Understanding the pleasure reading habits of university students: A study at the University of Dhaka

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates the reading habits of students at Dhaka University. It focuses on the demographic factors that influence their engagement in pleasure reading, their preferred materials and formats, the perceived importance of such reading, the impact of technology, and the challenges they face in their reading practices.

Methods: A quantitative research approach was utilized, employing a semi-structured questionnaire to gather data on the demographics, reading habits, and attitudes of 250 students University of Dhaka. This method provided diverse insights into students' perceptions and practices regarding leisure reading.

Findings: This study revealed that Dhaka University students often engage in pleasure reading, mainly through digital formats like e-books and online articles. Preferred materials include short stories, job-related guides, and non-fiction. Most students view pleasure reading as beneficial for personal development. Major barriers to pleasure reading include academic workload and limited access to appealing materials. Supportive measures, such as better library resources and dedicated reading spaces, are essential for helping students balance pleasure reading.

Research implications: Educational institutions could promote more balanced academic schedules to encourage leisure reading. Additionally, improving access to engaging and diverse reading materials, both digital and physical, could foster a more robust culture of pleasure reading. The influence of technology indicates that universities could collaborate with digital platforms and online reading communities to enhance students' reading experiences, supporting their personal and academic development. These insights can help policymakers, educators, and librarians design initiatives that integrate leisure reading into the academic environment while leveraging the benefits of digital media.

Keywords: Pleasure reading, recreational reading, student's perception, digital device, university students; Bangladesh.

1. Introduction

Pleasure reading, often pursued voluntarily, allows readers to explore materials that align with their interests. University students prefer fiction, including novels, realistic fiction, and fantasy (Perera & Somaratna, 2024). This type of reading offers numerous benefits, such as language acquisition, cognitive development, and increased cultural awareness. Engaging in leisure reading enhances vocabulary, grammar, and overall language proficiency, improving language learners' communication skills (Ovilia & Asfina, 2022). The cognitive and emotional benefits are equally significant: Reading for pleasure reduces stress, promotes relaxation, and provides an escape from daily routines (Perera & Somaratna, 2024; Biswas, 2023). Pleasure reading enhances cultural understanding by exposing readers to diverse perspectives and historical contexts, thus enriching their worldview (Karasu & Tunaboylu, 2022). Libraries play a vital role in promoting a culture of pleasure reading by creating supportive environments. They offer a variety of materials, highlight new arrivals, and provide advisory services to help readers find books that match their interests (Perera & Somaratna, 2024; Biswas, 2023). While some argue that pleasure reading can detract from more structured academic reading, integrating it into educational settings can create a balanced approach that enhances academic and personal development. This integration fosters a more comprehensive learning experience, encouraging students to seek knowledge in both academic and recreational contexts. For university students, engaging in pleasure reading can complement their studies by broadening their perspectives, enhancing cognitive function, and providing a much-needed balance to their demanding schedules. The digital age has significantly transformed how people access and engage with reading materials in recent years. E-books, online platforms, and digital reading communities have become widespread, providing greater accessibility to various genres. However, the extent to which university students engage in pleasure reading in this context and the factors that influence their reading habits that need to be explained. This research highlights a decline in pleasure reading among university students, mainly due to academic pressures, changing lifestyles, and the increasing influence of technology. By examining the current landscape of pleasure reading practices among these students, this study aims to provide valuable insights for fostering a campus culture of reading. The study focuses on university students' perceptions and practices regarding pleasure reading. It investigates the demographic factors that shape their reading habits, the materials and formats they prefer, their views on the importance of leisure reading, and the obstacles they face. Additionally, it explores how technology has influenced students' reading practices, especially with the rise of e-books and digital reading platforms. Understanding the factors influencing pleasure reading among university students is the first step towards fostering a campus culture of reading. This understanding will help educational institutions, policymakers, and libraries develop strategies to promote pleasure reading as an essential part of university life. These strategies are beneficial and necessary as they contribute to students' academic success and personal well-being.

