Social factors influencing students' reading habits

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Albert Einstein was once asked how we can make our children smarter. His answer was simple and wise. If you want your children to be smart, he said, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be even smarter, read more fairy tales to them. He understood the value of reading and imagination.

ABSTRACT

Aim. The study aims to analyze the social factors influencing the students' reading habits: The educational sphere, academic performance, the availability of free time, their parent's level of education and the number of children in the family.
Methods. Psychological and pedagogical literature was analyzed, and the main concepts of the study were revealed, a survey of students was conducted to determine social factors and the degree of their influence on reading habits.
Results and conclusion. The study found that reading habits are developed in childhood under the influence of significant adults, primarily parents and secondary teachers, and the education of parents play an important role. The study also found that reading habits and academic performance are closely related, and people who maintain consistent reading habits tend to achieve high levels of educational success. Additionally, crises have a significant impact on the changes in the number of books read and digital literacy, which considerably increased. However, most respondents stated that they depend on external factors. Therefore, there is a need to look for methods for developing the reading habits of modern students.
Cognitive value. The cognitive value of this research lies in its ability to shed light on how reading habits are formed and how they affect academic performance. This research contributes to understanding the social factors shaping reading habits. The findings are relevant to educators and parents, who can use them to develop strategies to promote reading habits.

Keywords: Reading, reading habits, types of reading, ways of reading, social factors, students.

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INTRODUCTION

It is well known that the habit of reading is a prerequisite for the academic achievement of students, both in schools and in universities. Reading not only enriches a person with knowledge and serves to transfer the experience of other people, but also ensures the process of development and socialization of the individual, and contributes to the intellectual, professional and spiritual growth of a person. Moreover, reading can help students develop critical thinking skills, improve their writing ability, and expand their worldview. In addition, reading can foster empathy and understanding of other cultures and experiences,

which is important in a diverse society. Quadri and Abomoge (2013) call reading the key to a rich experience that connects people far beyond distance and time, a socially significant skill that provides a better quality of life. Reading has undergone a significant transformation over the past 20 years and is no longer limited to obtaining information from printed sources. Electronic media have taken a leading position in the market for providing the intellectual, educational, and social needs of society. While social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are not typically associated with reading, they

have become important channels for sharing and discussing books and other reading materials. Many authors and publishers now use social media to promote their books, and readers can connect with each other to share recommendations and discuss their favorite books. On the other hand, there has been a shift in cultural norms around reading. With the rise of "digital natives" who have grown up with technology, reading habits have shifted towards shorter and more visually oriented content, such as articles and videos. This has led to concerns about the decline of long-form reading and the impact on literacy and critical thinking skills. In recent years, many researchers (Karim et al., 2006). Liu (2005) and Oktay and Darıyemez (2014) have focused on studying the influence of digital technologies on reading habits development, both positively and negatively. On the positive side, digital technologies have made reading more accessible and convenient. People can now access books and other reading materials from almost anywhere. This has made it easier for people to find time to read and has made reading more convenient for people who may not have had access to physical books or libraries in the past. In addition, digital technologies have made it easier for people to discover new books and authors, connect with other readers, and share recommendations and reviews. On the negative side, digital technologies have also led to changes in reading habits that have raised concerns about literacy and critical thinking skills. The rise of social media and other digital distractions has made it harder for people to focus on reading for long periods of time, which can be detrimental to comprehension and engagement with the text. Therefore, when conducting this study, we did not focus on the classification of information sources but concentrated on the factors that influence reading habit development.

Reading habit is usually considered dependent on the number of materials read, the frequency of reading, as well as the average time spent on reading (Wagner, 2002). Reading a variety of materials can also help develop a wider range of knowledge and understanding of different topics and perspectives. Consistency in reading can help make it a regular part of one's routine and increase the likelihood of maintaining the habit over time. Spending more time reading can also increase one's comprehension and engagement with the material. The reading habit is characterized by reading preferences, tastes and rituals (Chettri et al., 2013). The individual reading process reflects the internal and external needs, aspirations and tastes of the reader. People may have a particular affinity for a certain author's writing style or may have a strong emotional connection to a particular book. Understanding one's reading tastes can help individuals make more informed decisions about what to read and can help to foster a deeper understanding of the texts read. Libi (2006) categorizes reading by how often, how much, and what a person reads at a particular time. Reading can also be categorized based on other factors such as the purpose of reading, the level of comprehension or engagement with the material, and the format of the material being read (e.g. print, digital, audio).

