

Impact of Students' Reading Habits on Academic Performance in English of Bhutanese Higher Secondary School Students

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigates the impact of reading habits on English academic performance among Bhutanese higher secondary students using a mixed methods approach. Quantitative data were collected from 378 participants, while qualitative data were gathered from 16 interviewees and one focus group discussion involving teachers, parents, and students from higher secondary schools. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were employed for quantitative data, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that students' reading habits positively influence academic performance in English. Moreover, the study highlighted the crucial roles of teachers and parents in fostering these habits. However, it underscored that modern challenges such as the pervasive use of information and communication technology threaten to diminish students' reading habits. The study also identified barriers to regular reading, including difficulty comprehending texts, time constraints, inadequate guidance, unsupportive environments, limited resources, and restricted library access. Consequently, the study recommends collaborative efforts among parents, teachers, and schools to adopt diverse strategies and methods to promote and sustain reading habits among students.*

KEYWORDS: Reading habits, academic performance, teachers, parents, challenges, strategies

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1. Introduction

The English curriculum in the Bhutanese Education system encompasses four distinct strands: reading and literature, writing, listening and speaking, and language and grammar (REC, 2008). Reading holds significant importance as it unlocks the vault of knowledge to the world. Students are encouraged to read a wide range of texts independently and cultivate an interest in books, viewing reading as both a recreational and educational activity (CAPSD, 2015). Through reading, students explore and reflect upon Bhutanese and global cultural values, essential skills, and wisdom. Pobi (2016) asserts that reading enhances knowledge acquisition, reduces stress, improves vocabulary, enhances memory, and boosts focus among students. According to the Cambridge English Dictionary, reading is defined as “the skill or activity of

obtaining information from books” (p.1262). However, it is essential to acknowledge ongoing shifts in reading habits due to the proliferation of diverse technological tools, as noted by Chettri and Rout (2013). Similarly, Jamila et al. (2018) argue that technology diminishes students' reading time, underscoring the need for effective reading habit strategies from parents and teachers. Thus, cultivating good reading habits is fundamental to becoming a proficient reader, correlating with academic success and lifelong learning (Kumara & Kumar, 2019), thereby contributing significantly to intellectual development in society. Reading habits shape an individual's personality, foster accurate thinking, and generate new ideas (Chauhan & Lal, 2012), reflecting positively on academic performance in English (Acheaw & Larson, 2014). Recognizing the importance of reading

habits, this study investigates their impact on the academic performance of Bhutanese higher secondary school students, focusing on practical implications for enhancing reading practices in schools, particularly at the higher secondary level.

Statement of the PROBLEM

Reading is crucial in every student's life and plays a vital role in their academic performance, enabling them to become lifelong learners. However, studies indicate a lack of reading habits among Bhutanese higher secondary students, contributing to their lower performance in English. Poor reading habits hinder students' ability to excel in English and other subjects. According to the Bhutan Council for School Educational Assessment (BCSEA, 2019), the PISA-D evaluation revealed an average literacy rate of 45.34% among Bhutanese students, which, although showing a 4.08% improvement compared to other participating countries, remains below the average of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. This discrepancy is attributed to challenges such as inadequate reading comprehension skills (BCSEA, 2019), reading proficiency issues (Pardede, 2019), and a negative attitude towards reading (Nga, 2012). Excessive internet and social media use among students further hinder effective reading habits (Wangchuk & Zangmo, 2019). Similarly, BCSEA (2023) reported an average score of 61.73% in English and 66.91% in Chemistry (p.29), indicating a positive correlation between strong English performance and overall academic success. Notably, many high school students allocate more time to social media browsing than reading. Moreover, a majority of students rarely complete reading a book beyond higher secondary education (Brydolf, 2007). Conversely, students with good reading habits demonstrate better comprehension and communication skills in English (Acheaw, 2014; Balan et al., 2019; Diwan, 2020). Hence, it is increasingly evident that reading habits directly influence students' academic performance in

English. Therefore, this study aims to explore the impact of students' reading habits on the academic performance of Bhutanese higher secondary school students.

Objectives of the STUDY

The study aims to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions regarding the impact of students' reading habits on their academic performance in English. It also explores the factors influencing students' reading habits and examines the statistical correlation between students' reading habits and their academic performance in English.

Study Question

Primary

What are students' and teachers' perceptions of the impact of students' reading habits on their academic performance in English among Bhutanese higher secondary school students?

Sub-study question

1. What are the impacts of students' reading habits on their academic performance in English?
2. What factors influence students' reading habits?
3. Is there a correlation between students' reading habits and their academic performance in English among Bhutanese higher secondary school students?

