondary level. *Frontiers in psychology, 14*, 1020269.
- Abimbola, M. O., Shabi, I., & Aramide, K. A. (2021). Pressured or pleasure reading: A survey of reading preferences of secondary school students during COVID-19 lockdown. *International Journal of Knowledge Content Development & Technology, 11*(2), 7-21.
- Aharony, N., & Bar-Ilan, J. (2018). Students' academic reading preferences: An exploratory study. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science, 50*(1), 3-13.
- Alamer, A., Robot, E. S., Shirvan, M. E., & Ryan, R. (2025). Self-determination theory and language learning: A multilevel meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review, 37*(2), 59.
- Al-khresheh, M. H. (2024). Bridging technology and pedagogy from a global lens: Teachers' perspectives on integrating ChatGPT in English language teaching. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence, 6*, 100218.
- Altamura, L., Vargas, C., & Salmerón, L. (2025). Do new forms of reading pay off? A meta-analysis on the relationship between leisure digital reading habits and text comprehension. *Review of Educational Research, 95*(1), 53-88.
- AlTwijri, L., & Abdelhalim, S. M. (2026). Enhancing reading engagement in adult EFL classrooms through AI-supported instruction: A mixed-methods study. *System, 136*, 103906.
- Amirtharaj, A. D., Raghavan, D., & Arulappan, J. (2023). Preferences for printed books versus E-books among university students in a Middle Eastern country. *Heliyon, 9*(6).
- Apridayani, A., Han, W., & Waluyo, B. (2023). Understanding students' self-regulated learning and anxiety in online English courses in higher education. *Heliyon, 9*(6).
- Aslan, E. (2022). Days of our 'quarantined' lives: Multimodal humour in COVID-19 internet memes. *Internet pragmatics, 5*(2), 227-256.
- Azizi, Z., Namaziandost, E., & Rezai, A. (2022). Potential of podcasting and blogging in cultivating Iranian advanced EFL learners' reading comprehension. *Heliyon, 8*(5).
- Baron, N. (2021). *How we read now: Strategic choices for print, screen, and audio*. Oxford University Press.

- Benitez-Correa, C., Vargas-Saritama, A., Gonzalez-Torres, P., Quinonez-Beltran, A., & Ochoa-Cueva, C. (2022). Students' preferences and learning styles in relation to reading and writing strategies at distance higher education. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 21(4), 316-336.
- Brown, D. J., Scott, R., Ireland, R., Harness, J., Phipps, D. J., & Keech, J. J. (2025). Rethinking social media and mental health: The role of emotion regulation difficulties. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 108825.
- Bruner, J. (1991). The narrative construction of reality. *Critical inquiry*, 18(1), 1-21.
- Chan, G., Banire, B., Ataguba, G., Frempong, G., & Orji, R. (2025). A panoramic view of socio-cultural sensitivity in digital technologies: a comprehensive review and future directions. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 41(4), 1917-1945.
- Chen, J., Lin, C. H., & Chen, G. (2023). Adolescents' self-regulated and affective learning, teacher support and digital reading literacy: A multilevel latent profile approach. *Computers & Education*, 205, 104883.
- Chen, X., & Xiao, Y. (2024). Pathways to digital reading literacy among secondary school students: A multilevel analysis using data from 31 economies. *Computers & Education*, 218, 105090.
- Clark, C., & Teravainen-Goff, A. (2020). Children and Young People's Reading in 2019: Findings from Our Annual Literacy Survey. National Literacy Trust Research Report. *National Literacy Trust*.
- Delgado, P., Vargas, C., Ackerman, R., & Salmerón, L. (2018). Don't throw away your printed books: A meta-analysis on the effects of reading media on reading comprehension. *Educational research review*, 25, 23-38.
- Delgado, P., & Salmerón, L. (2022). Cognitive effort in text processing and reading comprehension in print and on tablet: An eye-tracking study. *Discourse Processes*, 59(4), 237-274.
- Dimitropoulou, P., Filippatou, D., Gkoutzourela, S., Griva, A., Pachiti, I., & Michaelides, M. (2025). The synergy of school climate, motivation, and academic emotions: a predictive model for learning strategies and Reading comprehension. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(4), 503.
- Evans, J. R., & Mathur, A. (2018). The value of online surveys: A look back and a look ahead. *Internet research*, 28(4), 854-887.
- Firmansyah, D., & Saepuloh, D. (2022). Social learning theory: Cognitive and behavioral approaches. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Holistik (JIPH)*, 1(3), 297-324.
- Gacumo, R. J., Campbell, J. A., Løkken, I. M., & Kucirkova, N. I. (2025). The role of gender in multisensory reading: Children's engagement with olfaction-enhanced digital books. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 133, 102658.