2. Literature review

"It is what you read when you don't have to that determines what you will be when you can't help it." –Potter (1927).

Pleasure reading (PR) refers to recreational reading in and outside academic settings. Balling (2016) described PR as joyous, entertaining, and self-actualizing. Although PR is not an academic pursuit, it can still enhance literacy and vocabulary skills (McKool, 2007). Research by Phasha et al. (2012) conducted in South Africa shows additional benefits of pleasure reading, such as enhanced communication skills and tremendous academic success. Moreover, Bergland (2014) suggested that PR contributes to expanding the theory of mind (ToM) by helping individuals memorize various concepts through repeated exposure and reconstructing their understanding of human consciousness. Interpretivist perspectives contend that knowledge is subjective and socially constructed, acquired through human experiences. In this context, pleasure reading (PR) is vital for gaining practical experiences (Chilisa & Preece, 2005). Students who read less for enjoyment may struggle to maintain an adequate reading volume (Brozo et al., 2007). Research by Cristy et al (2016) showed that students who engage in personal reading generally achieve higher academic scores than their peers who do not read as much. Specifically, those participating in PR show improved performance in English, Mathematics, Science, and History, with average gains of 0.11% in English, 1.71% in Science, 4.45% in Mathematics, and 2.05% in History. However, the impact of technology, social media, and heavy workloads can reduce the value placed on PR. A survey indicated that 71% of students do not appreciate leisure reading. Kamalova and Kolevinova (2016) examined the barriers to pleasure reading in Russia, highlighting that an emphasis on careerism and an exam-driven educational system impede reading enjoyment. They also noted that electronic media have contributed to declining adult reading habits. Greenfield (2015) referred to this issue as "Mind Change," indicating that excessive use of digital technology adversely affects communication skills and interpersonal empathy. Teachers have reported that students show signs of inattentiveness, which they attribute to excessive engagement with digital technology (p. 28). Furthermore, video gaming addiction can lead to significant behavioral problems among students (p. 198). University educators are crucial in promoting reading enjoyment beyond academic requirements (Ketsitlile & Galegare, 2010). Sakib (2023) highlighted the importance of building a sustained reading culture, with libraries as essential resources. Additionally, Greenfield (2015) emphasized the need for increased awareness of how digital technology influences reading habits. Although pleasure reading has not received extensive research attention, emerging studies emphasize its significance for educational and personal development. These studies reveal that promoting pleasure reading can substantially impact young and adult individuals and influence their future. For example, research involving children indicates a positive correlation between pleasure reading and various literacy-related benefits, including improved reading proficiency and writing skills (OECD, 2000), enhanced text