2. Literature Review

Students' and Teachers' Perception on Reading Habits

The definition of reading keeps changing every time. In the past, reading was described as the process of interpreting data offered by any system or code (Baron, 2017). Fischer et al. (2015) defined reading as the "procedure of recalling, thinking and linking abstracts according to the functions of the written words" (p.16). While, Saparova et al. (2020) described reading as, "the ability to make sense of written or printed symbols" (p.8). Students read various materials, including textbooks and online resources, for both academic and recreational purposes." (Balan, 2019; Bhatt, Arshab, 2016

& Shen, 2006). However, reading attitudes, materials read, reading frequency and time spent on reading did not contribute to academic performance (Wangchuk & Zangmo, 2021).

People read for different reasons and purposes, including pleasure, leisure, recreation, information, knowledge and for academics (Guess et al., 2020; Wangchuk et al., 2020; Wangchuk & Zangmo, 2021). Similarly, another study by Dorji (2020) states that reading is an important part of education to expand one's knowledge and foster critical thinking skills, which ultimately contributes to academic success. Reading, therefore, is an essential tool for knowledge transfer, and the culture of reading is an academic activity that increases skills in reading strategies. Thus, students' reading habits are an important means that improves the student's academic performance.

Factors that Influence Reading Habits

There are several factors that influence students' reading habits. Reading environment plays a vital role in developing students' reading habits. According to Morni and Sahari (2013), a reading environment is a place with sufficient reading materials, and presence of positive energy in and around. Similarly, Hassian et al. (2012) stated that 600 students in 10 secondary schools in Nigeria found that the setting of the reading place influenced their reading habits. In the same way, Karyono (2009) claims that schools are not good place to foster students' reading habits. Nonetheless, students decide to read within their houses because of the noticeable surroundings. (Remanente, n.d. & Kumara & Kumar, 2019). Further, Storch and Whitehurst (2002) the first environment in which children build reading skills is the home, and that the first interaction with these skills is established with parents, siblings. Alternatively, another study shows that library is students' favorite place of reading (Baron, 2017).

Situation plays a vital role in development of students' reading habits as a result it has a direct impact on academic performance. The study pointed out that household duties and tasks were

a factor that impeded students from engaging in reading (Owusu-Acheaw, 2014). Another study claimed that parent's and teachers' encouragement to develop the habit of reading from infancy so that it will be a part and parcel of them (Owusu-Acheaw, 2014 & Taha, 2021). Similarly, Dorji (2020) added that teachers must make concerted efforts to motivate their students to read using innovative methods. On the other hand, studies have also demonstrated that students spend time on online games and Facebook without realizing the negative effect such as reduction in time for reading (The Springs of Hope, 2019; Sharma & Shukla, 2016; Yeboah & Ewur, 2014).

Students' attitudes towards reading strengthen students' reading habits and preference of reading materials. Literature found that positive attitudes of students have a huge impact on reading and their achievements (Wangchuk & Zangmo, 2021). Therefore, parents, teachers, motivation, attitudes, resources and the environment play an important role in promoting students' reading habits.

Manifold Benefits of Reading

Reading is an indispensable tool for learning and acquisition of varied skills and experience needed by students to develop knowledge. In addition, reading also helps students understand and appreciate their own cultural heritage as well as other values (Zangmo, 2016). A recent study shows that through reading, students gain extensive knowledge and experience that they can use in their daily lives (Lincoln, 2020). Reading, therefore, is an essential tool for knowledge transfer and the culture of reading is an academic activity that increases skills in reading strategies.

Reading shapes the mind, gives broader and enriched vocabulary, helps in character creation, widens mental horizons and provides other benefits (Skenderi & Ejupi, 2017). It is important that students develop positive habits towards reading books and gain a wide range of knowledge and skills (Ajayi et al., 2014). Thus, reading helps in the all-round development of a person from birth to death (Loan & Ahmad, 2009).

The Impacts of Reading Habits on Academic Performance in English

The reading habits of students have a significant impact on their academic achievement. Literature posits that academic performance is based on development of students' reading habits (Acheaw, 2014; Annamalai & Muniandy, 2013). Similarly, another study showed that regular reading increases one's vocabulary, grammar and writing abilities which helps to improve performance in English (Obi 2016; Kumara, Kumar, 2019; Kashen & William, 2012). Further, students' positive attitudes towards recreational reading have enhanced students' performance in reading comprehension and score comparatively higher marks in exams in all the subjects (Whitten et al., 2016; Wangchuk et al., 2020; Wangchuk & Zangmo, 2021). On the contrary, a study by Baruah (2006) found that reading also had an impact in improving speaking and writing skills. The study carried by Lukhele (2019) explored the relationship between attitudes to reading, reading ability, vocabulary, and academic performance of students. It was found that reading had a positive contribution to their proficiency levels in English.