- Geng, X., & Su, Y. S. (2025). The effects of different metacognitive patterns on students' self-regulated learning in blended learning. *Computers & Education*, 227, 105211.
- Guo, D., Zhang, S., Wright, K. L., & McTigue, E. M. (2020). Do you get the picture? A meta-analysis of the effect of graphics on reading comprehension. *AERA Open*, 6(1), 2332858420901696.
- Guo, F., Lin, C., & Akhter, S. (2025). Autonomy and familiarity in AI-mediated collaboration: A self-determination theory perspective on motivational interdependence in EFL learners. *Learning and Motivation*, 92, 102219.
- Hashim, M., Rahman, A., & Bibi, S. (2023). A Study of Students' Views on the Transformation of Text Reading Routines before and after COVID-19. *Annals of Human and Social Sciences*, 4(4), 441-453.
- James, G. E. (2022). *The BookTube/BookTok Phenomenon: Analyzing reading habits of Young readers in the Digital age*(Master's thesis, Ohio University).
- Jakubowski, M., Gajderowicz, T., & Patrinos, H. A. (2023). Global learning loss in student achievement: First estimates using comparable reading scores. *Economics Letters*, 232, 111313.
- Khoiri, M., Suyono, S., & Harsiati, T. (2025). Unlocking Minds: The Nexus of Reading Literacy and Cognitive Strategies in Educational Advancement. *College & Research Libraries News*, 86(4), 157.
- Kong, Y., Seo, Y. S., & Zhai, L. (2018). Comparison of reading performance on screen and on paper: A meta-analysis. *Computers & Education*, 123, 138-149.
- Li, X., Li, P., You, H., Zhou, Q., Zhao, L., Huang, Y., & Luo, Y. (2025). Using Eye Tracking to Explore Differences and Influencing Factors of Map Reading Ability in Different Problem Situation among High School Students. *Computers & Education*, 105466.
- Li, Y. (2023). *Reader's Pocket: Provide Middle School Students with Digital Reading Guide in Online Reading Tutoring Classes* (Master's thesis, New York University Tandon School of Engineering).
- Li, Y., & Yan, L. (2024). Which reading comprehension is better? A meta-analysis of the effect of paper versus digital reading in recent 20 years. *Telematics and Informatics Reports*, 14, 100142.
- Liao, S., Yu, L., Kruger, J. L., & Reichle, E. D. (2024). Dynamic reading in a digital age: new insights on cognition. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 28(1), 43-55.
- Lin, Y. (2025). A reflection of learners' motivation to read, self-assessment, critical thinking, and academic well-being in extensive and intensive reading offline instruction: A focus on self-determination theory. *Learning and Motivation*, 89, 102093.

