Improving the Reading for Pleasure Habit of Students of Samtse College of Education

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ABSTRACT: *Reading for pleasure is essential for the students of Samtse College of Education as it helps enhance communication skills, upgrade knowledge, and serve as a role model to inspire students. However, it was found that the reading-for-pleasure habit among students at Samtse College of Education (SCE) is poor. This action research investigated improving the reading-for-pleasure habit of the students at SCE. The participants in the action research comprised 16 classes, including students from M.Ed, B.Ed, and BA in Social Work programs. Data for the study were gathered using questionnaires and interviews. A total of 325 students responded to the questionnaire, and 57 students participated in the interview, both in the pre- and post-intervention data collection phases. The baseline and post-intervention data were analyzed using the statistical mean for the questionnaire data and thematic analysis for the interview data. Following the analysis of the baseline data, three intervention strategies-Our Time To Enjoy Reading (OTTER), Self-Indulgence Reading, and Raffle Draw-were used in all 16 classes for eight weeks. The analysis of the two sets of data showed that the intervention strategies were effective in promoting the reading-for-pleasure habits of the students. The findings indicated that, of the three intervention strategies, OTTER was the most effective. The study recommends the continuation of the reading program to further enhance the reading-for-pleasure habits of the students.*

1. Introduction

Reading for pleasure is an essential skill that holds immense importance for students. Developing a strong reading-for-pleasure habit is crucial for college students, as it serves as a gateway to success in education and forms the core of tertiary courses (Florence et al., 2017). Additionally, fostering a good reading-for-pleasure habit promotes personal and social development. However, the prevalence of various reading challenges among college students worldwide cannot be ignored. Many students lack a good reading habit (Dukpa & Dhendup, 2021), with some even falling into the non-reader category (Lone, 2012; Sehar & Ghaffar, 2018). Notably, countries such as the United States are experiencing a decline in college-level reading habits (Florence et al., 2017). The National Endowment for the Arts (2020) contends that pleasure reading has become a rare activity, particularly among today's youth.

Similar trends are observed in Bhutan. Studies indicate a resemblance to the global pattern in college students' reading-for-pleasure habits. While many Bhutanese college students engage in reading for pleasure, a significant number read minimally (Wangchuk et al., 2020). Generally, these students read to acquire academic knowledge and develop skills crucial for personal, social, and professional growth. However, their reading time and dedication are affected by the availability of alternative recreational activities such as games, sports, and online engagements (Wangchuk et al., 2020). Consequently, the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Bhutan has implemented initiatives such as "Reading Month" and "Reading Week" to enhance reading habits among students at the school and college levels.

Reading for pleasure is an imperative and intrinsic skill, particularly in an era characterized

by an abundance of information. It is an essential competence that every tertiary student must possess, especially future teachers who play a pivotal role as exemplars for their students. The investment students make in reading for pleasure will yield immense benefits throughout their college journey and in their future endeavors. As teachers, they bear the responsibility of guiding and encouraging their students to read. Lecturers at SCE have noticed a lack of interest and engagement in reading-for-pleasure habits among their students. This attitude towards reading has become a cause for concern. Many students opt to spend their time on social media and other activities instead of engaging in reading, which hampers their intellectual growth and knowledge acquisition (Choeda et al., 2021). Additionally, poor written and oral communication skills among students are often attributed to their poor reading habits.

The decline in youth reading habits is also a concern for His Majesty the Fifth King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, who consistently encourages young people to read. During the launch of the National Reading Week in 2015, His Majesty emphasized the significance of reading on diverse subjects, current events, history, science, culture, and people worldwide, stating that the pursuit of knowledge should be lifelong (Wangchuck, 2014). Recognizing the significance and benefits of reading for pleasure, it is essential to introduce reading activities in the college to cultivate students' reading habits, foster critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills, and instill a lifelong love for reading and learning. Furthermore, these reading activities can be extended to future classrooms, where students can nurture the passion for reading in their students. Therefore, this study aims to enhance students' habit of reading for pleasure through various intervention strategies. To address this objective effectively, action research is deemed the most appropriate design. By employing action research, the study seeks to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the reading intervention strategies employed.

Reconnaissance

Prior to embarking on the conduct of action research, it is important to do thorough reconnaissance. Reconnaissance is derived from the French word "reconnoitre," which means "to look at." Reconnaissance refers to the preliminary phase of data collection and observation that occurs before implementing any interventions or changes. Reconnaissance is important as it enables informed decision-making (Stringer, 2014), contextual understanding (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), identifying and prioritizing problems (Reason & Bradbury, 2008), developing strategy (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011), and anticipating challenges (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). Maxwell (2003) identified three parts to reconnaissance: situational analysis (looking at a situation in terms of a range of factors such as resources and practices); competence (profile and competence of researcher(s), and relevant literature (linking with previous work in this field).