comprehension, and improved grammar (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992). Expanded vocabulary development (Angelos & McGriff, 2002; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998), increased positive attitudes towards reading (Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999), greater self-confidence as readers and continued engagement in pleasure reading into later life (Aarnoutse & van Leeuwen, 1998). Many university students, especially first-year undergraduates, develop a habit of reading for pleasure as a way to relax and enjoy themselves (Parlette & Howard, 2010). The preferred genres include novels, with particular popularity for realistic fiction, romance, and fantasy (Perera & Somaratna, 2024). Students regard pleasure reading as beneficial for relaxation and enjoyment and an escape from their daily routines (Perera & Somaratna, 2024). Research shows that pleasure reading enriches personal experiences and positively impacts academic performance by expanding background knowledge and vocabulary (Parlette & Howard, 2010). Pleasure reading is linked to improved well-being and supports personal growth and identity development (Brookbank, 2023). University libraries play a vital role in promoting leisure reading by offering initiatives such as book clubs, reading programs, and enhanced collections of recreational materials (Parlette & Howard, 2010). A supportive library environment and committed staff encourage students to read leisurely (Perera & Somaratna, 2024). However, promoting reading in academic settings can be challenging despite the clear benefits and enjoyment of pleasure reading. Many students do not utilize library resources for leisure reading, indicating a disconnect between available resources and student engagement (Brookbank, 2023). Developing a reading habit early is crucial for fostering a lifelong love of books and learning. Sheldrick-Ross, McKechnie and Rothbauer (2005) suggested that it is never too late to cultivate a passion for reading pleasure. Pleasure reading is often likened to imaginative play, allowing readers to explore different worlds and roles (Nell, 1988). According to Holden (2004), reading is a dynamic and creative activity rather than just a passive pastime. Engaging in pleasure reading encourages interpretation and interaction, influenced by an individual's experiences, expectations, and social contexts (Graff, 1992). The importance of pleasure reading goes beyond mere enjoyment. Research by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2002) indicates that a student's reading enjoyment is a more reliable predictor of educational success than their socio-economic status. This finding underscores the potential of pleasure reading to enhance academic performance and help mitigate social inequalities. Encouraging pleasure reading among students can significantly improve educational outcomes and reduce social exclusion. Leisure reading is essential for university freshmen, as it aids in developing literacy and self-awareness (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007; Jarvis, 2003). This transitional phase, typically characterized by significant life changes, occurs when students aged 18 to 20 leave home for the first time and confront the challenges of university life (Kantanis, 2000). Engaging in enjoyable reading during this period provides a valuable coping mechanism, helping students adapt, manage challenges, and transition into adulthood while positively influencing their self-perception (Sullivan & Brown, 2015). Alam et al. (2021) found

that book preferences in Bangladesh are influenced by factors such as age, gender, and personality. The study revealed that 43.52% of respondents prefer science fiction, while 32.64% favor action and adventure genres. Readers aged 16 to 25 are the most active, whereas interest in reading declines significantly among those aged 35 and older. Understanding and promoting leisure reading as part of the university experience can yield personal and academic benefits, supporting students' growth during this crucial stage. In summary, the literature emphasizes the numerous advantages of pleasure reading, its essential role in educational achievement and personal development, and the need to address barriers to foster a culture of leisure reading within academic environments.

3. Objectives of the study

The primary objective of this study is to explore the perceptions and practices of pleasure reading among university students. Specifically, the study aims to:

- Investigate the perception of pleasure reading in the lives of students and its potential effects on their personal development and academic success.
- Identify the types of reading materials and formats that university students prefer for leisure reading.
- Examine the role of technology in shaping students' pleasure reading habits, particularly the use of digital devices, e-books, and online platforms.
- Explore the obstacles that students encounter when engaging in pleasure reading.

4. Methodology

This study utilized a quantitative research approach to examine Dhaka University students' perceptions and practices regarding pleasure reading. A semi-structured questionnaire was developed and distributed to capture data on demographics, reading habits, and attitudes toward pleasure reading. The study employed a stratified random sampling technique to ensure that the sample represented a range of academic disciplines, educational levels, gender, age groups, and residential status. This approach enabled the research to capture varied perspectives on pleasure reading among a sample of 250 Dhaka University students. Data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire, distributed to the students. The questionnaire captured demographic information and included questions focused on the types of books students read for pleasure, frequency of reading, factors influencing their choice of reading material, and overall attitudes toward pleasure reading. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize demographic characteristics. This approach helped reveal patterns in pleasure reading across different demographic groups and identified potential influences on students' reading preferences. Data analysis was performed using SPSS25 software, with results presented in tables to provide a clear understanding of students' pleasure reading practices. Ethical approval was obtained, and participants' informed

consent was secured prior to data collection. All participants were assured of confidentiality and were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. This methodology outlines the systematic approach undertaken to investigate the perceptions and practices of pleasure reading among university students, providing insight into how demographic factors may influence their engagement with leisure reading.