- Mastrothanasis, K., Kladaki, M., & Andreou, A. (2023). A systematic review and meta-analysis of the Readers' Theatre impact on the development of reading skills. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, 4, 100243.
- Matthews, J. K., & Johnson, A. T. (2023). Preferring print: The planned behavior and preferences of first-generation college students in the academic library. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 49(6), 102813.
- Míguez Álvarez, C. M., Agrelo-Costas, E., & Mociño-González, I. (2023). What do I recommend Reading and why? Reading preferences of primary and early childhood education teachers in training.
- Mizrachi, D., & Salaz, A. M. (2022). Reading format attitudes in the time of COVID. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 48(4), 102552.
- Mills, K. A., Unsworth, L., & Scholes, L. (2023). *Literacy for digital futures: Mind, body, text* (p. 274). Taylor & Francis.
- Minor, C., & Muhammad, G. (2023). *Best practices in literacy instruction*. Guilford Publications.
- Nwagwu, W. E., & Maxwell, F. U. (2025). Influence of sociocultural factors on the reading habits and well-being of postgraduate students. *Educational Dimension*, 12, 102-132.
- Olay, L. R., García-Sampedro Fernández-Canteli, M., & Saneleuterio, E. (2023). The influence of literary preferences and gender on the reading habits of students in the 5th and 6th grades of primary school. *Investigaciones Sobre Lectura*, 18-2.
- Othman, J. (2024). Academic vocabulary learning in EMI classrooms: Challenges and strategies.
- Pettoello-Mantovani, M., Bali, D., Giardino, I., Pop, T. L., Sevketoglu, E., Pastore, M., & Vural, M. (2025). Paper versus Screen: The Unresolved Conflict in Children's and Adolescents' Learning Processes. *The Journal of Pediatrics*, 284.
- Phan, B. (2025). The Impact of Intrinsic Motivation as Predictors of Academic Achievement: The Mediating Role of Deep Learning and Surface Learning in Learning Mathematics. *Educational Psychology Journal*, 14(2), 15-38.
- Pianzola, F., Reborá, S., & Lauer, G. (2020). Wattpad as a resource for literary studies. Quantitative and qualitative examples of the importance of digital social reading and readers' comments in the margins. *PloS one*, 15(1), e0226708.
- Pikhart, M., Klimova, B., Meunier, F., Ibarra, I., Muñoz, F. S., Zamborova, K., ... & Parmaxi, A. (2023). A systematic review of the cognitive impact of digital media modalities on reading comprehension in L2. *Investigaciones sobre Lectura*, volume 18, issue: 2.

- PISA. (2021). *21st-century readers: Developing literacy skills in a digital world*. OECD Publishing.
- PISA, O. (2019). PISA 2018 result (Volume I): What student know and can do.
- Rahmania, T. (2024). Exploring school environmental psychology in children and adolescents: The influence of environmental and psychosocial factors on sustainable behavior in Indonesia. *Heliyon*, *10*(18).
- Ramos-Navas-Parejo, M., Cáceres-Reche, M. P., Marín-Marín, J. A., & Victoria-Maldonado, J. J. (2022). Validation of the questionnaire on reading preferences and habits of primary school pupils at risk of social exclusion. *Education Sciences*, *12*(5), 332.
- Reyes-Millán, M., Villareal-Rodríguez, M., Murrieta-Flores, M. E., Bedolla-Cornejo, L., Vázquez-Villegas, P., & Membrillo-Hernández, J. (2023). Evaluation of online learning readiness in the new distance learning normality. *Heliyon*, *9*(11).
- Rico-Juan, J. R., Pena-Acuna, B., & Navarro-Martinez, O. (2024). Holistic exploration of reading comprehension skills, technology and socioeconomic factors in Spanish teenagers. *Heliyon*, *10*(12).
- Ronconi, A., Veronesi, V., Mason, L., Manzione, L., Florit, E., Anmarkrud, Ø., & Bråten, I. (2022). Effects of reading medium on the processing, comprehension, and calibration of adolescent readers. *Computers & Education*, *185*, 104520.
- Rosa, S., Sukmawati, N., Saputra, N., & Fatmawati, E. (2025). Uncovering the literary landscape: Exploring the impact of artificial intelligence on Indonesian literature. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, *12*(1), 2507509.
- Roy, P. B., Misty, S. T., Rahman, Z., & Aziz, D. B. (2023). Impact of e-resources in promoting reading habits: A study among the central library users of University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*, 7877.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practices, and future directions. *Contemporary educational psychology*, *61*, 101860.
- Salmerón, L., Altamura, L., Delgado, P., Karagiorgi, A., & Vargas, C. (2024). Reading comprehension on handheld devices versus on paper: A narrative review and meta-analysis of the medium effect and its moderators. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *116*(2), 153.
- Savolainen, R. (2020). Sharing information through book reviews in blogs: The viewpoint of Rosenblatt's reader-response theory. *Journal of documentation*, *76*(2), 440-461.
- Segers, E., Cho, B. Y., & Naumann, J. (2025). Digital reading and what makes it hard for whom: Individual differences in learning from digital texts. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 102801.