It has coloration with findings on Annamalai and Muniandy (2013) positive benefit on academic performance. It is found that extensively reading not only enhances academic performance but also helps in other social purposes. Another literature confirms that there is a significantly positive relationship between students' reading habits and students' academic performance (Acheaw & Larson 2014; Balan, Katenga & Simon, 2019; Popoola 2021). On the other hand, poor reading habits affect students' performance in school and examinations (Ania et al., 2011). Anyaegbu et al., 2016; Acheaw & Larson, 2014; Diwan, 2020) found that students read notes, textbooks and handouts to pass tests and examinations which resulted in poor reading habits and writing skills.

Additionally, Bhutanese higher secondary students spend on social media which affects students reading habits and academic

performance (Samdrup, 2014; Wangchuk & Zangmo, 2021). Thus, reading habits has both positive and negative implications on the academic performance in English of Bhutanese higher secondary students.

3. Methodology

Design and Approach

This study adopted a mixed methods study approach. Mixed methods study includes both quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single study. The use of this design provided an in-depth understanding of the subject matter through personal experiences, interviews and surveys (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This study also associates with personal experiences and behaviors, and hence this approach will be guided in the collection of data and the process of analysis. Further, this approach provides a complete understanding of research problems and research phenomena (Mitchell, 2018). Mixed methods also helps in data triangulation and validation of the findings (Maarouf, 2019). It also gives more room to learn about the topic's strengths of qualitative research with quantitative research while compensating at the same time for the weakness of each method (Creswell, 2013).

Of the different types of study designs, this study employed an explanatory mixed methods design. It further allowed us to understand the lived experiences of individuals on the impacts of reading habits on academic performance in English of Bhutanese higher secondary students. In addition, this design provided greater understanding of the study problem by obtaining different complementary data (Creswell, 2013).

Sampling Strategies and Sample Process

Sampling plays a very important role in mixed methods study (Creswell, 2013). After confirming the population, Cochran's (1977) method of sample size determination was used at a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. A total of 378 participated in this study. A random sampling technique was employed to select a gender-balanced sample of 378 students of Bhutanese higher secondary school. Out of

378 students, 175 were male and 203 were female. There were 84 from southern, 52 from central, 54 eastern and 188 participants from western part of Bhutanese Higher secondary schools.

This study used purposeful sampling techniques to select study sites and participants from a higher secondary school of Bhutan since the researcher is interested in collecting detailed knowledge or information regarding the study topic. One-on-one interview- using guiding questions was conducted as one of the data collection techniques in this study with the aim to acquire in -depth understanding of students, parents and parents on the impacts of reading habits on academic performance in English of higher secondary students. In this interview, parents and teachers were included (see Table 1). Focus Group Discussion (FGD- Male:3 & Female:4) was included as one of the data collection techniques with the aim to acquire an in-depth understanding of students’ perceptions of the impacts of students’ reading habits on academic performance in English of Bhutanese higher secondary students (see Table 1).

Tools

The data was collected through survey, semi-structured interview and document analysis. Each data collection tool complemented the other, which enabled a greater depth of understanding of the issue under study. The discussion of tools is provided in the following sections.

Survey

This method of collecting data provides insights into participants’ opinions on how reading habits impact academic performance in English. Survey questionnaire consists of 5 sections: Students’ and teacher’s perceptions on academic performance, Factors influence reading habits, manifold benefits of reading and Impacts of reading habits on Academic performance in English. The survey items were expressed on a six-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (6), Agree (5), Somewhat Agree (4), Disagree, (3), Somewhat Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Further, the scale on the level of the opinion was adapted from Tshering, Tamang and Rinchen, 2021, guide to interpret the mean score (see Table 2). Prior to the administration of the

Table 1. Number of One-on-one Interviews

Interviewees	Number of interviewees	Male	Female
One –on-one interview with students	5	2	3
One-on-one interview with teachers	9	5	4
One –on-one interviews with parents	3	1	2
Overall Interviewees	16	8	9

Table 2. Scale on Level of Opinion

Scale	Level of Opinion
1-1.50	Strongly disagree
1.51-2.50	Disagree
2.151-3.50	Somewhat disagree
3.51-4.50	Somewhat agree
4.51-5.00	Agree
5.51-6.00	Strongly agree

(Scale adapted from Tshering, Tamang and Rinchen, 2021)

survey questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted. The pilot test included 10 female and 14 male students from Dechencholing Higher Secondary Schools. The reliability of students' survey questionnaires were verified through a pilot test study of 24 students from Dechencholing Higher Secondary School. Thus, the alpha value shows an increment from 0.722 to 0.861.