5. Findings of the study

The most significant percentage of students is enrolled in Arts and Social Sciences (52.4%), followed by Science, Engineering, and Technology (25.2%) and Business Studies (22.4%). Most students are either in their third year (26.4%) or have graduated (29.6%), with fewer students in their first year (3.6%). There are more male students (59.6%) than female students (40.4%). The age distribution is pretty even among the three younger age groups (18-20, 21-23, 24-26), with a smaller yet significant proportion of students aged 27 and above (21.2%). The majority of students reside in university halls (84.0%), with smaller proportions living at home (2.4%) or outside the university with friends (13.6%), as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the variables

Variables	Frequency	%
Academic discipline		
Arts and Social Sciences	131	52.4%
Science Engineering and Technology	63	52.2%
Business Studies	56	22.4
Education		
First year	9	3.6%
Second year	64	25.6%
Third year	66	26.4%
Fourth year	37	14.8%
Graduate	74	29.6%
Gender		
Male	149	59.6%
Female	101	40.4%
Age group		
18-20	75	30.0%
21-23	77	30.8%
24-26	45	18.0%
27 and above	53	21.2%
Residence		
Home	6	2.6
University Hall	210	84.0%
Outside of university/friends	34	13.6%

Total (n)	250

Table 2 shows the frequency and duration of students' engagement in pleasure reading. The data shows that a significant portion of students engage in pleasure reading several times a week (45.2%), with smaller percentages reading daily (16.8%), once a week (16.4%), several times a month (15.2%), or rarely (6.4%). Many students dedicate 5–6 hours weekly to pleasure reading (34.4%). This is followed by those reading for 3–4 hours (20.0%), more than 6 hours (19.2%), 1–2 hours (17.2%), and less than one hour (9.2%).

Table 2: Engagement in pleasure reading

Variables	Frequency	%
Engagement in pleasure reading		
Daily	42	16.8%
Several times of a week	113	45.2%
Once a week	41	16.4%
Several times of a month	38	15.2%
Rarely	16	6.4%
Engagement in pleasure reading per week		
Less than one hour	23	9.2%
1–2 hours	43	17.2%
3–4 hours	50	20.0%
5–6 hours	86	34.4%
More than 6 hours	48	19.2%

Table 3 provides detailed information about the types of reading materials that students engage with, the starting periods for pleasure reading, the reading formats, the sources of reading, participation in university reading groups or book clubs, and the importance of pleasure reading. Short stories are the most popular, with 84.4% of students reading them. Non-fiction materials (66.0%), job–related guides and books (75.6%), and online articles or vlogs (74.8%) are also widely read. Novels (64.8%), magazines (48.4%), newspapers (53.6%), and academic journals (52.4%) show significant engagement, while other materials are read by only 8.0% of students. Most students began pleasure reading at the higher secondary level (40.4%) or university level (31.2%). Fewer students started at the secondary level (18.0%), primary school level (6.8%), or during childhood (3.6%). E-books are the most popular reading format76.0%). Other formats include online articles (66.0%), audiobooks (20.0%), and print books (16.0%). A significant number of individuals use various formats for reading, with 60.0% engaging in options beyond traditional books. The most common sources for discovering new reads are friends and family and online platforms like Goodreads (62.4%). Other notable sources include bestseller lists (61.2%), book reviews (53.6%), and browsing bookstores (49.2%). Most

students (66.4%) participate in university reading groups or book clubs, while 33.6% do not. Additionally, a large proportion of students view pleasure reading as necessary, with 46.4% considering it very important and 33.6% viewing it as significant. Others find it moderately important (14.0%), slightly significant (4.0%), or not essential at all (2.0%).