- Shanmugam, D. (2020). Impact of printed text on deep reading skills. *Int. J. Engl. Lit. Lang. Ski*, 9, 122-129.
- Singh, F., Saini, M., Kumar, A., Ramakrishna, S., & Debnath, M. (2023). Perspective of educational environment on students' perception of teaching and learning. *Learning Environments Research*, 26(2), 337-359.
- Skulmowski, A., & Xu, K. M. (2022). Understanding cognitive load in digital and online learning: A new perspective on extraneous cognitive load. *Educational psychology review*, 34(1), 171-196.
- Smeplass, E. (2023). Investigating adult learners' experiences from using slow reading as a pedagogical approach. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 122, 102252.
- Taber, K. S. (2018). The use of Cronbach's alpha when developing and reporting research instruments in science education. *Research in science education*, 48(6), 1273-1296.
- Talwar, A., Magliano, J. P., Higgs, K., Santuzzi, A., Tonks, S., O'Reilly, T., & Sabatini, J. (2023). Early academic success in college: Examining the contributions of reading literacy skills, metacognitive reading strategies, and reading motivation. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, 53(1), 58-87.
- Taye, T., & Teshome, G. (2025). The efficacy of extensive reading strategies for enhancing reading comprehension among 4th year EFL students at Mizan Tepi University. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 11, 101616.
- Tiwari, P. G., Prakash Bodke, D. S. A., Garge, D., Gaikwad, R. R., & Rathore, K. (2025). Exploring the Reading Preferences and Habits of Foreign Students: A Cross-cultural Perspective. *TECHNOARETE TRANSACTIONS ON LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS Учёным: Technoarete Research and Development Association*, 4(1).
- Ushpa, P. R. Y., & Ganchala, S. J. E. (2022). Socio cognitive factors involved in the teaching learning process in English language.
- Vargas, C., Altamura, L., Blanco-Gandía, M. C., Gil, L., Mañá, A., Montagud, S., & Salmerón, L. (2024). Print and digital reading habits and comprehension in children with and without special education needs. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 146, 104675.
- Vasan, M., & Yoganandan, G. (2023). Reading habits of students of higher learning institutions during COVID-19 lockdown period. *International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management*, 28(3), 352-367.
- Vaughn, S., Boardman, A., & Klingner, J. K. (2024). *Teaching reading comprehension to students with learning difficulties*. Guilford Publications.
- Wirayuda, A. W., Maulana, G. R., Afriyanto, M. T., Afriyanti, R., & Muliawati, H. (2025). Generation Z's Perception of Reading Literacy in the Digital Era: Preferences for

Print and Digital Media. *Jurnal Dimensi Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*, 13(2), 235-250.

- Wu, R., Liu, F., Situ, X., & Huang, W. (2023). “Reading A Book, By A Gain In Your Wit”-How to cultivate high school students' sustainable reading: A multi-factor analysis. *Heliyon*, 9(12).
- Yotta, E. G. (2023). Accommodating students' learning styles differences in English language classroom. *Heliyon*, 9(6).
- Yulmiati, Y., Daud, A., Autila, R. (2024). Students’ Learning Styles on Basic Reading in Higher Education. *Tell-Us Journal*. 10(1), 153-165.
- Yulmiati, Purba, A., Harisnawati, Akhyaruddin, Adrias, A., Nazhifah, & Yulastri, W. (2025). Constructing the Validity of a Reading Assessment Model for 21st Century Education with a Focus on Self-Directed Learning. *Jurnal Arbitrer*, 12(1), 96–113.
- Yulmiati, Y., Zaim, M., & Atmazaki, A. (2022, February). Considering Student’s Reading Interest in Developing Blended Reading Assessment in Higher Education. In *67th TEFLIN International Virtual Conference & the 9th ICOELT 2021 (TEFLIN ICOELT 2021)* (pp. 250-254). Atlantis Press.
- Yulmiati, Y., Zaim, M., Atmazaki, & Alicia, D. (2024). Need Analysis of an Authentic Blended Assessment Model Oriented to Self-Directed Learning. *International Journal of Language Pedagogy*, 4(2), 91–99.
- Zeng, J. (2023). A theoretical review of the role of teacher professional development in EFL students’ learning achievement. *Heliyon*, 9(5).