Regular and systematic reading sharpens the intellect, refines the emotions, develops the imagination, elevates tastes, and opens up prospects for life, thereby preparing a person for effective participation in social, religious, cultural, and political life. Love for reading, awareness of perception of information, reader's taste, reading habit, psychology and culture of the reader are formed under the influence of society, family, and significant social trends. This occurs at different age stages: in childhood, adolescence, or adulthood, and under the influence of various social factors. It is these questions that this study is devoted to.

The study is based on the findings of a previous study conducted by Davidovitch, Yavich and Druckman (2016) that reviewed the changes in students' reading habits over time and Davidovitch and Yossel-Eisenbach (2018), which indicated factors that might shape students' learning habits. It was found that social environment (parents, teachers) has an effect on developing traditional learning habits.

AIM

The study aims at analyzing social factors and the degree of their influence on the students' reading habits development.

Research objectives

1. To analyze psychological and pedagogical literature on reading habit development.
2. To expand the basic concepts of the research: "reading", "reading methods", "types of reading" and "reading habit".
3. To conduct a survey to determine social factors and the degree of their influence on the students' reading habits development.
4. To analyze the obtained data.

Hypothesis: development of reading habits is influenced by the educational sphere, the student's specialty and academic performance, the availability of free time (working during studies), the level of parents' education and the number of children in the family, as well as family, parents, teachers, friends.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When studying reading, it is necessary to understand that, unlike the perception of such types of cultural

entertainment as television and video, reading is work: one must work hard to learn to read, and one must work hard to become a reader. Reading demands deep concentration and focus, it can be mentally exhausting and require significant effort. Ingarden (1982) suggested distinguishing between two ways of reading a literary work - ordinary, passive (receptive) reading and active reading. Pointing out that all reading is an activity consciously carried out by the reader, and not a simple experience or perception of something, he points out that the reader's efforts are often aimed only at understanding the general meaning of the sentences read. With such reading, the meaning is only perceived or experienced in a certain way, while, as with active reading, understanding occurs. It is difficult to identify the way of reading during the survey: the answer to a direct question involves complex self-reflection, which is hardly feasible in the case of a survey. Awareness and activity of reading can only be judged by indirect signs: the ability to analyze, summaries the information received, draw certain conclusions, apply the acquired knowledge in new conditions, interpret them, understand the subtext, and accept the philosophical or spiritual component of the literary work.

Biryukov (1999), according to the goals and motives, distinguishes several types of reading. Hedonistic reading is reading aimed at relaxation and entertainment. It relies on textual information that can involve a person in the described events and their dynamics, making a person empathize. The volitional component is almost not represented here, but the imagination is very weighty; memory works in an involuntary mode. Reading for the purpose of education and reading as one of the components (and conditions) of professional activity, is fundamentally different from hedonistic reading. These types of reading require a lot of willpower and are made up of a whole series of decision-making acts. Such reading has a forced or semi-coercive intrapersonal, and often external (semi) coercive character. Reading for the purpose of acquiring (or maintaining) a certain social status is also self-coercive. It is focused on the implementation of career goals, improving the social status, and the well-being of a person and his family. Reading is a creative process, which can be socially significant or subjective-personal. Reading is motivated by the necessity to study any area of interest, acquire knowledge of the world, understand philosophical issues, to solve practical problems.