Situational Analysis

Developing a reading-for-pleasure habit is an important attribute for students in tertiary education, particularly SCE students as future teachers. They need to role model reading to their students. However, lecturers have observed that the reading-for-pleasure habit among the students in the College is poor. Students do not engage in reading despite encouragement and persuasion from their lecturers. The College library has a good collection of books in general; however, there is a limited variety of books for reading for pleasure. Further, with the availability of the internet, students spend their time on social media platforms. They also spend time on games and sports during their leisure time rather than engaging in reading. Reading for pleasure affects readers' well-being and academic performance (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015), develops text comprehension and grammar (Clark & Rumbold, 2006), and is essential for obtaining information (Capps & Huang, 2015). Therefore, developing a good reading habit is of paramount importance to college students. Choeda et al. (2020) found that poor reading habits are a barrier to good communication skills. These attitudes of students towards reading and their poor communication skills are a concern for the lecturers.

Competence

The researchers involved in this study have experience in conducting action research. Besides undergoing professional development programs in action research and offering action research modules at the College, they have a few action research publications and experience in offering action research programs at the national level. Moreover, four of the authors are English teachers who have taught English language and literature in schools and at the tertiary education level for more than 20 years. They have also supervised action research projects and Master's dissertations. Their engagement in reading for pleasure sets them as role models for students. Three of the researchers hold PhD degrees and are categorized as advanced career researchers. The five researchers come with the expertise to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data.

The participants in the study consisted of two broad categories – undergraduate and postgraduate students. While the undergraduate students, such as Bachelor of Education (B. Ed) and Bachelor of Arts in Social Work (BASW), are pre-service, Master of Education (M. Ed) students are in-service teachers. Both the B. Ed and M. Ed students, except for BASW, have experience in conducting research. All students have undergone their schooling and college education with English as the medium of instruction. Thereby, they possess adequate knowledge and skills to engage in reading for pleasure. The researchers and participants in this study are qualified to conduct and participate in this research. They have all the necessary experience, knowledge, and skills to complete the study successfully.

Critical Friend

A critical friend is a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides alternative perspectives, and offers insightful observations during the study. The main purpose of a critical friend is to provide an outsider's view to enhance the quality of the study (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). According to Stringer (2014), a critical friend plays a valuable role in action research by helping the researcher to understand their practice,

develop their research skills, and reflect on their learning. A critical friend can include colleagues, supervisors, friends, or family members willing to offer sincere and constructive feedback.

The critical friend for this study possessed the qualifications and experience in the education field, specifically in teaching English language and literature at the tertiary level for over twenty years. Furthermore, the critical friend has prior experience in supervising action research projects. Being a faculty member at the same College where the research was conducted, the critical friend has significant knowledge of the students and the curriculum, enabling him to provide relevant and insightful feedback on the ongoing research. Demonstrating strong critical thinking skills, the critical friend asked probing questions and provided constructive feedback. Notably, the critical friend assumed a supportive colleague role, consistently offering assistance and encouragement. In conclusion, the critical friend was an excellent choice for this role, given the extensive knowledge, skills, and experience which would provide invaluable support and guidance to the researchers' success.

2. Literature Review

A review of the literature on reading for pleasure, its importance, factors affecting it, and strategies to enhance it are discussed in the following section.

2.1. Reading for Pleasure

Reading is deriving meaning from written symbols. It is an essential literacy skill that helps develop one's knowledge and skills (Arici, 2008); achieve one's potential and goals (Witri, 2021), and provides the ability to use written information to function in society (Alverman, 2017; Clark & Rumbold, 2006). Teachers need to view themselves as both language and reading teachers (Knutsen, 2018). Reading is, therefore, a valuable skill since it enhances the ability to speak and write. One of the types of reading is reading for pleasure. Reading for pleasure is defined as reading for enjoyment (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). It is also referred to as independent reading (Cullinan, 2000), voluntary reading (Krashen, 2004), leisure reading (Gilbert & Fister, 2011),

or recreational reading (Chireac et al., 2022). The process of reading for pleasure is described as a form of play that enhances creativity (Holden, 2004). According to Clark and Rumbold (2006), reading for pleasure is done at a place that suits the reader with the material of his/her choice. Thus, reading for pleasure is a source of enjoyment and a window to the other worlds.

2.2. Benefits of Reading for Pleasure

Research indicates that reading for pleasure has numerous benefits. For example, reading for pleasure influences students' academic performance (Pearson, 2015; Whitten et al., 2016); stimulates development and instills discipline (Danladi & Yohanna, 2018); and develops imagination, induction, reflection, critical thinking, and vocabulary (Wolpert, 2009). Further, it is an important gateway to personal development, and social, economic, and civic life (Holden, 2004). Salehi et al. (2015) contend that it is not a discrete skill but consists of several skills and procedures in which the readers interact with printed words for content and pleasure thereby teaching oneself to write, speak, spell, enhance grammar structure, vocabulary, and other language skills. This shows that reading for pleasure is linked to cognitive progress (Alvermann, 2017). Moreover, Krashen (2004) advocates the power of reading for pleasure in literacy development.