Semi-structured Interview

For qualitative data collection, the study employed a semi-structured interview tool. This tool provides a framework for respondents to express their own understanding in their own words (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This method of collecting data enabled the researcher to understand the impact of students' reading habits on academic performance in English. The study used a guiding interview questions for both one-on-one interview and focus group discussion.

To ensure methodological soundness, the interview questions were tested with 2 teachers, 2 parents and 3 students and one focus group discussion outside of the study sample. The pilot test provided valuable experience and validity in conducting the interview.

Focus Group Discussion was used in order to gather information from similar groups of students having the same experiences, background and knowledge on the subject. This study included one focus group from Classes XI to XII. Thus, Focus Group Discussion provides in-depth insights into the impacts of students' reading habits on academic performance in English.

Document Analysis

Data was also gathered using a variety of documents. Documents such as student participants' reading records, book review records, library records, and any other relevant documents were analysed.

Data Analysis Methods

The analysis of data in a mixed methods design involves the analysis of both quantitative

Table 3. Correlation and Coefficient Range (Adapted from Best and Khan, 2006)

Coefficient Interval	Coefficient level
0.00-0.199	Very low
0.20-0.399	Low
0.40-0.599	Middle
0.60-0.799	Strong
0.80-1.000	Very Strong

and qualitative data, which are analyzed using appropriate methods of analysis (Creswell, 2013). The survey questionnaire was analysed using the statistical package for Social Science (SPSS) 23. The data were analyzed through features such as frequencies, mean, standard deviation and correlation, which were represented in the forms of tables. To determine the degree of correlation, the idea of Best and Khan (2006) was adapted (see Table 3). Interview data was analyzed thematically following procedures of Braun and Clarke (2018). Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded using descriptive and In Vivo coding. The codes were further developed into categories or themes, which become the units of discussion. In order to safeguard the identity of participants, pseudonyms such as FGD, P, T and S were used to represent Focus Group Discussion, parents, students and Teachers.

In this study, interviews, documents and survey data were triangulated for validation of results as it offers a variety of data sets to explain differing aspects of phenomena of interest. Further, the anonymity and confidentiality of participants was maintained by not revealing name and identities in the data collection and while reporting the study findings. The participants signed an informed consent form before the interview to indicate their permission to be part of the study. All the collected data were compiled and protected for 5 years.

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviation of Students' and Teachers' Perception on Reading habits

	Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Opinion
I read text books.		4.84	.893	Agree
I read teachers' notes.		4.94	.934	Agree
I read newspapers		3.08	1.268	Somewhat disagree
I read magazines.		3.87	1.175	Agree
I read novels.		4.88	1.044	Agree
I read short stories.		5.17	.830	Agree
I read online articles.		5.12	.851	Agree
Overall Mean	378	4.55	0.99	Agree

4. Results and Discussion

Students' and Teachers' Perception on Reading Habits of Higher Secondary School Students

Students' reading habits not only facilitate the acquisition of diverse skills and knowledge, but also significantly enhance academic performance in English. It is imperative to advocate that students allocate a dedicated span of more than three hours per diem towards the cultivation of these invaluable habits. The analysis of Table 4 reveals that students read a diverse range of genres (M = 4.55; SD = 0.99). This indicates that students read different genres. Similarly, the standard deviation of 0.99 suggests that it has similar opinion on their reading preferences. Further, individual reading record of the participants revealed that they have read an average of 4 to 5 books in 2023. Additionally, the library book issued record showed that the students read 4-5 books in the academic session in 2023. The previous literature corroborated with an idea of Balan, 2019; Bhatt & Arshab (2016), Students read different genres. Thus, it is evident that students read books. However, teacher participants expressed that students generally have poor reading habits because they spend less time in reading.

Additionally, T2, T4, T6, T7 & T9 expressed that students even read e-books that are easily accessible to them. Moreover, the study found that social media triggers students to read

online articles as they are cheaper and shorter than printed books (Daluba & Maxwell, 2013; Larson, 2015). Similarly, interview data shows that students read e-books. It seems possible that students are easily accessed to online articles and e-books. Thus, this finding suggests that students need to be cautious while selecting online reading materials.