In the course of socio-psychological research, it was found that a person who reads – "homo legens" - differs in intellectual development from a non-reading person. Sociological studies conducted in a number of countries show that readers, unlike non-readers, are more capable of thinking in abstract categories, grasping the whole and identifying contradictory interconnections of phenomena; more adequately assess the situation and quickly find the right solutions; they have a larger memory capacity and active creative imagination. A reading person speaks better, more accurately formulates thoughts and puts them on paper more freely; it is easier for them to make contacts and they are more pleasant in communication; they have a greater need for independence and inner freedom; they are more critical, independent in judgments and behavior. In this regard, it is appropriate to assert that the habit of reading is a necessary condition for the development of both a literate individual and a literate society as a whole. Research by Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2014) showed that students who often come from different social backgrounds and localities with different levels of academic performance differ in the nature and degree of reading habit development. Since reading and academic achievement are interrelated and dependent on each other, reading habits largely determine the academic achievement of students.

Reading habit is analyzed by a method of collecting information; respondents are asked to answer questions (for example, what books do you prefer, your favorite genre of fiction, how often and regularly do you read, do you feel an inner need in reading as a leisure activity, etc.). The concept of reading habits is more general than reading skills; it includes not only the ability to read but also the characteristics of reading activity in general - the structure of reading by type of materials, its regularity, duration, reading conditions, etc. (Talovov, 1993).

More specifically, reading habits are estimated as how much a person reads, how often they read, and when and what they read. In a study by Rosli et al. (2017), kinds of reading such as reading books, published articles and electronic materials were included, since reading is universal, browsing blogs, and the news on the Internet is also considered reading if it contains a written paragraph. Scientists have proven that the habit of reading makes it possible to determine the relationship between students' attitudes towards reading and how the environment can affect them, especially during their studies at a university.

METHODS

To find out the students' reading habits, it is important to understand what and who formed their attitude to reading, the environment and the reading materials that they prefer, so we conducted a survey, which included such questions as gender, age, marital status, the number of children in the family of the respondent's parents (together with the respondent), the level of parent's education, the educational field of the respondent, their educational institution, the year of study, the indicators of success in education, working during studies, people that influenced the student's reading habits development: parents, teachers at school or a specific teacher, university lecturer(s), friends and acquaintances.

RESULTS

The study involved 147 people, including 43 men (29%) and 104 women (71%). We combined age indicators into groups presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Age of surveyed students (N = 147).

Number of participants	Age			
	16-17	**18-19**	**20-21**	**22-26**
147 (100%)	54 (37%)	57 (39%)	26 (17%)	10 (7%)

Source. Own research

According to Table 1, the majority of respondents: 54 people (37%) and 57 people (39%) are between the ages of 16 and 19, while only 2 students (1.4%) are sixteen years old, and the main sample in these age groups was 17-18 years old - 93 respondents (63% of the total number). 16 respondents (11%) mentioned the age of 19 years. At the age of 20-21, the respondents are almost equally represented. In the group of 22-26 years old, there is 1 respondent aged 26, the rest are 22 and 24 years old, almost evenly. Correlating the indicators of age and gender, it can be argued that the main sample of respondents is represented by girls aged 17-18, which amounted to 73 people (50% of respondents).

Indicators of the marital status of the respondents are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Marital status of students (N = 147).

Number of participants	Marital status					
	Not married	**Married, no children**	**Married, there are children**	**Divorced, no children**	**Divorced there are children**	**Other**
147 (100%)	128 (87%)	2 (1.4%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	3 (2%)	12 (8.2%)

Source. Own research.

The vast majority of respondents (87%) are not married, the second statistically significant category was the respondents who chose the answer "other", which amounted to 8.2% (12 people). The rest of the answers are presented by 1 to 3 respondents. Only 4 students have children (2.8% of respondents).

The next question aimed to determine the number of children in the family of the respondent's parents (together with them). The answers are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Number of children in the family of the respondent parents (together with them) (N = 147).