Table 3: Types, starting period and Significance of pleasure reading

Variables	Frequency	%
Types of reading materials		
Novels	162	64.8%
Short stories	221	84.4%
Non–fiction	165	66.0%
Magazines	121	48.4%
Newspapers	134	53.6%
Job related guide/books	189	75.6%
Academic journals	131	52.4%
Online article/vlogs	187	74.8%
Others	20	8.0%
Starting period of pleasure reading		
At the Childhood	9	3.6%
At the primary school level	17	6.8%
At the secondary level	45	18.0%
At the higher secondary level	101	40.4%
At the university level	78	31.2%
Format of reading materials		
Print books	40	16.0%
E–books	190	76.0%
Audiobooks	50	20.0%
Online articles	165	66.0%
Others	150	60.0%
Source of reading		
Friends/family	156	62.4%
Book reviews	134	53.6%
Bestseller lists	153	61.2%
Browsing bookstores	123	49.2%
Online platforms (e.g., Goodreads)	156	62.4%
Participate in any university reading groups or book clubs?		
Yes	166	66.4%
No	84	33.6%
Significance of pleasure reading		
Very	84	33.66%
Important	116	46.4%
Moderately important	35	14.0%
Slightly important	10	4.0%

| Not important | 5 | 2.0% |

Table 4 presents detailed descriptive statistics regarding the perceived benefits of engaging in various activities. The statistics include the minimum (Min), maximum (Max), mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and the number of respondents (N) for each statement. Respondents rated the benefit of receiving and retaining diverse background information in academic fields very positively, with a mean score of 4.70 (SD = 0.716, N = 250), indicating substantial agreement. Enhancing vocabulary and promoting diverse cultural literacy received a mean score of 4.37 (SD = 0.689), suggesting general agreement on its benefits for improving vocabulary and cultural understanding. Increasing reading proficiency and creative writing skills garnered a mean score of 4.56 (SD = 0.785), reflecting a positive perception of its impact on these skills. In contrast, the benefit of achieving decent grades in examinations was rated lower, with a mean score of 3.26 (SD = 1.207), indicating more significant variability in responses and less unanimous agreement on this benefit. Developing language, speaking, and reasoning skills received a mean score of 4.50 (SD = 0.987), showing strong agreement that this activity supports these competencies. Additionally, providing self-directed learning opportunities to assist in making future professional decisions had a mean score of 4.30 (SD = 1.049), indicating a positive perception of its long-term advantages. The benefit of assisting with course assignments and presentations had a mean score of 3.48 (SD = 1.173), suggesting moderate agreement and higher response variability. Conversely, providing relaxation and entertainment was rated highly, with a mean score of 4.50 (SD = 0.847), indicating that respondents find this activity enjoyable and relaxing. The benefit of helping individuals escape reality received a mean score of 3.83 (SD = 1.058), also showing moderate agreement. The activity of passing the time or spending leisure time was rated very positively, with a mean score of 4.53 (SD = 0.777), suggesting that respondents see this activity as valuable for leisure.

Table 4: Perception of pleasure reading

Statement	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.
It helps in receiving and retaining diverse background information in academic fields	1	5	4.70	.716
It enhances vocabulary and promotes diverse cultural literacy	3	5	4.37	.689
It increases reading proficiency and skill in creative writing	1	5	4.56	.785
It helps to accomplish decent grades in the examination	1	5	3.26	1.207
It helps in developing language, speaking, and reasoning skills	1	5	4.50	.987

It provides self-directed learning prospects that can help with making professional decisions later on	1	5	4.30	1.049
It helps in preparing course assignments and presentations	1	5	3.48	1.173
It gives me Relaxation and entertainment	2	5	4.50	.847
It helps me to escape reality	1	5	3.83	1.058
It helps me as time passes or when I spend leisure time	2	5	4.53	.777

In Table 5, out of the 250 respondents, 129 individuals (51.6%) reported using digital devices, while 121 individuals (48.4%) did not. Among digital device users, 23 individuals (17.8%) reported using them consistently, 40 individuals (31.0%) often, 47 individuals (36.4%) sometimes, 11 individuals (8.5%) rarely, and eight individuals (6.2%) never.

