

Social Factors that Shape Reading Habits in Individuals

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 5 December 2021

Revised 12 January 2022

Accepted 3 February 2022

Key words:

Reading habits,
Social environment,
Family,
School,
Literacy,
Society,
Reading culture.

ABSTRACT

Individual reading habits are influenced by many interconnected social factors, such as family, school, peers and society. Families have a central role in shaping children's reading habits from an early age, while schools with good literacy facilities can motivate students to read more. Peers and society can also strengthen reading habits through social interaction and providing access to books and other reading resources. However, economic and social factors that limit access to literacy can hinder the development of reading habits in some societies. Creating a social environment that supports the habit of reading is very important. This can be done by encouraging families and schools to play an active role in developing the habit of reading and increasing people's access to quality books and reading media. The government also has a responsibility to introduce policies that support a reading culture in society at large. The formation of a strong reading habit will contribute to improving the quality of literacy and education in society.

INTRODUCTION

Reading habits have become increasingly important in individual development with the rapid flow of information, both intellectually and socially. Social environments, such as family, peers and educational institutions, play an important role in shaping an individual's reading habits. A reading culture instilled in the family or at school, for example, can influence individuals to make reading an integral part of their daily routine. The development of technology, especially the internet and social media, has also shaped the way people access information, which often changes the behaviour of reading consumption, both in physical and digital form.

The culture and values developed in society also greatly influence reading habits. Societies with a high level of education are generally more supportive of reading, while societies with low literacy levels tend to under-appreciate the importance of reading. Social support from society groups or close peers can be a motivating factor for someone to form a reading habit, either individually or collectively. A social environment that supports or even challenges reading habits can have a major impact on how much time a person spends reading and the type of reading chosen (Huang et al., 2014).

While the social environment can play a positive role in shaping reading habits, many challenges remain related to the low interest in reading in some societies. One of the main problems is the lack of access to quality reading resources that match readers' interests, which is more common in areas with economic and infrastructural limitations. The shift to digital media is also a problem, as not all information consumed digitally is of comparable quality to books or scholarly articles. This causes the habit of reading books or more in-depth literature to erode, especially among young people who are more interested in short, quick-access content.

Another problem that contributes to a poor reading habit is the lack of support from family and neighborhood. Families that do not emphasize the importance of reading or do not provide enough reading resources often create individuals who are not accustomed to reading from an early age. Schools that are unable to provide access to diverse reading materials also contribute to poor reading habits among students. Lack of positive examples and encouragement from close people or social groups also affects low levels of participation in reading activities. This leads to the stunting of the development of the reading habit in the society (Chauhan & Lai, 2012).

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It is important to observe the role of the social environment in shaping reading habits because reading habits greatly influence the literacy level and intellectual development of individuals. Good literacy is important for individuals and for social progress as a whole. People may struggle to access in-depth knowledge, develop critical thinking skills, and adapt to changing times without good reading habits. Unfavorable environments, such as lack of access to books, the absence of positive reader models, or a low reading culture in families and communities, can hinder the formation of good reading habits. It is important to understand how the social environment can influence reading habits so that appropriate solutions can be developed to improve reading culture across society.

The main objective of this study is to understand how social factors, such as family, peers and educational environments, shape the reading habits of individuals in different walks of life. The study aims to explore the role that the social environment plays in supporting or hindering reading habits, as well as its impact on individual and societal literacy levels.

RESEARCH METHOD

The literature study approach can be used as the main method to analyze the role of the social environment in shaping reading habits. This approach allows researchers to collect and review various relevant literature sources, such as articles, books and previous research reports that discuss literacy, reading habits and social influences. The literature review allows the researcher to understand the trends in reading habits that develop in various social environments, as well as the factors that influence these habits. The literature review may also include social theories that explain the relationship between individuals and their social environment and how habits are formed and maintained in society (Bandura, 2001).

The literature study method can provide insight into the relationship between social factors and reading habits, as it allows researchers to analyze diverse perspectives from different studies around the world. For example, in a cultural perspective, some studies show that family and educational factors strongly influence individuals' reading habits, while other studies highlight the role of technology in changing these habits (Vygotsky, 1978). The approach used in this study allowed the researcher to summarize previous findings and provide a comprehensive overview of the topic under discussion. The literature review is therefore a very appropriate method for understanding broader social and cultural phenomena (Baker & Green, 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The social environment plays a significant role in shaping individual reading habits. For example, in terms of family, children who are raised in families that emphasize the importance of reading tend to develop stronger reading habits compared to children who do not receive similar encouragement (Jabbar et al., 2021). Families that provide easy access to books, organize shared reading activities, or discuss books regularly will create a supportive environment for the formation of reading habits in children (Baker & Green, 2019). These factors are very important, given that reading habits can be learned from an early age and can be maintained throughout life if supported by the surrounding environment.

The educational environment, especially school, also plays an important role in shaping reading habits. Teachers who motivate students to read more and provide access to a variety of interesting reading resources can develop better reading habits in students. Schools that have rich libraries and supportive literacy systems can increase students' reading interest and build a strong reading culture within the school society (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). The existence of this space not only provides easy access to books, but also creates an atmosphere that supports a strong reading culture among students. Students can more easily develop their literacy skills with adequate reading resources which will have a positive impact on their intellectual and social development. Schools that do not have adequate literacy facilities may limit students' opportunities to develop reading habits. Students' motivation to read may decrease and the opportunity to gain wider knowledge is limited as a result of this problem.