Reading for pleasure enhances readers' well-being. It deepens the feelings of empathy and presents the reader with a greater understanding of others' mental states (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015). Furthermore, a positive association of reading for pleasure with emotional and personal well-being is identified in studies that state, "Reading for pleasure enhances empathy, understanding of the self and the ability to understand one's own and other's identities" (BOP Consulting, 2015, p. 11). Hence, pleasure reading is a valuable activity, particularly for students as it helps to build their emotional resilience and grit. Reading is also essential to obtain information and success. Capps and Huang (2015) revealed that the rate of high academic performance is directly proportional to one's

reading. In addition, Clark and Rumbold (2006) pointed out that reading for pleasure develops text comprehension and grammar, builds positive reading attitudes, pleasure in later life as well as increased general knowledge. Similarly, Diaz (2016) found that reading for pleasure impacts the personal, academic/professional, and linguistic spheres of individuals. Specifically, people who read for pleasure had a 14.4% advantage in vocabulary and a 9.9% advantage in math (Sellgren, 2013). Though reading for pleasure is important and its benefits are infinite, reading habits among the "born digital" generation are affected by Facebook, texting, and multichannel stimulation (Nicholas, 2008). In conclusion, reading for pleasure has numerous benefits.

2.3. Factors Affecting Reading for Pleasure

Many factors affect decisions to read for pleasure. The factors include a positive attitude (Twist et al., 2007); accessibility of resources (Clark & Poulton, 2011; Gabriel et al., 2012); opportunity for choice (Clark & Phythian-Sence, 2008); presence of a role model (Cremin et al., 2009), and rewards to engage in pleasure reading (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). Additionally, "Students read more, understand more, and are more likely to continue reading when they have the opportunity to choose what they read" (Allington & Gabriel, 2012, p.10). Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) pointed out that interventions that promote reading motivation and engagement through various strategies, such as choice of reading materials, social interaction, and goal setting can significantly enhance students' attitudes towards reading. Additionally, Wigfield et al. (2012) emphasized the role of teacher support and encouragement in shaping students' reading attitudes. When teachers create a culture of reading in the classroom, students are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards reading. Moreover, it was found that positive social interactions and role models (Guthrie et al., 2006) and social networks and peer recommendations (McDonald, 2013) motivate students to read. Conversely, research consistently demonstrates that students are disinterested in reading. Students' reading is

impeded by lack of time, work overload, desire to socialize, or decision to spend time in other ways (Gilbert & Fister, 2010). Kavi et al. (2015) and Pattuelli and Rabina (2010) stated that technology negates young readers from pleasure reading. Nevertheless, Abimbola et al. (2021) indicated that making books and other reading materials available at home and libraries and providing adequate access to reading materials in electronic format are determining factors to aid reading for both academic and pleasure reading. To alleviate interest, exposing students to electronic books and other exciting reading materials is necessary and beneficial.

2.4 Enhancement of Reading for Pleasure Habit

The literature on enhancing reading for pleasure reveals several key factors that contribute to fostering a reading-friendly environment among college students. Brown and Lee (2021) identified barriers such as time constraints, academic workload, and limited access to engaging reading materials, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address these challenges within educational institutions. Similarly, Roberts (2018) emphasized the importance of providing students with a diverse array of genres and topics tailored to their interests, which significantly boosts their motivation to read for pleasure. Additionally, Miller (2020) highlighted the effectiveness of integrating multimedia elements into reading materials and promoting interactive reading platforms to capture students' interest and sustain their engagement in recreational reading.

Literature also shows that literacy-targeted rewards, such as Raffle Draw or Book Vouchers (Clark & Rumbold, 2006), opportunity for independent reading (Our Time To Enjoy Reading-OTTER), and Self-indulgence Reading (Tyson, 2013) are effective in motivating, promoting, and reinforcing students to read for pleasure. OTTER is a strategy in which the whole class engages in independent reading for 15-20 minutes. This strategy motivates students to read in a social reading environment and promotes designated time to read in class (McWilliams, 2021). Some of the benefits of OTTER include increased knowledge and comprehension, enhanced vocabulary and reading enjoyment, and better writing skills (Simapili, 2022). Similarly, Raffle Draw is a motivational incentive for students to read; it is a way of rewarding and encouraging students to read (Gabriela, 2020). Additionally, Raffle Draw inculcates and reinforces positive reading behaviour, motivates and excites students to read and makes reading fun and enjoyable (Salmivalli & Pukkila, 2022). Self-Indulgence Reading in which students read outside of class on their own is a great technique to enhance students' interest in reading (Barnes, 2016). It helps acquire language, develop analytical and critical thinking, improving focus and centration, and reducing stress and anxiety (Wolf, 2007). OTTER, Raffle Draw, and Self-Indulgence Reading are the major strategies that will be employed in our intervention.

2.5. The Action Research Question

Based on the reconnaissance, the following action research questions were formulated:

Main Question

How can we improve the reading for pleasure habit of the students of Samtse College of Education?

Sub-questions

a. What are the participants' perceptions of reading for pleasure?

b. What are the participants' perceptions of the benefits of reading for pleasure?

c. What strategies will promote the reading for pleasure habits of the students?

d. How effective are these strategies?