Table 5: Technology for pleasure reading

Variables	Frequency	%
Use of digital devices		
Yes	129	51.6%%
No	121	48.4%
Frequency of using digital devices		
Always	23	17.8%
Often	40	31.0%
Sometimes	47	36.4%
Rarely	11	8.5%
Never	8	6.2%
Influence of technology		
Increased Reading time	7	5.4%
Not comfortable	46	35.7%
Easy accessibility and availability	21	32.6%
Distract from focus	42	23.3%
No significant impact	13	10.1

Regarding the influence of technology on reading habits and comfort, out of 129 respondents, 7 (5.4%) felt that technology increased their reading time, while 46 (35.7%) reported feeling uncomfortable with technology. Meanwhile, 21 respondents (16.3%) indicated that technology provided easy accessibility and availability. Additionally, 30 respondents (23.3%) mentioned that technology distracted them from focusing, and 13 (10.1%) stated that technology had no significant impact on their reading habits or comfort levels.

Table 6: Problems encounter by the students

Variables	Yes	No
Problems		

Separate space for reading	126;50.4%	124;49.6%
Lack of time	112;44.8%	138;55.2%
Academic workload	168;67.2%	82;32.8%
Lack of interest	107;42.8%	143;57.2%
Availability of other entertainment options (e.g., quiz, games, group play)	104;41.6%	146;58.4%
Difficulty in finding attractive materials	134;53.6%	116;46.4
Career pressure	148;59.2%	102;40.8%
Restricted materials	118;47.25	132;52.8%
Others	28;11.2%	222;88.8%

Table 6 presents the frequency and percentage of respondents identifying various issues affecting their reading habits. The responses are categorized as "yes" or "no." Approximately half of the respondents indicated that they lack a separate space for reading (yes: 126, 50.4%; no: 124, 49.6%). A smaller proportion cited a lack of time as an issue (yes: 112, 44.8%; no: 138, 55.2%). Most respondents reported that academic workload significantly impacts their reading (yes: 168, 67.2%; no: 82, 32.8%). Additionally, a smaller portion identified lack of interest as a problem (yes: 107, 42.8%; no: 143, 57.2%). Less than half of the respondents indicated that the availability of other entertainment options affects their reading habits (yes: 104, 41.6%; no: 146, 58.4%). More than half reported difficulty finding attractive reading materials (yes: 134, 53.6%; no: 116, 46.4%). Many respondents noted career pressure as a problem (yes: 148, 59.2%; no: 102, 40.8%). A smaller proportion indicated that restricted materials are an issue (yes: 118, 47.2%; no: 132, 52.8%). Only a few respondents mentioned other reasons affecting their reading habits (yes: 28, 11.2%; no: 222, 88.8%).

6. Discussion

Most students are enrolled in Arts and Social Sciences (52.4%), which may reflect broader university trends or the influence of curriculum requirements on reading habits. The smaller percentages in Science, Engineering, Technology, and Business Studies may suggest that students in more technical fields prioritize subject-specific or career-oriented reading over pleasure reading. Gender distribution shows a higher number of male students (59.6%) than female students (40.4%), which might influence genre or format preferences and could potentially relate to access to reading resources. Age distribution shows balanced representation across younger age groups, but with fewer students aged 27 and above (21.2%), possibly indicating that older students are more career-focused and less engaged in pleasure reading. Alam et al., (2021) also found that reading pattern varies from age, gender and personality. According to them, recreational reading interest in Bangladesh is gradually declining those have ages over thirty five and students aged from 16-25 are the most active readers. Many students engage in pleasure reading multiple times a week (45.2%), with a smaller but significant number reading daily

