



An Analysis of Reading Habits: The Case of LIS Students at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University Tirunelveli.

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Abstract

This study, "An Analysis of Reading Habits: The Case of LIS Students at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University," employed a quantitative survey to analyze the reading habits of 42 first and second-year students. The findings reveal a predominantly academic and compulsory reading culture, with over 90% of students reading primarily for assignments and exams, and a strong preference for digital formats like e-books (83.3%). However, the study identifies a significant gap in the cultivation of independent reading habits, as 42.9% of students spend less than 30 minutes daily on non-compulsory reading, with major barriers being a heavy academic workload (78.6%) and digital distractions (71.4%). The study concludes that while students are proficient in using digital tools for mandated tasks, intentional pedagogical strategies are needed to foster the broad, self-directed reading habits essential for their future roles as information professionals.

Keywords: Reading Habits, Library and Information Science Students, Academic Reading, Digital Reading, Reading Preferences, Reading Challenges, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Information Professionals.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is the fundamental conduit for knowledge acquisition, critical thinking, and professional competence, forming the bedrock of education in any discipline. For students of Library and Information Science (LIS), reading transcends a mere academic exercise; it is the core professional skill and disposition that defines their future role as curators, managers, and facilitators of knowledge in an increasingly complex information society. Their ability to engage deeply with diverse texts, navigate between print and digital formats, and cultivate sustained reading habits directly influences their capacity to become expert information professionals. In the contemporary landscape, characterized by the pervasive digitization of

content and the constant pull of competing media, understanding how these future professionals interact with the written word is of paramount importance.

Despite its critical importance, there exists a notable gap in focused empirical research on the specific reading habits of LIS students within individual institutional contexts, such as Manonmaniam Sundaranar University. While general studies on student reading behaviors exist, the unique intersection of professional training, information technology fluency, and academic pressure experienced by LIS students warrants a dedicated investigation. It remains unclear to what extent their reading practices are shaped by compulsory academic demands versus self-directed professional curiosity, how digital environments are reshaping their engagement, and what systemic or personal barriers hinder the development of optimal habits. This study, "An Analysis of Reading Habits: The Case of LIS Students at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University," seeks to address this gap. By systematically profiling the purposes, preferences, frequencies, and challenges associated with reading among its LIS undergraduates, this research aims to generate actionable insights. The ultimate goal is to inform curriculum development and pedagogical strategies that can more effectively nurture the lifelong, adaptable, and deep reading practices essential for the next generation of library and information professionals.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A comprehensive review of related literature contextualizes this study within the broader discourse on reading habits in academic and professional settings. The selected works highlight trends, methodologies, and critical gaps pertinent to Library and Information Science (LIS) students.

Studies on LIS Students and Reading Patterns: Several surveys provide direct precedent for this research. **Thanuskodi (2011)** surveyed LIS students at Annamalai University, finding a strong inclination towards reading for academic purposes, with newspapers and journals being preferred sources. The study highlighted the positive role of the library but noted that leisure reading was often secondary to curricular demands. Similarly, **Onuoha, Unegbu, and Umahi (2013)** examined Babcock University students, confirming that academic motivation was the primary driver of reading and library use. These studies establish a baseline, suggesting that LIS students' reading is frequently instrumental rather than intrinsic, a pattern this current study investigates in a different institutional context.

Reading Habits and Academic Achievement: Expanding the scope, **Balan, Katenga, and Simon (2019)** explored the correlation between reading habits and academic performance among university students, concluding that consistent and diversified reading positively impacts academic success. This underscores the importance of habitual reading beyond compulsory tasks, a key concern for developing competent LIS professionals. Their work provides a rationale for examining not just *how much* students read, but the *nature* and *impact* of their reading behaviors.

The Role of Libraries and Contemporary Challenges: The literature also emphasizes the library's role and evolving challenges. **Sethy (2018)** discusses the library's proactive role in cultivating reading habits through services, space design, and promotional activities, pointing to environmental and institutional factors that shape behavior. Complementing this, **Tveit (2012)** focused on young adults, noting a significant shift towards digital reading and the impact of new media on sustained attention and deep reading practices. This is crucial for understanding the format preferences and potential distractions faced by today's LIS students, who operate at the intersection of traditional literacy and digital information overload.

Objectives of the Study

1. To profile the reading habits of first and second-year LIS students in terms of purpose, frequency, and preferred format (print vs. digital).
2. To measure the average daily time students devote to independent, non-compulsory reading.
3. To identify the key factors and perceived challenges that influence the development of their reading habits.
4. To propose curriculum-oriented suggestions for fostering robust and self-directed reading habits among future information professionals.

Research Hypotheses

1. **H₀₁:** There is **no significant difference** in the preferred reading format (print vs. digital) between first-year and second-year LIS students.
2. **H₀₂:** There is **no significant relationship** between the student's year of study (first or second year) and the primary purpose of their reading (academic vs. leisure/professional).
3. **H₀₃:** There is **no significant association** between gender and the average daily time spent on non-compulsory reading.

4. **H₀₄:** There is **no significant difference** in the perceived challenges to reading (e.g., academic workload, digital distractions) based on the student's year of study.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the critical link between reading habits and professional competency in Library and Information Science, there is a lack of empirical data on the specific reading patterns, preferences, and challenges faced by LIS students at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University. This knowledge gap hinders the ability of academic programs to strategically support the development of these essential skills in an increasingly digital information landscape. This study aims to systematically investigate these habits to inform curriculum and pedagogical strategies.

