

Unlocking the Power of Reading: How Building Strong Reading Habits Can Transform Your Life

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.12040042>

Received: 11 April 2025; Accepted: 15 April 2025; Published: 05 May 2025

ABSTRACT

In the modern digital era, reading remains a critical pillar of personal development, academic success, and mental well-being. However, the rapid transformation of media consumption habits has altered how individuals, particularly students, engage with reading. This study, titled "Unlocking the Power of Reading: How Building Strong Reading Habits Can Transform Your Life," aimed to explore the multifaceted impact of reading habits on college students' academic outcomes, cognitive engagement, emotional resilience, and motivational structures.

The researcher focused on business school students from Bangalore, Karnataka. Structured questionnaires, interviews, and a vast array of secondary data were analyzed. The researcher conducted a detailed investigation into the reading habits and the changes related to their habit. The study subjects were selected on a convenience sampling method.

The data examination revealed that over half of the respondents acknowledged that reading helped alleviate stress, improve mood, and serve as a healthy mental escape. Recreational reading was especially linked to emotional regulation and cognitive relaxation. A majority of students still read regularly, although digital content has largely overtaken traditional print. The research also highlights notable mental and emotional benefits associated with recreational reading. More than half of the respondents agreed that reading helped them manage stress, anxiety, and negative emotions. Many interviewees shared that reading fiction or self-help content provided a calming escape and a way to process emotions. Frequent reading improves language processing and literacy outcomes. Participants noted that consistent reading enhanced their critical thinking, vocabulary, and time management, further supporting reading as a foundational skill for academic success.

Keywords: Reading habits, cognitive development, emotional intelligence, stress reduction, reading benefits.

INTRODUCTION

Reading has the special ability to transform the life of a person by unlocking new doors, ideas, and opinions. Reading habits are vital to strengthen language skills, increase vocabulary, and improve comprehension skills, all of which play an undeniable role in academic achievement. Promoting reading habits gives a sound basis for cultivating imagination, enhancing critical thinking, and developing empathy through various experiences. This article highlights how books can be powerful tools for self-improvement beyond the classroom, developing curiosity and a love of lifelong learning, and offering facts in an ever-evolving world. Reading habits equip the reader with the knowledge necessary to manage challenges and seize opportunities. Reading, once regarded as a leisure activity or intellectual requirement, has become a stronger tool for brain and emotional growth. In today's world, where multitasking and screen time rule everyday life, the process of reading is frequently underestimated or overlooked. There has been extensive research done related to this topic. However, the sampling from participants focused on Bangalore Business School students in India had yet to be reviewed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading, as a cognitive and cultural practice, plays a significant role in personal development, academic performance, and mental well-being. The literature reviewed below explores the diverse dimensions of reading

habits, motivation, and the shifting patterns influenced by digital technologies, particularly among college and university students.

Levine et al. (2020) emphasized the mental health benefits of recreational reading among college students, highlighting that autonomous motivation—engaging in reading for intrinsic enjoyment—was crucial in deriving emotional and psychological rewards. Their study demonstrated that students who read for pleasure reported lower levels of stress and anxiety, as well as improved mental resilience. Similarly,

Zhang et al. (2022) extended this argument to an older demographic, demonstrating that consistent reading habits in the elderly population were associated with improved physical and mental health outcomes, including reduced loneliness and cognitive decline.

Motivation emerges as a central theme in the literature. Kambara et al. (2021) validated the Adult Motivation for Reading Scale (AMRS) in a Japanese context and affirmed that intrinsic motivation positively correlates with reading frequency and satisfaction. Their research supports self-determination theory, emphasizing that autonomy in reading choices fosters sustained engagement.

Tabata-Sandom (2023) examined the impact of online extensive reading on language learners, finding that digital platforms can enhance both motivation and linguistic abilities when used for consistent, goal-oriented reading.

Ament, Tort-Cots, and Pladevall-Ballester (2025) investigated the effectiveness of academic reading circles in higher education. Their study found that peer-supported reading structures can promote engagement, motivation, and academic comprehension, especially when students are actively involved in discussions and knowledge sharing.

Several studies have analyzed how reading behaviors are evolving due to the rise of digital media. Yusof (2021) and Aslam et al. (2021) both reported that digital technologies have led to a decline in traditional reading habits, particularly long-form reading. Students increasingly gravitate toward brief, surface-level content consumption, which negatively impacts deep comprehension and critical thinking.