3. Methodology

This action research was conducted to improve the reading for pleasure habit of students of SCE. The research participants were students from all 16 classes. The classes comprised students pursuing Master of Education in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, English and Geography. The students pursuing B. Ed comprised Math and IT, Maths and Physics, Biology and Chemistry, English and History, English and Geography and the students

pursuing BA in Social Work. The baseline and the post-intervention data were collected through self-designed questionnaires. A six-point Likert Scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Agree, and 6 = Strongly Agree) was used to gather objective data on students' attitude, reading preferences, purpose of reading and techniques to enhance reading. The choice of the six-point Likert Scale was to enable the respondents to either choose positively or negatively or not remain neutral (Thompson, 2018). The survey questionnaire was pilot-tested and changes were made accordingly. Expert views have also been sought to enhance the validity of the instrument. The questionnaire was administered to 325 students (142 Bachelors in Education, 123 Masters in Education, and 60 Bachelors of Arts in Social Work). The link to the questionnaire was shared with the students and they completed the survey online. The questionnaire data, based on the four predetermined themes, were analysed using descriptive statistics through the measure of mean and standard deviation. Further, t-test was also conducted to study the effectiveness of the intervention strategies used by comparing the means of baseline and post-intervention data. Participants' ratings on the frequency were grouped into six distinct levels employing Best and Kahn's (1988) criteria that suggest each grouping needs to maintain an interval width of 1.0. The mean scores of the frequency were interpreted in terms of the ranking as reflected in Table 1. The ranking of the mean range is classified according to the range of mean scores that indicate the frequency of occurrence.

Table 1. Likert scale Converted to Numerical Mean

Sl. No	Mean Range	Rank
1.	0.01-1.00	Strongly disagree
2.	1.01-2.00	Disagree
3.	2.01-3.00	Somewhat disagree
4.	3.01-4.00	Somewhat agree
5.	4.01-5.00	Agree
6.	5.01-6.00	Strongly agree

One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted to examine participants' attitudes, reading preferences, reading purposes, and reading enhancement techniques. Additionally, participants' perspectives on the monthly number of books read, daily time allocated to reading, challenges encountered during reading, and potential measures that the College could implement to improve their reading habits were collected. The interview questions were pilot-tested and changes were made accordingly. The interviews were carried out in the classroom after regular class hours or during free periods, with each session lasting approximately one hour. A total of 57 participants were selected for interviews using random sampling. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed to obtain the baseline data. However, due to Covid-19 restrictions, the post-intervention interview data were collected via email. The interview data were analysed by aligning them with the predefined survey themes.

The study adhered to research ethical protocols throughout its duration. Prior informed consent was obtained from all participants, encompassing their participation in the survey, interviews, and audio recording of the interviews. Stringent measures were implemented to guarantee the confidentiality of participants. Anonymity was ensured in the transcription files, as well as in any data segments quoted in this research report. Pseudonyms were utilized to represent the participants; for instance, participant 1 was denoted as P1, participant 2 as P2, and so forth. The findings derived from the baseline data are subsequently presented within distinct sections corresponding to the various themes examined.

Attitude to Reading

According to the findings presented in Table 2, the theme "Attitude to Reading" exhibited an overall mean of 5.24 (SD=0.83) indicating that students generally possess a positive attitude towards reading. This survey result aligns with the qualitative data gathered through interviews where all participants expressed a favorable attitude towards reading. For instance, P13 stated, "*For me, reading is a source of both pleasure and leisure.*" Similarly, P15 asserted that

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation for Attitude to Reading

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
I like reading in my leisure time.	325	4.80	1.03	Agree
I think reading is an indispensable part of life.	325	5.34	0.81	Strongly Agree
I am of the opinion that reading is not a waste of time.	325	5.60	0.65	Strongly Agree
Average	**325**	**5.24**	**0.83**	**Strong Agree**

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation for Benefits of Reading

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
I read for knowledge.	325	5.13	0.71	Strongly Agree
I read for pleasure.	325	4.71	1.00	Agree
Reading positively affects my academic performance.	325	5.07	1.02	Strongly Agree
Reading develops my multiple reasoning.	325	5.27	0.73	Strongly Agree
Reading enables me to express my feelings.	325	5.21	0.80	Strongly Agree
Reading develops my imaginary world.	325	5.38	0.66	Strongly Agree
Average	**325**	**5.13**	**0.82**	**Strongly Agree**

reading is a valuable activity due to its numerous advantages, such as improving literacy skills and equipping individuals with essential life skills. In conclusion, the findings from both the quantitative questionnaire data and qualitative interview responses indicate that the students in this study hold a positive attitude towards reading.

Benefits of Reading

The findings reveal that participants displayed a notable awareness (M=5.13, SD=0.82) regarding the benefits of reading as indicated by the overall mean for the theme "Benefits of Reading." This suggests that students recognize the significance of engaging in reading activities. This point was echoed in the interview responses, exemplified by P1's assertion that reading is a "process of acquiring knowledge, expanding wisdom, and improving the horizons of knowledge." Furthermore, P16 emphasized the positive impact of reading on behaviour change and its role as a crucial gateway to success. Moreover, the study participants acknowledged that reading fosters critical thinking and creativity, nurtures cognitive development, reduces stress levels, and cultivates a positive outlook towards life

(P9). These insights collectively indicate that participants possess an understanding of the diverse personal and professional advantages associated with reading. Overall, this study highlights the significance of reading and its wide-ranging positive impacts. It reinforces the notion that engaging in reading activities is not only an enjoyable pastime but also a valuable investment in one's personal and professional development.