Further, quantitative data shows that students participate in 'Drop Everything and Read' (DEAR) moments (M=4.68; SD=1.11). (M=4.68; SD: 1.11) (See Table 4). Conversely, it is noteworthy that the item *I love to read during the 'Dear' moment* with SD: 1.11 does not express the same opinion. In the same way, interview data revealed that students read during the DEAR moments as it is mandatory to read library books. For instance, T6 said, "In a way, with that program, students and teachers

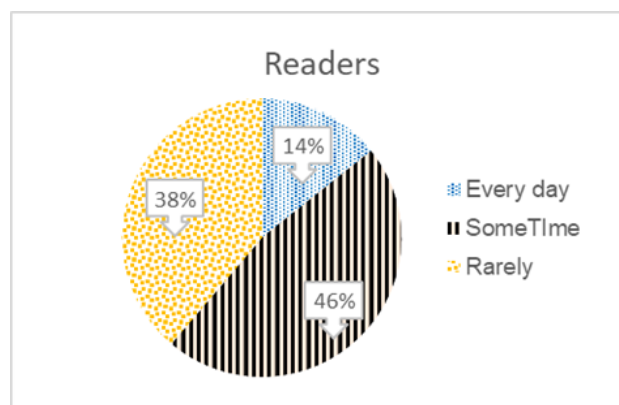


Figure 1. Frequency of Reading

are compelled to read and without much choice becomes a bibliophile at least in that moment and School milieu too for that moment becomes attuned to the rhythm of reading.” Further, S1 said, “I am pleased to be part of this program as I get time to read books beyond the prescribe curriculums.” However, S6 and FGDs expressed that due to the time constrains, and some teachers do a normal teaching. The findings suggest that teachers should use a diverse strategies to enhance reading in the schools.

Furthermore, the item *I read more than 3 hours in a day*, with a mean score of (M=3.2; SD=1.29), suggests that a significant portion of students do not dedicate more than three hours to reading books daily. Similarly, interview data revealed that students read less than one hour in a day. This view is exemplified in quote by FDG, “My average reading time would be 30 to 50 minutes in the morning study. I used to read some magazines and some literature, textbooks. So I spend almost 30 to 50 minutes.”

Moreover, the figure 1 shows that the frequency of reading habits. Majority of respondents are reading habits in *sometimes* with 46 percent followed by *rarely* with 38 percent and every day with 14 percent, meaning reading habits of the students are too minimal. Further, P1 and P2 stated that children seldom read books since children should manage their reading time from home works and other household works.

Additionally, the data reveals a lack of consistent foundational reading experiences from the primary school level, as evidenced by the item *I began my reading journey in primary*

school (M=4.39; SD=1.20) (see Table 5). This indicates that students have not begun their reading at the primary levels. Similarly, Shen (2006) reports that almost all students read books at lower grades, whilst at higher grades, more students read electronic information. More than 70% of teacher participants expressed that teachers along cannot cultivate reading habits in student, parents need to take equal share of responsibility for it.

Factors Influencing Reading Habits

It is clear from this study that factors influencing students’ reading habits encompasses both positive and negative influences on academic performance in English. As shown in the analysis table, students’ reading habits are influenced by number of the factors. Time plays important role in enhancement of the reading habits. The survey item *I manage to read books besides my home works* (M=4.39) suggests that students face difficulties in finding time for reading. In the same way, T6 shared, “Class work, homework, household chores, lack of accessibility of good books, and age old fixation on the academic scores and rigid and calcified eulogizing of the mandated textbooks.” This findings are corroborated with the current findings. Students are involved in household duties and other tasks which impede the students from engaging in reading (Owusu-Acheaw, 2014). These findings might help us to understand about the importance of time for reading.

Motivation and attitude of students play indispensable role in reading. Majority of the participants expressed that rewards encourage

Table 5. Mean and Standard Deviation of Reading Habits in Higher Secondary School Students

	Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Opinions
I love to read during the DEAR moment.		4.68	1.11	Agree
I read more than 3 hours in a day.		3.2	1.29	Somewhat Disagree
I enjoy reading at the school library.		4.35	1.19	Somewhat agree
I began my reading journey in primary school.		4.39	1.20	Somewhat agree
Overall Mean	378	4.15	1.19	Somewhat agree

Table 6. Mean and Standard Deviation of Factors Influencing Reading Habits

	Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Opinion
Happy mood helps me to read more books.		4.89	0.928	Agree
I enjoy reading in quiet settings.		4.68	1.116	Agree
I manage time to read books besides my home works.		4.39	1.201	somewhat Agree
Social media improves my reading habits.		3.23	1.101	Somewhat disagree
My teacher motivates me to read books.		5.17	0.894	Agree
School rewards help me to build reading habits.		4.56	1.067	Agree
Overall Mean	378	4.68	0.89	Agree