Number of participants	Number of children in the family of the respondent parents (together with them)					
	1 child	**2 children**	**3 children**	**4 children**	**5 children**	**6 children**
147 (100%)	49 (33%)	69 (47%)	21 (14.6%)	6 (4%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)

Source. Own research

Almost half of the respondents grew up in a family with two children 69 respondents (47%), there are also many families with one child - 49 students (33%), and there are three children in the families of 21 respondents (14.6%) and a small part of the respondents grew up in families with 4 children (4%), 5 and 6 children - 1 respondent each (0.7%). Answers to questions about the level of education of the respondent's parents are presented in Figure 1.

According to Figure 1, one can trace the trend that, among men (fathers of the respondents), the majority graduated from a vocational school, or college, 69 (47%), while among women (mothers of the students), this percentage is much lower, it amounted to 36% (53 respondents). 2 fathers (1%) have incomplete secondary

education, mothers are not represented in this category. 8 fathers (5%) and 15 mothers (10%) have complete secondary education. 29 (20%) and 36 (25%) fathers, and 32 (22%) and 47 (32%) mothers have bachelor's and master's degrees. Only 3 fathers (2%) have a Ph.D. It can be concluded that among women, higher education prevails (54%), but there are no people with a scientific degree, while among men, 45% have higher education and 47% have vocational education, 6% have incomplete

and complete secondary education and 2% have a Ph.D. The data obtained show that the distribution of the education indicator of the respondents by gender is not significant and cannot serve as a criterion for determining the impact of students' reading habits development. At the same time, vocational and higher education (the vast majority of the sample) serve as a value factor in obtaining higher education by the respondent and, accordingly, in reading habit development.
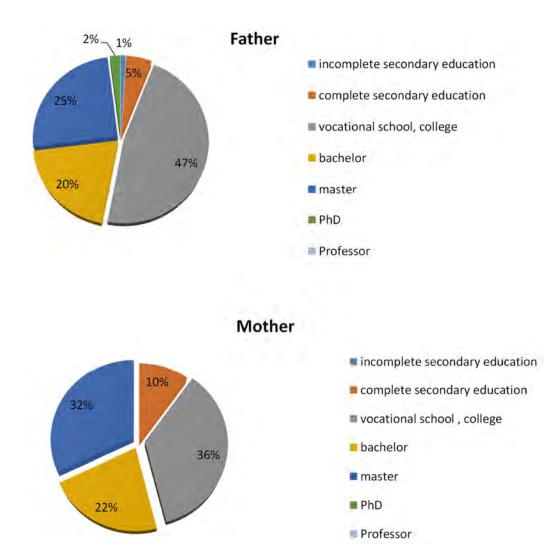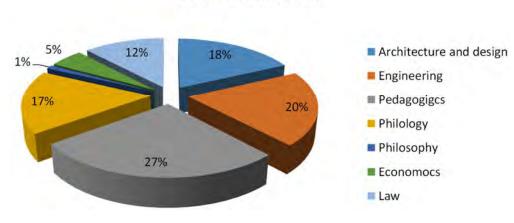

Figure 1. Level of education of the students' parents. Source. Own research.

The next question was aimed at determining the educational sphere of the respondents, respectively, the students of the following universities of Ukraine took part in the survey: Odessa State Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture, Odessa I.I. Mechnikov National University, Ushynsky University, V. I. Vernadsky Taurida National University, National University "Law Academy", National University "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy". The

distribution of respondents is shown in Figure 2.

Conducting the research, we tried to involve respondents from various educational fields in order to ensure the most complete sample of the study. Thus, the survey involved students of the Odessa State Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture, Engineering - 30 respondents (20%) and future architects and designers - 26 people (18%); students of the Ushynsky University and

I.I. Mechnikov Odessa National University study Pedagogics - 39 people (27%) and Philology - 25 students (17%). Also, the students of the I. I. Vernadsky Taurida National University, National University "Law Academy",

National University "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" took part in the survey, they study "Law" - 17 people (12%), "Economics" - 8 students (5%) and "Philosophy" - 2 students (1%).
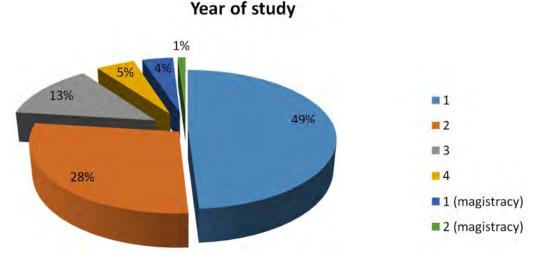
Field of education

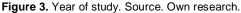**Figure 2.** Field of education of the respondents. Source. Own research.