Reading Preference

The analysis of the data presented in Table 4 indicates that the mean score (M=4.60, SD=1.02) for the items related to the theme of "Reading Preference" demonstrates that students exhibit a preference for a diverse range of reading materials, including research reports, newspapers, fiction, and non-fiction. This finding is consistent with the insights obtained from the interview data, thereby corroborating the results of the survey.

The participants conveyed their inclination towards both fictions, encompassing novels, stories, comics, and science fiction, as well as non-fiction, comprising biographies, self-help books, religious books, newspapers,

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviation for Reading Preference

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
I like reading books by Bhutanese authors.	325	4.47	1.10	Agree
I like reading books by foreign authors.	325	5.03	0.78	Strongly Agree
I like reading journals or research reports.	325	4.28	1.16	Agree
I like reading newspapers.	325	4.86	0.93	Agree
I prefer reading more than watching a movie or a literary book.	325	4.03	1.27	Agree
I like reading fiction.	325	4.63	1.01	Agree
I like reading non-fiction.	325	4.93	0.89	Agree
Average	**325**	**4.60**	**1.02**	**Agree**

Table 5. Mean and Standard Deviation for Motivation for Reading

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Level
My lecturers motivate me to read.	325	5.11	0.92	Strongly Agree
My lecturers are my role models for reading.	325	4.50	1.08	Agree
My friends motivate me to read.	325	4.46	1.00	Agree
I am self-motivated to read.	325	4.83	1.01	Agree
My lecturers guide me to read.	325	4.25	1.15	Agree
My lecturers encourage me to read.	325	5.01	0.92	Strongly Agree
Average	**325**	**4.69**	**1.01**	**Agree**

and journals. These preferences reflect the participants' desire to engage with a variety of literary genres and informational resources in their reading habits. This convergence of findings from the survey and interview data underscores the consistency and reliability of the results. It suggests that students exhibit a genuine interest in exploring a broad spectrum of reading materials, embracing both imaginative narratives and informative texts.

Overall, these findings provide valuable insights into the reading preferences of the student participants, shedding light on their inclination towards a diverse array of materials. Such knowledge can inform educators and curriculum developers in designing reading programs that cater to students' varied interests, promoting a rich and engaging reading experience that accommodates both fiction and non-fiction genres.

Motivation for Reading

The results obtained from the survey on the theme "Motivation to Reading" indicate a mean score (M = 4.69, SD =1.01), suggesting that students generally agreed with the notion that their motivation to read stems from multiple sources, including their lecturers, peers, and personal drive. The interview findings shed light on the participants' inspiration derived from His Majesty's endorsement of reading's significance. Participant 1, for instance, remarked, *"His Majesty's insightful words have truly stimulated my reading habits."* Additionally, participants reported being motivated by their tutors and friends, while some attributed their reading motivation to their own intrinsic drive.

Besides the predetermined themes, the interview also gathered data on time spent on reading, number of books read in a month, challenges of reading, strategies to enhance their

reading, and measures the College could take to motivate them to read. The findings suggest that some participants spend 20-30 minutes to one hour a day on reading. However, other participants pointed out that they do not engage in reading at all. Additionally, a few participants highlighted that they engage in reading only when they have time. One participant said, *"Actually I am not fond of reading. Instead of reading, I prefer listening to music and watching videos"* (P14). Furthermore, P12 opined that the prevailing reading culture in the College was inadequate, indicating a lack of enthusiasm for reading among the students. It was also observed that while some participants failed to read even a single page in a day, others managed to read a few pages or complete one to two books within a month. Among the challenges highlighted by the participants, common obstacles included time constraints, difficulties in selecting suitable reading material, heavy academic workloads, and distractions posed by social media platforms.

Regarding strategies to enhance participants' reading enjoyment, the findings uncovered that the presence of peers who actively engage in reading would serve as a source of motivation. The participants also expressed a desire for lecturers to recommend books to them, thus guiding their reading choices. As for the measures that the College could employ to foster a reading culture, all participants unanimously emphasized the importance of dedicating specific time during class hours for reading. This sentiment was exemplified by P11 who stated, *"If the College management could allocate specific periods for reading, it would greatly assist us in developing our reading habits."* Furthermore, some participants suggested that the provision of a diverse range of reading materials within the library, along with the organization of literary activities within the College, would significantly contribute to the cultivation of a reading habit among students. Based on the insights derived from the baseline data, a series of intervention strategies were formulated and implemented over the course of eight weeks.

Intervention Strategies

Three intervention strategies were used to help student teachers improve their reading for pleasure habit as detailed below.