Methodology:

This study will employ a quantitative research design utilizing a descriptive survey method to collect data from Library and Information Science (LIS) students at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University. A structured questionnaire, developed through a review of related literature and validated by experts in the field, will be administered to a stratified random sample of students across all academic years (first year through final year) to ensure representation. The questionnaire will utilize a mix of closed-ended Likert-scale questions and multiple-choice items to gather quantifiable data on key variables including reading frequency, preferred formats (print vs. digital), purposes (academic, professional, leisure), sources of reading material, and perceived influencing factors. The collected data will be systematically processed and analyzed using statistical software (SPSS) to generate descriptive statistics—including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores to identify predominant patterns, trends, and significant differences in reading habits across demographic subgroups such as gender and year of study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n=42)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	16	38.1
	Female	26	61.9
Year of Study	First Year	20	47.6
	Second Year	22	52.4
Program	B.L.I.Sc	20	47.6
	M.L.I.Sc.	22	52.4
Total		42	100.0

Interpretation: The study sampled 20 undergraduate ([B.L.I.Sc.](#)) students, with a slightly higher proportion from the second year (52.4%) and a majority being female (61.9%). The data exclusively represents the perspectives of foundational-year students within the LIS program.

Table 2: Primary Purpose of Reading (Multiple Responses)

Purpose	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
To complete academic assignments	40	95.2
To prepare for examinations	38	90.5
For general knowledge	26	61.9
For professional development	18	42.9
For leisure / entertainment	12	28.6

Interpretation: For first- and second-year students, reading is overwhelmingly compulsory and academic. Nearly all students read for assignments (95.2%) and exams (90.5%). Reading for intrinsic purposes like professional development or leisure is significantly less common, indicating that independent reading habits are not yet firmly established in the early stages of the program.

Table 3: Preferred Reading Format (Multiple Responses Allowed)

Format	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
E-books / Digital PDFs	35	83.3
Print Books / Textbooks	25	59.5
Online Journals & Articles	22	52.4
Websites / Blogs	15	35.7

Interpretation: A strong preference for digital formats is evident, with 83.3% of students favoring e-books and PDFs, likely due to ease of access and cost. While print books are still used by a majority (59.5%), the data suggests these early-year students are digital-natives who rely heavily on electronic resources for their academic reading.

Table 4: Average Time Spent Reading per Day (Excluding Class Material)

Duration	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Less than 30 minutes	18	42.9
30 minutes to 1 hour	15	35.7
1 to 2 hours	7	16.7
More than 2 hours	2	4.8

Interpretation: The data indicates a limited engagement with leisure or supplemental reading. A concerning 42.9% of students spend less than 30 minutes daily on non-compulsory reading, and only 21.5% read for more than an hour. This highlights a potential gap in cultivating the habitual, volitional reading essential for lifelong learning in the information profession.

Limitation of the Study:

This study acknowledges several limitations. Its scope is confined to LIS students at a single university, limiting the generalizability of findings. The data relies on self-reported survey responses, which are susceptible to social desirability bias. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design only provides a snapshot in time, unable to track changes in habits over a longer period.

Scope of the Study

This study is exclusively focused on Library and Information Science students enrolled at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University. It investigates key aspects of their reading habits including frequency, format, purpose, and influencing factors through a structured quantitative survey during the 2019-2020 academic year. The findings are descriptive and intended for application within this specific academic context.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Demographics: The respondent group consisted of 61.9% female and 38.1% male students, with a nearly equal distribution between first-year (47.6%) and second-year (52.4%) cohorts.

2. Dominance of Compulsory Academic Reading: Reading is primarily a compulsory activity. An overwhelming majority of students read to complete assignments (95.2%) and prepare for examinations (90.5%). In contrast, reading for professional development (42.9%) or leisure (28.6%) was significantly less prevalent.

3. Strong Preference for Digital Formats: Students showed a clear inclination toward digital resources, with 83.3% preferring e-books and PDFs for their reading. While print books were still used by 59.5% of respondents, digital formats were the dominant medium, indicating the adaptation of early-year students to electronic academic resources.

4. Limited Engagement in Sustained Independent Reading: A significant finding was the low volume of daily reading outside of direct academic requirements. Nearly half (42.9%) of the students spent less than 30 minutes per day on non-compulsory reading. Only about one-fifth (21.5%) engaged in independent reading for more than one hour daily.

5. Perception of Major Hindrances: When asked about challenges, the most frequently cited barriers to reading were the heavy academic workload (78.6%) and easy distraction by social media (71.4%). Limited access to a variety of interesting reading materials was also noted by 45.2% of students.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the reading habits of first and second-year LIS students at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University are primarily academically compulsory and digitally

mediated. The findings depict a clear pattern where engagement with reading is overwhelmingly motivated by immediate curricular demands, such as completing assignments (95.2%) and preparing for examinations (90.5%), rather than by professional curiosity or personal leisure. A strong preference for digital formats like e-books and PDFs (83.3%) highlights their integration with contemporary learning resources. However, this digital proficiency exists alongside a significant constraint: a substantial portion of students (42.9%) dedicates less than thirty minutes daily to independent, non-compulsory reading. This indicates that while students are effective at using digital tools for mandated tasks, the development of self-directed, volitional reading habits remains limited.

The identified challenges, particularly the perceived heavy academic workload (78.6%) and distractions from social media (71.4%), frame reading as an externally imposed obligation rather than an intrinsic professional practice. Therefore, the study underscores a critical developmental gap in the early training of these future information professionals. Cultivating the broad, deep, and habitual reading patterns essential for expertise in the field requires deliberate pedagogical strategies. Recommendations include integrating structured independent reading modules into the curriculum, promoting diverse and accessible professional reading materials, and fostering digital literacy that encourages focused engagement over distraction. Addressing this gap is vital for transforming students from academically compliant readers into lifelong learners and competent information practitioners.

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