(16.8%) or weekly (16.4%). This finding suggests a positive engagement level, where reading serves as a regular leisure activity. Additionally, most students read for 5–6 hours per week, highlighting an overall moderate commitment to pleasure reading. These patterns indicate that students view reading as a worthwhile activity but likely balance it with academic or social responsibilities. This frequency suggests a routine integration of reading, potentially supported by accessible formats and reading materials. Students primarily engage with short stories (84.4%) and job–related guides (75.6%), likely motivated by a combination of relaxation and career preparation. This variety indicates that pleasure reading serves both educational and recreational purposes. The popularity of e-books (76.0%) and online articles (66.0%) suggests a shift toward digital formats, likely due to their accessibility and lower cost. Additionally, the influence of friends, family, and online platforms as common sources of reading material highlights the social aspect of reading habits, with peers playing a significant role in shaping students' reading choices and recommendations. Importance of Pleasure Reading. Taylor et al.,(2017) explored that students enjoy finding books with a peer rather than looking for alone. A considerable majority of students value pleasure reading, with 46.4% deeming it "important" and 33.66% regarding it as "very important." This reflects their awareness of the advantages of reading beyond academic performance. Such positive attitudes indicate that, for many, pleasure reading offers a satisfying and enjoyable balance to academic pressures, potentially aiding in stress reduction and fostering intellectual growth. Dearbon (2024) found that 96% respondents of his study warmly welcomed library for fostering Pleasure reading. Students report significant benefits from pleasure reading, particularly in areas that enhance academic performance and personal growth. For instance, high ratings for "receiving diverse information in academic fields" and "increasing vocabulary and cultural literacy" show that students view reading as a way to improve essential skills. Other noted benefits, such as enhancing creative writing and language abilities, highlight the broader cognitive and communicative advantages of reading. Different activities like; play, rehearsal, modeling and practice play significant role to acquire essential literacy skills while simultaneously developing the cognitive and linguistic abilities necessary to support their learning process (Gregory, 2016). The moderate score for "achieving decent grades" suggests that while some academic benefits are recognized, students may not strongly connect pleasure reading with academic success. However, benefits like relaxation and entertainment received high scores, indicating that pleasure reading is primarily appreciated as a recreational activity. The impact of technology on reading habits is mixed. While 16.3% of students report that it increases accessibility and availability, a significant portion 23.3% finds technology distracting. This divide indicates that, although technology can enhance reading, it also presents challenges to maintaining focus and engagement. Additionally, 35.7% of

students experience discomfort, suggesting that digital formats may not be ideal for extended reading sessions. This discomfort could influence both the duration of reading and the overall experience. These varying responses highlight the need for a balanced approach to incorporating technology into leisure reading practices. Greenfield (2015) used the term "Mind Change" for the digital technologies affect. She explored that communication skill and interpersonal empathy are worsening due to the excessive use of social network sites.

A considerable portion of respondents 67.2% identify academic workload as a significant challenge to their reading habits, while 59.2% point to career pressure. This indicates that, although students appreciate the value of pleasure reading, overwhelming demands from their studies and careers hinder their ability to engage in it consistently. Similarly, Kamalova et al., (2016:474) studied in Russia and explained that careerism referred colonial legacy and only exam passing tendency can create the barriers for PR and authors attributed that electronic media is responsible for the sharp declining tendency of PR among the adults. Furthermore, 53.6% struggle to find appealing reading materials, and 50.4% lack adequate reading space. These issues reveal structural or resource-related barriers that may limit both the frequency and enjoyment of reading. This insight underscores the potential for institutional support, such as improved library access or curated reading lists, to help alleviate some of these obstacles.

Finally, the results of this study highlight that pleasure reading is both a valued leisure activity and an informal educational tool among Dhaka University students, contributing to their personal and academic growth. However, significant barriers such as academic workload and career focus can hinder this practice. There's a noticeable trend toward digital formats, but mixed experiences with technology indicate that students benefit from a variety of reading formats. By addressing structural challenges and creating reading-friendly environments, we can enhance students' engagement with pleasure reading, ultimately supporting their intellectual and emotional well-being in the face of academic demands.

7. Recommendations

Based on the problems identified in Table 5, the following recommendations are proposed to address the issues affecting the respondents' reading habits:

- **Create dedicated reading areas and promote library usage:** Libraries and hall libraries should establish areas designated for pleasure reading. To encourage better reading habits, these spaces should be quiet, comfortable, and free from distractions. Encourage individuals to use libraries, as they often provide quiet, dedicated spaces ideal for reading.