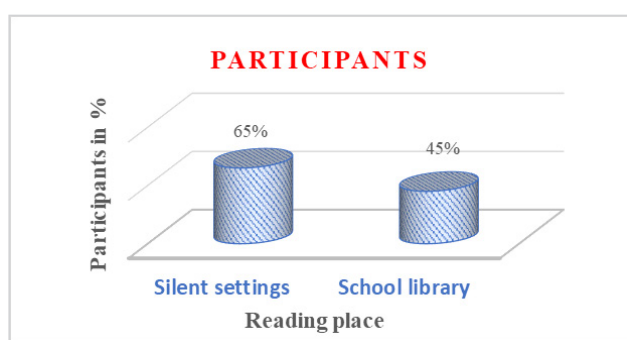


Figure 2. Reading Place

students to read more books. The item *my teacher motivates me to read books* (M=5.17) indicates that teachers inspired reading among students. Further, S3 said, “My teachers inspired me to read.” The current findings corroborated with an idea of Dorji (2020) found that with the use of creative ways, students are motivated to read. For instance, S1 said, “I am inspired to read more books after doing book review and book talk.” This is in line with the study by Ögeyik and Akyay (2009) that showed that students need to be motivated through reading activities which could become a habitual task for them. Further, teachers’ feedback and rewards can motivate students to build a positive attitude toward reading (Akabuike & Asika, 2012). Similarly, the item *school rewards help me to build reading habits* with the mean of (M=4.56) falls in the agree category. This shows that rewards of teachers encourage students to read books. This, in turn, may further contribute towards high academic achievement.

Having a conducive environment seems to be another factor affecting students’ reading habits. S1 and S3 shared that they need calm place to read a book because of their attentions. In the same way, the figure 2 reveals that 68% the students prefer to read in the silent settings, 48% loves to read at the school library. However, the previous literature stated that students prefer to read in the library, where they enjoy reading both their books and textbooks (Baron, 2017). Nevertheless, FGDs expressed that they could read books at the school as they get support from teachers. In addition, few student participants agreed that they lack guidance at home (S4 and S5). This finding suggests that parents, teachers and other stakeholders need to create enabling conditions for students to read and enhance their reading habits.

Moreover, majority of the participants expressed that students spend substantial time in social media has impaired their reading habits. For instance, the item *social media improves my reading habits* with the mean of (M= 3.23) expresses that students’ reading habit is neither develop nor improve by social media. A previous study pointed out that when students spend more time on social media, they spend less time reading (Shehu & Shehu, 2014). Similarly, majority of parent and teacher participants postulated that students reading has crippled by electronic gadgets. This view is represented by FGDs, when we reach home, 70 % of our time is wasted with mobile. Hence, parents and educators must

provide media literacy education before they expose to social media.

Manifold Benefits Of Reading

Reading habits help students improve their language skills. The majority of the student participants pointed out that reading enhances their language in many ways. It helps them in reading skills, writing skills, speaking, being informative, vocabulary enrichment, and spelling improvement. A common view among S1, S2, S4, FGDs, T6, T1, and T2 shared that reading habit helps students to develop strands of language such as writing and reading skills. This view is exemplified by T6,

It wouldn't be wrong to say that a student who is an avid reader has every possibility of outperforming his/her classmates especial in English domain. It is because, that student will have better vocabulary and general knowledge with which students can make text-to-text connection, express their thoughts succinctly and earn more points in exams.

Similarly, quantitative data show the overall mean (M= 5.18; SD=0.77), indicating that respondents agreed (See Table 4.2). Statistically it shows that students are benefitted in learning. Reading significantly improves students' reading skills (M=5.47) and written English (M=5.27). These indicate that students enhance their reading skills and written English by reading. Moreover, the standard deviation (SD=0.61; M=0.72) is low, indicating that students have similar feelings towards the items. In the same

way, the finding of a survey on the reading habits by Kumara, Kumar (2019) and Kashen & William (2011), reading regularly enhances one's vocabulary, grammar, and writing skills, resulting in improved written English skills. Further, student participants expressed that they maintain a reading portfolio that has helped them to write and express their thoughts. For example, one of the student participants, he read the book "Beyond The Sky And The Earth" by Jimme Zeppa, where student acquired knowledge beyond the history text. (See Figure 3).