The next stage of the study was the determination of the student's year of study and their educational success. The survey results are shown in Figures 3 and 4.
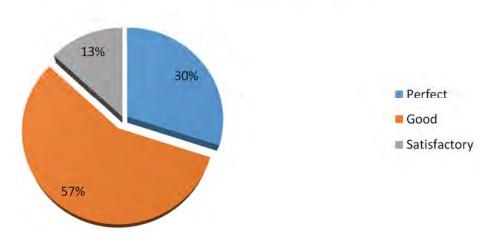
Almost half of the respondents were 1st-year - 72 people (49%), 2nd-year also made up a significant group - 28% of the respondents (40 people). The 3rd and 4th year respectively - 19 people (13%) and 8 people (5%). Only 8 master students (5%) took part in the survey.

Analyzing the students' answers, we can conclude that the vast majority of the average score is 89-75 (good) - 84

(57%); 44 (30%) of the respondents study for 90-100 points (excellent) - 44 (30%) and only for 13% (19 people) the average score was 74-60 (satisfactory).

The research hypothesis requires finding out to what extent working during studies influences reading habit development. The results of the survey on this criterion indicate that 90 respondents (61%) work, 78 (53%) work part-time and 12 (8%) work full-time. 57 people (39%) do not work. This means that the work factor is an obligatory one in the study of reading habit development.

Year of study

Figure 3. Year of study. Source. Own research.

The average score of the educational success

Figure 4. The average score of educational success. Source. Own research.

The main questions of our research were aimed at finding out who influenced reading habit development: parents, teachers at school or a particular teacher, university lecturer (s), friends and acquaintances. The data are presented in Table 4. As the data in Table 4 shows, parents have an important influence on reading habit development (the answer "to a large extent" was given by 38 people (26%) and "to a very large extent" by 19 students (13%)). Most respondents answered that all four categories of the social environment influenced reading habits development to a moderate degree, such answers were given on average by 25% of the respondents. The trend of the significance of influence is also monitored: 1st place - parents; 2nd place - friends and acquaintances; 3rd place - teachers (teacher) at school; 4th place - the least influence - was made by the university lecturers (lecturer). We assume that this is due to the fact that by the time of studying at a university, the reading habit has already been developed, since it indirectly indicates the general level of intellectual development and, to a certain extent, is a condition for admission and further successful education at a university.

Table 4. Determining the extent of influence of the social environment on reading habit development (N = 147).

Extent of influence	Parents	Teachers (teacher) at school	University lecturers	Friends and acquaintances
To a very little extent	20 (14%)	39 (27%)	47 (32%)	31 (21%)
To little extent	36 (24%)	34 (23%)	34 (23%)	38 (26%)
To some extent	34 (23%)	36 (24%)	36 (24%)	45 (30%)
To a large extent	38 (26%)	28 (19%)	25 (17%)	28 (19%)
To a very large extent	19 (13%)	10 (7%)	5 (4%)	5 (4%)

Source. Own research.

Another important issue in the context of our study was to find out how the respondents assess their own reading habits. The students answered the question: "Do you have a reading habit?"

To standardize the processing of responses, respondents were offered options:

Option A - a persistent reading habit (reading as internal motivation, the need to study any area of interest, cognition of the world in general or self-discovery, the need to read professional literature and fiction, reading at any opportunity).

Option B – non-persistent reading habit (reading as an external motivation, the need to read professional literature in order to get an education, as one of the components of successful studies, professional activity; reading fiction under external influence, reading on the advice of the social environment and in one's free time).

Option C - reading due to social necessity, lack of habit.