- **Motivation for pleasure reading:** Motivation for reading habits to help individuals prioritize pleasure reading. Similarly, Allignton et al., (2021) constructed that motivating students may be effective reading programs.
- **Balanced academic schedules:** Educational institutions should consider balancing academic workloads to prevent students from being overwhelmed and allow them more leisure time for reading. A study found Learners with limited enthusiasm for engaging with reading have adverse effect on academic, social and economic perspectives (Taylor and Casarez, 2024).
- **Reading clubs and discussions:** Establish reading clubs or discussion groups to foster a community around reading, making it more social and engaging. Similarly, Asplund et al. (2024) explored how engaging in reading and discussing with peers allows students to experience a sense of community similar to that found in digital spaces.
- **Promote the benefits of reading:** To compete with immediate entertainment options, highlight the long-term benefits of reading, such as improved cognitive skills and cultural literacy. Similarly, through activities like play, rehearsal, modeling, and practice, students can acquire essential literacy skills while also developing the cognitive and linguistic abilities necessary to support their learning process (Gregory, 2016).
- **Balance entertainment and reading:** Encourage a balance between various forms of entertainment and reading to ensure a well-rounded routine.
- **Curate reading lists:** Provide curated reading lists and recommendations tailored to different interests and reading levels, making it easier for individuals to find engaging materials.
- **Expand library collections:** Ensure libraries and reading spaces are stocked with diverse and updated collections that appeal to a broad audience.
- **Stress management programs:** Implement stress management and relaxation programs to help individuals cope with career pressures, thus freeing up mental space for reading.
- **Professional development resources:** Provide resources and support for professional development that includes reading as a vital component, demonstrating its relevance to career growth.
- **Improve access to resources:** Enhance access to a broader range of reading materials through digital libraries, inter-library loans, and subscriptions to e-books and audiobooks.
- **Policy advocacy:** Advocate for policies that reduce restrictions on reading materials, ensuring equitable access for all.
- **Identify and address specific issues:** Conduct further surveys or focus groups to identify any additional specific reasons affecting reading habits and develop targeted interventions accordingly.

- **Personalized support:** Offer personalized support and counseling to individuals facing unique challenges to their reading habits, ensuring tailored solutions.

Implementing these recommendations can significantly reduce barriers to reading, promote better reading habits, and enhance individuals' overall educational and personal development.

8. Implications

The findings of this study emphasize the significance of pleasure reading in the academic lives of university students and highlight the need for targeted interventions to overcome the barriers they encounter. A considerable number of students report challenges such as heavy academic workloads and career pressure. Therefore, educational institutions should prioritize the promotion of reading as an essential aspect of student development. The recommendations proposed include creating dedicated reading spaces, promoting library resources, and integrating reading into daily routines. These measures aim to enhance students' engagement with pleasure reading. By fostering a supportive environment that values reading, universities can improve students' academic performance and cultivate lifelong reading habits that contribute to personal and professional growth. Moreover, further research is needed to explore the specific factors influencing reading habits among different demographic groups, ensuring that interventions are tailored to meet diverse needs. Overall, a concerted effort to promote pleasure reading can enrich the educational landscape, resulting in a more well-rounded and engaged student body.

9. Conclusion

This study emphasizes the main factors that influence university students' engagement in pleasure reading, including demographic aspects like discipline, gender, and year of study. It was found that Arts and Social Sciences students, mostly male, and those in their third year or graduates, are the most engaged demographics. The preference for short stories and e-books, as well as the significant role of friends, family, and online platforms in sourcing reading materials, indicate evolving trends in reading habits. Students perceive pleasure reading as important, acknowledging its benefits in enhancing vocabulary, cultural literacy, reading proficiency, and providing relaxation. However, obstacles such as academic workload and difficulty finding attractive materials hinder their engagement. Technology, especially digital formats and online reading communities, has had a positive impact on reading habits by enhancing accessibility and fostering a reading culture among students. Addressing the identified obstacles and

leveraging technological advancements can further promote pleasure reading among university students.

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