Our Time To Enjoy Reading (OTTER)

OTTER is a reading intervention programme that was developed by Karen McWilliams in 2007. It is a reading programme designed to help children develop a love of reading and to improve their reading skills (McWilliams, 2010). It is based on the following principles reading for pleasure is essential for developing a love of reading, children need to be exposed to a variety of books and genres, children need to be encouraged to talk about what they are reading and children need to be given opportunities to practice reading independently (McWilliams & Clarke 2011). The OTTER programme has been evaluated in a number of studies, and the results have shown that it is effective in helping children develop a love of reading and improve their reading skills. In the present research, this intervention strategy was implemented for about 20-30 minutes every two-hour class to motivate students to read. Students read a book of their choice independently for a specific time. During the OTTER, lecturers also read with the students. To inspire students to read, lecturers shared what they have read and recommended books for reading. This might have inspired students to continue reading.

Self-indulgence Reading

Self-indulgence or independent reading is when students choose their own time to read (Krashen, 2004). Some of the benefits to self-indulgence reading include reduced stress, improved mood, and increased relaxation. It can also help to expand knowledge and understanding of the world, and develop imagination (Barnes, 2016). In the present study, students engaged in self-indulgence reading for at least one hour any time of the day to read the book of their choice. At the end of each reading, students shared the summary, quotes or interesting lines from their reading on the WeChat/WhatsApp/Telegram created by the lecturer for each class. Like the students, lecturers also shared the highlights from their reading. Both students and lecturers commented on what was shared on the group chat. This process created a social reading

environment and may have motivated students to enjoy and engage in reading.

Raffle Draw

The Raffle Draw is a motivational incentive for students to read and make reading fun and effective. Incentivizing Reading: Raffle draws provide a tangible incentive for individuals to engage in reading activities. The opportunity to win a prize creates excitement and motivation, encouraging participants to invest time and effort in reading (Selfe & Johnson, 2014). Raffle draws can foster reading habits, increase reading diversity, build a reading community, and promote literacy (Denton & Parris, 2011). In the context of the present study, as soon as a student completed reading a book, the details of the book were written and put in the raffle box created for each class. The raffle was drawn on the last day of the intervention period and book prizes were awarded to the winners. The winner was asked to provide a summary of the book to the whole class. This intervention strategy could have encouraged students to read.

Findings from the Post-intervention Data

The post-intervention data were gathered following the implementation of the intervention strategies. The findings of the survey data and interview data are coalesced and presented according to themes in the following sections.

Attitude to Reading

The average score (M=5.30, SD=0.85) for items related to the "Attitudes Towards Reading" theme exhibited a slight increase in comparison to the baseline data (M=5.24, SD=0.83). Furthermore, during the interviews, all participants reaffirmed the positive findings observed in the baseline data, expressing their enjoyment of reading and the meaningful experiences they gained from it. As an illustration, Participant 5 emphasized, *"I derive great pleasure from reading. It is a source of enjoyment and we acquire a wealth of experiences through it."*

Benefits of Reading

The overall mean value of items for the benefits of reading indicated a slight increase in the benefits of reading (M=5.21, SD=0.77 against M=5.13, SD=0.82 in the pre-intervention data). Moreover, during the interview, in addition to corroborating the baseline data findings, all participants expressed a positive disposition towards reading, highlighting both its inherent enjoyment and the consequential acquisition of

Table 6. Mean and Standard Deviation for Attitude to Reading

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
I like reading in my leisure time.	325	5.04	0.95	Strongly Agree
I think reading is an indispensable part of life.	325	5.31	0.85	Strongly Agree
I am of the opinion that reading is not a waste of time.	325	5.56	0.76	Strongly Agree
Average	**325**	**5.30**	**0.85**	**Strongly Agree**

Table 7. Mean and Standard Deviation for Benefits of Reading

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
I read for knowledge.	325	5.15	0.77	Strongly Agree
I read for pleasure.	325	4.86	1.01	Agree
Reading positively affects my academic performance.	325	5.17	0.88	Strongly Agree
Reading develops my multiple reasoning.	325	5.36	0.65	Strongly Agree
Reading enables me to express my feelings.	325	5.33	0.67	Strongly Agree
Reading develops my imaginary world.	325	5.39	0.64	Strongly Agree
Average	**325**	**5.21**	**0.77**	**Strongly Agree**

meaningful experiences. For instance, Participant 5 articulately noted, *"I derive immense pleasure from engaging in reading activities. The process itself is intrinsically enjoyable and it facilitates the acquisition of diverse and enriching experiences."* In addition to the benefits identified in the baseline data findings, the participants in the interview pointed out that reading helps them to be aware of themselves and be humble, sympathetic and empathetic. Some participants also contended that reading enables them to keep their minds active, helps explore new worlds and connects to different places and people. This claim is demonstrated by P7: *"Reading enables me to keep my mind engaged and active and through the books, I get to travel to different places and meet different people."*

Reading Preference

The overall higher mean (M=4.64, SD=1.01) indicates a slight increase (M=4.60, SD=1.02) in the items for the theme "Reading Preference." During the interview, the participants not only reiterated their preferences identified in the baseline data but also mentioned their engagement with stories disseminated through social platforms such as Telegram, WhatsApp, and WeChat. For instance, Participant 5 remarked, *"In addition to my regular reading preferences, I also explore the informational content and stories available on Telegram, WhatsApp, and WeChat."*