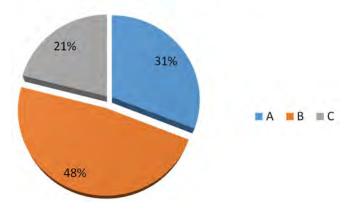The survey results are shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Reading habit development. Source. Own research.

The figure clearly shows that most respondents, 70 people (48%), chose option B. Respondents assessed their reading habit as unstable, dependent on external factors and influences (availability of free time, recommendation of a social environment, educational need, etc.). According to 46 respondents (31%), they have developed a persistent reading habit, which manifests itself in an internal desire for reading, not directly caused by external factors. Lack of reading habits was stated by 31 people (21%) of the respondents. These people read, sometimes daily, but the reading process is not due to internal motivation, mainly professional and educational literature, it is episodic in nature.

We studied to what extent the crisis (pandemics, war) influenced the number of books read, the digitalization of their studies and their academic success. The questions were:

- Have your usual Number of books read changed during the pandemic/war period?
- Has your academic success changed during the pandemic/war period?
- Has your digital literacy improved during the pandemic/war period?

The findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The influence of the crisis (pandemics, war) (N = 147).

Extent of influence	Number of books	Academic success	Digital literacy
To a very little extent	34 (23%)	51 (35%)	15 (10 %)
To little extent	33 (22%)	34 (23%)	38 (26%)
To some extent	8 (6%)	12 (8%)	18 (12 %)
To a large extent	24 (16%)	32 (22%)	62 (42%)
To a very large extent	48 (33%)	18 ((12%)	14 (10%)

Source. Own research.

As can be seen in Table 5, the number of books read significantly changed during the crisis; 72% of respondents affirmed that they had read more books. At the same time, almost complete digitalization of academic studies did not affect academic success seriously; only 34% of the students chose the option "to a large extent" or "to a very large extent". As to the growth of digital literacy, 52% of the respondents noted considerable changes.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summing up the results of the study, we came to the following conclusions: reading habit is developed in childhood under the influence of significant adults: first of all, parents, and secondary teachers, that's why the educational level of parents is so important (in our study, the majority had higher education). Parents form the child's social circle, which also plays a key role since peers have a significant influence on what a child or teenager reads. We also tracked the trend that university professors have the least influence on reading habit development since it is mainly formed during school years. The reading habit formed in childhood ensures successful learning and further professional development of the individual. The number of children in the respondent's family also affects the formation of the reading habit: students who grew up in families with one or two children read more, it can be assumed that in such families parents pay more attention to children than in families with many children.

The reading habit is also better developed among those respondents who do not have children and who do not work during their studies, this is due to the availability of free time that can be devoted to reading. We did not notice the influence of gender and age factors on the reading habits development in the surveyed group of students.

The field of education and the specialty of the student do not have a significant impact on the reading habits

development, for example, there were no significant differences among the interviewed future engineers and teachers. The exception is philology students, who, due to their chosen profession, almost all stated that they have a persistent reading habit (option A).

Reading habit and academic performance are closely related, we assume that there is also an inverse relationship: people with a stable reading habit have a high score of educational success, and not vice versa, i.e. a person who loves to read, and feels the need for it, is more successful in learning.

The crisis (pandemic, wartime) had a significant impact on the changes in the number of books read and digital literacy, which considerably increased.

It should be noted that most respondents, unfortunately, stated that they read not due to internal motivation but depend on external factors and influences. Their reading, according to the classification of Biryukov (1999), is self-coercive, and to a certain extent it also has an external (semi) coercive character, it is aimed at obtaining education and acquiring a certain social status. At the same time, all respondents noted that they read a lot, but this reading is limited to educational and professional literature. Only 31% of respondents said that their reading habit is based on an internal desire for reading, most of these respondents were future philologists. In our opinion, this is justified by the fact that the profession of a philologist was chosen by people with a developed need and habit of reading. In the future, we consider it necessary to look for methods for developing reading habits as the urgent need of modern students of non-philological specialties.

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