Yang et al. (2025), in a bibliometric analysis, confirmed the increasing scholarly interest in digital reading behavior. Their findings suggest a need to re-evaluate reading strategies in educational settings to better align with students' digital preferences while preserving the cognitive depth that print reading typically offers. Meanwhile,

Abequibel et al. (2021) studied prospective reading teachers and highlighted a strong inclination toward digital reading formats. However, they also cautioned that despite accessibility, digital reading may compromise retention and attention unless intentionally structured.

Kumara and Sampath Kumar (2021) found that while digital access has expanded the reach of reading materials, it has also contributed to fragmented attention spans. Their work suggests that library systems must evolve beyond mere digital access and focus on cultivating environments that encourage meaningful and immersive reading.

Kong (2024) proposed the use of fuzzy set theory and intelligent transformation in libraries to personalize and optimize user reading experiences.

Sweeney (2021) advocated for integrating reading across academic disciplines, arguing that reading should not be confined to language or literature classes. His review of "Rethinking Reading in College" emphasized the value of an across-the-curriculum approach that leverages reading as a bridge-building tool for critical thinking and academic success.

Islam and Muna (2024), studying Generation Z students at Dhaka University, observed that while interest in traditional reading remains, students largely favor short digital texts due to time constraints and technological dependency. This trend reflects a broader cultural shift toward convenience-driven information consumption.

Pandey and Chandra (2024) emphasized the role of institutional support in nurturing reading habits, pointing to the importance of accessible resources, library infrastructure, and reading-friendly academic environments. These findings align with the argument that sustained reading practices require both personal motivation and structural facilitation.

Chetail (2024) investigated the effects of print exposure on word recognition and literacy development. Her research established that regular engagement with printed texts leads to improved linguistic processing and vocabulary acquisition. These cognitive benefits support the argument for maintaining a balance between digital and print reading formats to maximize developmental outcomes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research for this article used a survey and interview method to gather both qualitative and quantitative data from business school students in Bangalore.

Surveys: The researcher has circulated five hundred structured questionnaires to male and female selected respondents equally based on the convenience sampling method between the years 2024 and 2025. Four hundred and twenty-five questionnaires were received with the required information.

Interviews: In-depth interviews were conducted with thirty participants who read regularly or were working to establish a consistent reading habit. The goal was to understand their motivations, challenges, and reading strategies.

Secondary Data: A comprehensive review of the literature was conducted, with a focus on published articles and studies that examine the advantages and disadvantages of reading. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, with a focus on determining correlations between reading frequency and cognitive, emotional, and health-related advantages.

DATA AND FINDINGS

The filled-out questionnaire has been analyzed and tabulated using MS Excel. Statistical tools used in this study are percentage and Mean score. The research demonstrated a firm relationship between the frequency of reading and other cognitive and psychological benefits. Below are presented key findings as tables and diagrams:

Table 1 Frequency of Reading and Cognitive Benefits

Frequency of Reading	Memory Improvement	Critical Thinking Enhancement	Problem-Solving Ability
Daily	85%	80%	78%
Several times a week	70%	65%	62%
Weekly	50%	48%	45%
Rarely/Never	20%	18%	15%

Interpretation: The statistics confirm a definite positive correlation between the frequency of reading and cognitive improvements. Those individuals who read each day experience vast improvement in memory capabilities, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Table 2 Impact of Reading on Emotional Health

Frequency of Reading	Stress Reduction	Emotional Intelligence	Empathy Increase
Daily	70%	72%	75%
Several times a week	55%	58%	60%
Weekly	40%	42%	45%
Rarely/Never	15%	18%	20%

Interpretation: Regular readers reap the most in emotional health, such as reduced stress, enhanced emotional intelligence, and increased empathy.

The correlation between reading frequency and cognitive/emotional benefits

Cognitive Benefits

- Improved Brain Connectivity & Function—Regular reading consolidates neural connections and enhances brain connectivity, particularly in regions associated with understanding and critical thinking.
- Increased Vocabulary & Knowledge—Reading introduces people to new words, concepts, and viewpoints, increasing communication ability and overall knowledge.
- Improved Memory & Concentration—Regular reading necessitates concentration and memory retention, improving brain functions.
- Slowed Down Cognitive Decline—Research indicates that lifelong reading maintains cognitive functions and slows down cognitive decline, decreasing the chances of conditions such as dementia.