Peer groups contribute to the formation of reading habits. Peers are often a source of social encouragement that influences one's reading choices and motivation to read. Social interactions involving book discussions or sharing reading recommendations can introduce individuals to types of books they had not previously considered, increasing their reading interest (Van der Meijden & Veenman, 2018). Peers with reading habits can also create a more positive atmosphere towards reading, making it more appealing. Friends who actively read can pass on this habit in indirect ways, for example by discussing the books they read, inviting friends to visit the library, or even reading together. This makes reading not just an obligation, but a fun social activity, which further strengthens the reading habit among peers. Peer groups play a huge role in creating a strong reading culture among individuals.

Cultural and social values also have a significant impact on reading habits. Societies with high literacy levels, such as Scandinavian countries, reading is considered an important and valued activity. These communities tend to have stronger reading habits, as reading becomes part of social and cultural norms that are internalized from an early age. In societies with lower literacy levels or where education is not prioritized, reading may not be as popular as other activities, such as watching television or using social media (Baker, 2009). The challenge of developing a reading habit is greater, as the habit is not encouraged or reinforced by existing social norms. It is important for society to instill the values of education and literacy as part of valued social norms and to provide sufficient support from families, schools and society as a whole.

Technological developments also influence reading habits. Many individuals turn to digital media in the current digital era, such as smartphones and the internet to access information, which may not always be in the form of long readings (Hutchison, 2018). Technology allows access to information in a faster and more efficient way, but on the other hand, it can also detract from deeper reading habits that are essential for intellectual development. This technology, can also provide access to e-books and audiobooks, allowing individuals to access literature in a way that is more flexible and suited to their lifestyle (Carr, 2010). It's safe to say that technology offers a new way to stay connected to the world of literacy. The availability of social media and other fast-paced content, however, often distracts from more in-depth reading, affecting one's information consumption behaviour. This reliance on fast-paced content can reduce interest in reading long or in-depth texts that require time and concentration.

The work environment can also influence reading habits, especially for individuals who have busy routines and limited free time. For many adults, especially those who work full-time, time to read long books or articles is often neglected due to work demands and personal commitments. In some companies or organizations, initiatives to improve literacy and reading culture such as book sharing programs or workplace book clubs can introduce employees to reading habits (Green, 2017). The environments that support continuous learning make employees more likely to develop reading habits for the purpose of self-development and skill enhancement. This is important in the ever-evolving world of work, where continuous learning is necessary to remain competitive. These programs help create a broader culture of literacy and encourage employees to expand their horizons beyond their day-to-day work.

The next factor is economic, access to books and other reading resources also greatly affects reading habits. Individuals who live in areas with limited access to libraries or bookstores may have fewer opportunities to develop reading habits than those who live in big cities with easier access (Vygotsky, 1978). This limits their opportunities to explore different genres of reading, which in turn can affect their reading habits. This makes equal access to reading resources across all levels of society important so that the habit of reading can develop evenly (Palani, 2012).

Social status and education also influence reading habits. Individuals with higher levels of education tend to read more frequently, both for personal and professional purposes. Higher education provides individuals with greater access to develop reading interests, especially through more complex and quality reading materials (Smith & Davis, 2019). The lower-educated often have limited access to quality reading, which limits their ability to develop a reading habit.

Reading habits are also influenced by social factors such as gender. Some studies show that women are more likely to have better reading habits compared to men, although this depends on the culture and social values prevailing in a society (Van der Meijden & Veenman, 2018). For example, in some cultures, women are often encouraged to spend time at home reading, while men are more likely to engage in activities outside the home. This disparity may diminish as social values change and more opportunities are accessed by all individuals, regardless of gender.

The process of forming a reading habit is also influenced by the interaction between individual social and psychological factors. Perceptions of the benefits of reading, such as increased knowledge and skills, can strengthen reading habits (Baker & Green, 2019). Individuals who see reading as a value-added activity tend to engage in reading more often. The contrast, individuals who believe less in the benefits of reading may engage in this activity less frequently, even if their social environment is supportive.

The role of reading habits in society is enormous. Societies with high reading levels tend to have better social and cultural quality. Individuals who are accustomed to reading are better able to think critically, develop communication skills and actively participate in social discussions (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). This suggests that it is important to create a social environment that supports the formation of reading habits from an early age, through education policies that introduce the importance of reading and provide wide access to quality reading resources.

The overall reading habit is influenced by the interaction between many interconnected social factors, such as family, peers, school and society culture. Social changes, such as technological advances and cultural changes, can affect this habit both positively and negatively. This is why creating a social environment that supports the habit of reading will have a positive impact on the literacy development of society as a whole

CONCLUSION

Individual reading habits are strongly influenced by various social factors, such as family, school, peers and society. The family as the first environment to shape children's habits is very important, as it provides resources and creates a reading culture at home. Similarly, schools that have good literacy facilities and social interactions with peers who have reading habits can increase an individual's motivation to engage in reading activities. A society that supports literacy values and provides access to quality reading also reinforces this habit. The challenges of building a reading habit, however, arise when these factors do not support each other or when access to reading resources is limited, either due to economic or social issues.

The findings suggest that it is important to create a more supportive social environment for the formation of reading habits. One way to do this is to ensure that children receive early encouragement from their families and schools to read regularly. Not only that, societies and governments need to ensure greater access to books and other reading media, and develop policies that encourage a culture of literacy. This will provide opportunities for every individual to develop the habit of reading, which in turn can improve the quality of education and social life in society as a whole.

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