Motivation for Reading

The mean score (M=4.86, SD=0.97) for the items related to the "Motivation for Reading" theme exhibited a slight increase compared to the baseline data (M=4.69, SD=1.01). The interview data showed that participants derived motivation to read not only from influence of His Majesty, tutors, and personal drive, but also from recommendations made by their peers and other readers. Furthermore, Participant 9 emphasized,

Table 8. Mean and Standard Deviation for Reading Preference

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
I like reading books by Bhutanese authors.	325	4.61	1.05	Agree
I like reading books by foreign authors.	325	4.99	0.77	Agree
I like reading journals or research reports.	325	4.35	1.14	Agree
I like reading newspapers.	325	4.85	0.91	Agree
I prefer reading more than watching a movie or a literary book.	325	4.07	1.31	Agree
I like reading fiction.	325	4.62	1.07	Agree
I like reading non- fiction.	325	5.01	0.83	Strongly Agree
Average	**325**	**4.64**	**1.01**	**Agree**

Table 9. Mean and Standard Deviation for Motivation for Reading

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
My lecturers motivate me to read.	325	5.22	0.80	Strongly Agree
My lecturers are my role models for reading.	325	4.70	1.15	Agree
My friends motivate me to read.	325	4.52	1.15	Agree
I am self-motivated to read.	325	4.97	0.94	Agree
My lecturers guide me to read.	325	4.58	1.01	Agree
My lecturers encourage me to read.	325	5.17	0.78	Strongly Agree
Average	**325**	**4.86**	**0.97**	**Agree**

"Listening to TED Talks featuring renowned individuals who possess expertise, critical thinking skills, and persuasive abilities serves as a strong motivating factor for me to engage in reading."

Regarding the emergent themes, a comparison between the baseline data and post-intervention findings revealed an increase in the amount of time devoted to reading, with the participants dedicating two hours in a day instead of the previous 20-30 minutes. Additionally, the findings concerning the number of books read in a month indicated an increase from no books read to an average of one to four books per participant. Detailed comparisons between the baseline and post-intervention findings are presented in the subsequent sections.

4. Results

The mean comparison of the baseline and post-intervention data is shown in Figure 1.
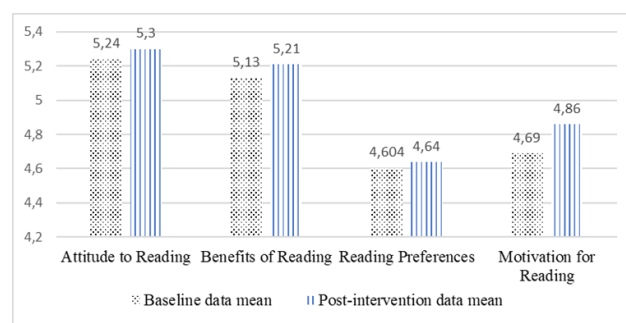

Figure 1. Mean Comparison of the Baseline and Post-intervention Data

According to Figure 1, the comparison between the pre-data and the post-intervention survey data indicates a slight overall improvement in the four themes as a result of the interventions. Notably, the *Attitude to Reading* scores increased from 5.24 to 5.3, while students' perceptions of the *Benefits of Reading* increased from 5.13 to 5.21. Similarly, there was an increase in the *Motivation for Reading* scores, from 4.69 to 4.86.

The post-intervention qualitative data provided additional insights. Participants expressed that reading is enjoyable and helps them develop self-awareness, humility, sympathy, and empathy. Additionally, they mentioned about engaging with stories shared on social media platforms such as Telegram, WhatsApp, and WeChat, as well as reading books recommended by friends and other readers motivated them to read.

To examine the significance of the differences between the pre- and post-intervention survey data, paired samples t-tests were conducted, and the results are presented in Table 10. The t-test analysis revealed a statistically significant increase in the mean scores from the baseline data (M=4.85, SD=0.482) to the post-intervention data (M=4.94, SD=0.477), t(11)=-2.463, p<0.05. This outcome suggests that the interventions have effectively promoted the habit of reading for pleasure among students.

The comparative analysis revealed a notable shift in reading habits among the participants. Initially, the majority reported reading only one or no book per month, whereas over time, they began reading two to three books monthly. Moreover, the time devoted to reading for pleasure also experienced a significant increase with the participants spending one to two hours per day engaged in reading. In addition to these changes, the participants identified a range of benefits associated with reading for pleasure. For instance, Participant 12 expressed:

The interventions have greatly benefited me in multiple ways. I was able to read more books compared to the previous semesters. Without the interventions, I would have struggled to find time for reading due to the heavy workload. The dedicated time provided by the interventions allowed me to fully utilize it for reading. Additionally, reading together in a peaceful environment created a sense of enjoyment. Furthermore, it has stimulated my interest in

Table 10. Comparison of Pre-data and Post-intervention data mean scores

Mean Score	Mean	Mean Difference	SD	Sig (2 tailed)
Baseline data	4.85		0.482	
		0.092		0.014
Post-intervention data	4.94		0.477	

reading and enhanced my capacity for critical thinking and self-reflection.

The participants attributed these positive outcomes to the various interventions implemented in the classroom setting.