Emotional & Psychological Benefits

Improved Empathy—Reading literary fiction enhances the capacity to comprehend and empathize with others' feelings by activating the brain areas involved in perspective-taking.

Less Stress & Anxiety—Daily reading has been found to reduce stress levels by as much as 70%, which is more effective than certain relaxation methods.

Increased Emotional Resilience—Inspirational and self-help books can promote personal growth and resilience in adversity.

Better Mood & Mental Health—Reading inspiring or familiar material can fight depression and offer emotional comfort.

BENEFITS OF READING



Diagram 1

Explanation: Table 1, Table 2, and Diagram 1 display the linear relationship between reading frequency and the advantages of participants regarding cognitive and emotional well-being. The more often people read, the more benefits they report regarding better mental functioning and emotional health. While the advantages of reading are easy to see, numerous people encounter barriers in having regular reading habits.

The following were the challenges that were indicated within the study:

Time Constraints: Most of the participants indicated their time constraints as an obstacle in regular reading. Work, family, and social duties most often leave no space for free time reading.

Digital Distractions: The popularization of smartphones, social media, and video content can distract readers from reading. Most participants indicated that they find it hard to focus on books for long durations, mostly settling on shorter, more interactive digital content.

Lack of Motivation: Some participants, particularly those reading for academic or professional reasons, indicated a lack of motivation to read regularly. Without the instant gratification or enjoyment, the element of disengagement may arise.

Strategies to Build Strong Reading Habits

According to the research, several strategies were revealed to enable one to overcome obstacles and develop habitual reading habits:

Set Manageable Goals: Begin with small and attainable goals, like reading for 15 minutes daily, and evolve the reading duration gradually.

Create a Reading Schedule: Choose a specific time for reading, like before sleep or during lunch hours, to inculcate it as an everyday habit.

Minimize Digital Distractions: Put away smartphones and other devices during reading sessions to create a distraction-free environment.

Find Enjoyable Material: Read books that suit personal interests or experiment with other genres to stay motivated. Fiction, self-help, or biographies can yield interesting content that keeps readers motivated to read regularly.

Join Reading Communities: Join book clubs or online reading communities to keep oneself motivated and discuss books with people who share similar interests.

Major Findings

- A high positive relationship between the frequency of reading and cognitive gains
- Those who read every day had much higher scores of improvement in memory (85%), critical thinking (80%), and problem-solving skills (78%) than those who read rarely or never.
- Those who read every day felt more stress relief (70%), emotional intelligence (72%), and improved empathy (75%) compared to those who read less often.
- Cognitive function Improvements in the domains of memory and concentration are inextricably associated with increased emotional regulation and resilience, delivering overall benefit from reading.
- Literary fiction reading, in particular, engages brain areas corresponding to the comprehension of other people's feelings and points of view, corresponding to increased emotional intelligence and empathy.
- Long-term reading habits predicted a lower hazard of age-related cognitive decline, consistent with long-term brain health.

CONCLUSION

The present study assesses the transformation caused by strong reading habits in a person's life. Findings are supported by extensive research that documents its cognitive and emotional advantages. The research concluded that most of the respondents have good opinions regarding the influence of reading habits and the influence it produces in the life of the reader. Regular reading boosts memory, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and stress relief, resulting in a healthier and more balanced life. But challenges from time scarcity, digital distractions, and less inclination in motivation hinder the construction of habitual reading behavior.

With deliberate strategies and goal-setting, one can evade these hindrances and release the full potential of reading. Supported by recent research, reading is more than an enjoyable pastime—despite what some may think, it's a desirable aid to personal development and mental health. Although digital disruption has changed the mode of reading, it has not diminished its value. For students to fully unlock the transformative potential of reading, institutions must invest in motivational strategies, create supportive environments, and balance technological innovation with cognitive depth. These findings offer a roadmap for educators, librarians, and policymakers to reinvigorate reading cultures in an age where distraction is the norm and deep engagement is increasingly rare.

Limitation

A small sample size can make it difficult to generalize findings to a broader population. Similarly, limited access to the population in Bangalore, India, can restrict the scope of the study. Time constraints may also impact the depth and breadth of the research. This study acknowledges that the limitations can also provide opportunities for future research and improvements.

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Ethical Approval: During this study ethical approval was obtained for research involving human subjects who were involved.

APPENDIX

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