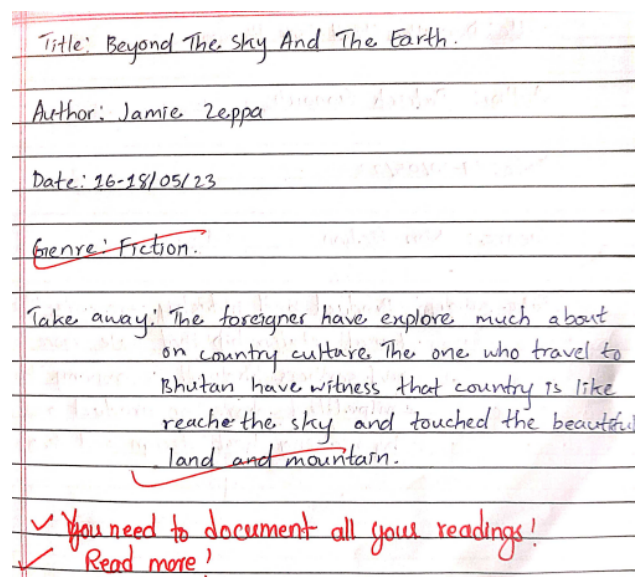


Figure 3. Book Record

Further, S1 said, "Maintaining reading records help me to read more books, because it serves as reflection towards my reading journey." Similarly, T2 stated that almost 30% of students

Table 7. Mean and Standard Deviation of Manifold Benefits of Reading

	Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Opinion
Reading helps me to learn vocabulary.		5.3	0.71	Agree
Reading helps me improve my written English.		5.27	0.72	Agree
Reading helps me to recognize my writing errors.		5.07	0.87	Agree
Reading helps me to do well in class presentation.		5.06	0.86	Agree
Reading helps me to find about all the necessary information.		4.92	0.88	Agree
Reading helps me to improve reading skills.		5.47	0.61	Agree
Overall Mean	378	5.18	0.77	Agree

Table 8. Correlation between the (Reading Habits among Higher Secondary School Students & Impacts of Reading Habits on Academic Performance in English).

		Reading Habits among Higher Secondary School students	Impacts of Reading habits on Academic performance in English
Reading Habits among Higher Secondary School students	Pearson Correlation	1	.265**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	Participants	477	476
Impacts of Reading habits on Academic performance in English	Pearson Correlation	.265**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	Participants	378	378

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

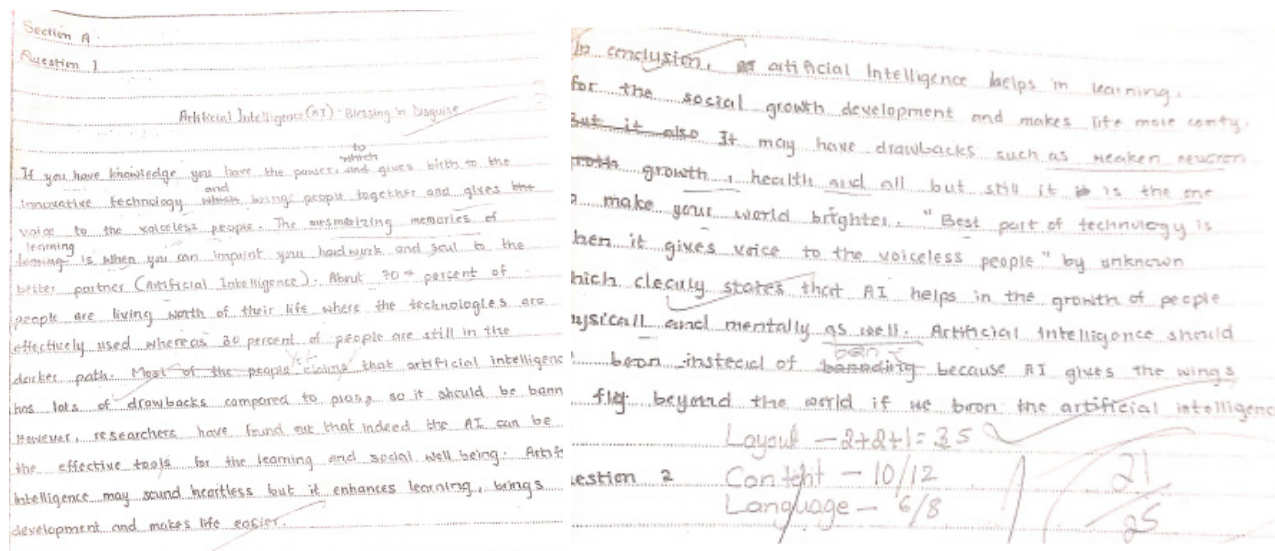


Fig.4. Student's Score in Essay Writing

have reap the benefits from maintaining portfolio. In the same way, Acheaw (2014) concluded that students with good reading habits are able to understand and comprehend the questions in the exam easily. Further, another study claim that students develop positive habits towards reading books and gain a wide range of knowledge and skills (Ajayi et al., 2014). In the similar way, FDGs and S3 stated that students also acquire a wide range of knowledge and information after reading the books. The survey item *reading helps me to find about all the necessary information* with a mean of (M=4.92) which reveals that students absorbed a various information from reading books.