5. Discussion

This study found that the intervention strategies employed significantly enhanced students' attitudes towards reading. This aligns with previous research indicating that a positive attitude towards reading is a crucial factor in determining individuals' reading habits and choices (Twist et al., 2007). Recognizing the importance of reading in education, fostering a positive attitude towards reading is essential. This can be achieved through various approaches, such as the careful selection of reading materials, promoting social interaction around reading, and setting attainable goals (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Additionally, teachers' support and encouragement play a significant role in instilling a positive mindset towards reading in students (Wigfield et al., 2012). These findings suggest that creating a conducive reading environment necessitates a multifaceted approach. By carefully curating reading materials, facilitating social interactions related to reading, setting realistic goals, and providing support and encouragement, educators can effectively foster a positive attitude towards reading among students, profoundly impacting their reading habits and overall educational journey.

The three intervention strategies employed in this study to improve students' reading-for-pleasure habits have benefited the students. Prior to the intervention, participants primarily associated reading with intellectual and literary advancements. However, post-intervention data revealed that participants expanded their recognition of reading benefits to include the development of virtues such as humility, sympathy, empathy, and nurturing of imagination. Literature corroborates that reading plays a pivotal role in fostering imagination, inducing critical thinking, facilitating reflection, and expanding vocabulary (Wolpert, 2009). Moreover, it serves as a crucial gateway to personal development (Holden, 2004).

The study also revealed an enhanced motivation for reading among students. Analysis of the qualitative data identified various sources of motivation, including His Majesty, tutors, friends, personal drive, peer recommendations, and TED talks. Participants indicated that they were motivated to read by their lecturers and friends and would continue to read in the future. The study's findings align with prior research emphasizing the significance of positive social interactions and role models in motivating individuals to engage with reading (Guthrie et al., 2006). Literature has also identified the influential role of social networks and peer recommendations in promoting reading engagement among students (Lenters, 2017; McDonald, 2013). Post-intervention findings showed that participants read one to four books a month, compared to no books read in a month pre-intervention. Similarly, the time spent on reading increased from 20-30 minutes to 2 hours a day. Participants noted that the interventions allowed them more access to reading materials as they could borrow books from friends and tutors. Corroborating this finding, literature shows that easy accessibility of books improves students' reading (Gabriel et al., 2012).

The study suggested that interventions such as OTTER, Self-Indulgence Reading, and Raffle Draw implemented over eight weeks were effective in enhancing students' reading-for-pleasure habits. This finding aligns with literature showing that strategies to enhance students' reading-for-pleasure habits include literacy-targeted rewards, such as book raffles (Clark & Rumbold, 2006), opportunities for independent reading (Our Time To Enjoy Reading – OTTER), and self-indulgence reading (Tyson, 2013). The study also showed that the interventions helped nurture students' critical thinking, creativity, communication, and expanded their intellectual and language development. Consistent with this finding, literature highlights that reading for pleasure develops imagination, induction, reflection, critical thinking, and vocabulary (Wolpert, 2009).

In the post-intervention interview, participants

were asked to list the intervention strategies in order of priority. The majority preferred OTTER, followed by self-indulgence reading and raffle draw, respectively. This preference is exemplified by a participant who stated, "I loved all the three interventions, but if I have to choose, it will be the OTTER time. It was a real-time everyday practice that motivated me to enjoy reading independently, rather than reading only specific module-related materials" (P4).

Participants recommended that the interventions continue to enhance the reading-for-pleasure habit of students. They also suggested that the library should offer a variety of books for recreational reading and that the College must create awareness of the importance and benefits of reading to motivate students to read.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to improve students' reading-for-pleasure habits through a comparative analysis of pre- and post-intervention results to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions used. Comparing the baseline and post-intervention findings, it can be concluded that students demonstrated an overall improvement in their reading-for-pleasure habits due to the interventions. Qualitative data revealed a shift in reading habits, with participants reading more books per month and dedicating more time to reading for pleasure. Participants recognized a range of benefits associated with reading, including personal development, critical thinking, and expanded vocabulary. The interventions—OTTER, Self-Indulgence Reading, and Raffle Draw—were well-received by the participants, with OTTER being the most preferred. Participants expressed their desire for these interventions to continue and recommended the availability of a variety of books in the library for recreational reading. They also highlighted the importance of creating awareness about the benefits of reading to motivate students to read.

In the technology-driven world, reading for pleasure has become a rare activity. However, with the right interventions, it can be reintegrated into students' daily lives. Based on the findings, this study recommends several strategies to improve students' reading-for-pleasure habits. Firstly, dedicating specific time during class hours for reading activities can emphasize the importance of reading and provide regular opportunities for students to engage with books. Secondly, ensuring a diverse range of reading materials is available in the library will cater to different interests and preferences, encouraging students to explore various genres and authors. Lastly, organizing literary activities such as book clubs or reading challenges can create a vibrant reading culture and instill a love for reading among students. By implementing these recommended strategies and incorporating comprehension techniques, educators can effectively nurture and strengthen students' reading-for-pleasure habits, leading to a lifelong love for reading and continuous personal development.

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