Impacts of Reading Habits on Academic Performance in English

Reading and exam results are directly related to the performance on English. Majority of teacher participants expressed that students are academically sound in English when they engrossed in reading. Similarly, S4 said, "Reading makes me to understand the text and improve my academic performance in English." The findings are aligned with the previous literature. Acheaw & Larson (2014), Balan, Katenga, & Simon (2019), and Popoola (2021), have confirmed a strong positive correlation between students' reading habits and their academic performance. In the same vein, the current study state that a

Table 9. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Impacts of Reading Habits on Academic Performance in English

	Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of opinion
My reading habits positively affect my overall academic performance.		4.49	1.133	Somewhat Agree
I feel more confident in my writing skills when I engage in regular reading habits.		3.91	1.482	Somewhat Agree
It enhances my proficiency levels in English.		4.74	0.811	Agree
Reading regularly helps me to improve my grades in English class.		4.97	0.755	Agree
It helps me to fetch good marks in essay writing.		4.85	0.965	Agree
Overall Mean	378	4.55	1.05	Agree

strong positive correlation was found between the *reading habits among higher secondary schools* ($r=.265$; $p=0.000$) and *impacts of reading habits on academic performance in English* ($r=.265$; $p=0.000$) at $p< 0.01$ (see Table 8). This presents an impression that students' reading habits have a positive impacts on their academic performance in English. For instance, S1 said, "Absolutely! Consistent reading naturally expands my vocabulary and enhances my English performance. It's a valuable tool for academic success, especially in English."

Further, in Table 4.6, the data reveal an overall mean and standard deviation of ($M=4.55$; $SD=1.05$) (see Table 9), indicating a statistically significant correlation between students' reading habits and their academic performance in English. Specifically, the item *my reading habits positively affect my overall academic performance* ($M=4.49$; $SD=1.13$), falling within the "somewhat agree" category. Conversely, current findings disagree with the previous study, literature states that reading attitudes, materials read, reading frequency and time spent on reading did not contribute to academic performance (Wangchuk & Zangmo, 2021). A possible explanation for this might be that students study for the examination rather than reading a library books. Moreover, the item pertaining to *reading regularly helps me to improve my grades in English* class exhibited a mean of ($M=4.97$),

indicating that students tend to achieve higher marks in English when they engage in consistent reading habits.

In a parallel fashion, S1 attained a commendable score of 21 out of 25 in the essay writing, as depicted in Figure 4. This observation highlights the positive correlation between reading and high performance in essay. This is further represented by S1, "I engage in extensive reading, which has contributed significantly to my proficiency in English." In the same way, the interview data reveal that majority of students used to score 45-50 % in examinations before reading, but after reading books they could score 50-65 % in English. For example, S5 said, "I hardly manage to get pass in English, now I score more than 60%." This could possibly indicate that students who read perform better in their examinations. As a result, good reading skills boost students' writing skills and help them perform better in their English performance. This finding has important implications on parents and teachers to establish a students' reading habits.

5. Limitations of Study

The study was limited to three higher secondary schools in urban settings in the northern and southern parts of Bhutan. Therefore, the findings may not be generalized to other students and schools in Bhutan due to

differences in geographical locations and socio-economic backgrounds of the students. Including diverse schools could have provided varying perspectives on the topic. Additionally, there is limited relevant research conducted within the Bhutanese context, necessitating reliance on literature from other countries.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concludes that reading enhances students' knowledge and skills. Parents and teachers should model good reading habits to encourage these behaviors in students. However, students often face challenges in selecting appropriate reading materials. To address this, teachers and librarians are advised to offer guidance in the selection process, considering students' interests and specific needs.

Moreover, several factors influencing students'

reading habits were identified, including time constraints, inadequate guidance, excessive use of electronic devices, and unsupportive environments. Schools are therefore encouraged to create conducive reading spaces and extend reading sessions to enhance student engagement with books. Additionally, implementing a school policy that rewards proficient readers and integrates diverse reading strategies is recommended.

Furthermore, the study highlights a challenge related to the lack of media literacy among students. These findings underscore the need for stakeholders to provide education on media literacy. Future studies could employ a variety of data collection tools to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' reading habits and their impact on academic performance.

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