

NEWSPAPER READING HABITS OF UNIVERSITY GRADUATE STUDENTS IN BANGLADESH: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Through a questionnaire based survey, newspaper reading habits of the graduate students of Social Science faculty of University of Rajshahi in Bangladesh has been studied. The study demonstrates that majority of the graduate students read Bengali and English newspapers. Moreover, the research reveals that international section of the newspaper is the mostly preferred section. This paper also highlights that a majority portion of respondents prefer hall library to read printed newspaper while a large number of them prefer computer center of the university central library to read online newspapers. The study also highlights the barriers and attempts to provide the suggestions to overcome the hurdles of reading both printed and online newspapers.

KEYWORDS: Newspaper Reading Habit, Online Newspaper, Rajshahi University, Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

Newspapers according to Onwubiko [1] have been accorded a great deal of importance in the transmission of government policy, priority changes and even interest changes. Newspapers are noted as regular source of primary and up-to-date information. Like other habits, the habit of reading in an individual develops during the course of time [2]. Reading in all its variety is vital to being better informed, have a better understanding of us as well as others. It makes man to be a thoughtful and constructive contributor to a democratic and cohesive society [3]. Newspapers help to improve reading habits, gain knowledge and improve awareness. They can be part of good study habits for students in any area of specialization [4].

In Bangladesh, there are a good number of dailies in both Bengali and English. According to University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh [5], there are thirty four public and fifty four private universities in Bangladesh. The University of Rajshahi is the second largest public university in the country and the largest in the northern region of Bangladesh. After its foundation on July 6, 1953, the university has completed 57 years providing higher education and research. The university is located at the green premises of Motihar which is very close to the mighty river Padma and seven kilometers east from the Rajshahi City Center. More than 25000 students have been pursuing their Bachelor, Masters, Mphil, and PhD education under the 8 faculties which include 47 subjects [6].

Newspaper is the imperative media which play a vital role in disseminating and spreading information concerning the latest trends and happenings on the national and the international events. Newspapers not only update us; they even coach us and facilitate us, persuade us to figure our attitude on significant matters. This exploratory study investigated the

newspaper reading habits of university graduate students with special reference to the graduate students of faculty of social science in Rajshahi University, Bangladesh.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Quite a lot of research have been done on the newspaper reading habit of different categories of people in the world. But in Bangladesh, research on the status of newspaper reading habit of the university students is lacking, particularly with regard to that of the graduate students. Studies on newspaper reading habits carried out elsewhere are discussed here. Kumar, Singh & Siddiqui [4] found that majority students of Chaudhary Charan Singh University read Hindi newspapers and spent 1-2 hours every day and most of them individually subscribe to the newspapers and prefer the editorial, sports, and politics sections of the newspaper. Bankole & Babalola [7] studied the use of newspapers by students of Olabisi Onabanjo University in Nigeria. They observed that majority of the students prefer libraries as a place to read and their main aim was to obtain information on public affairs, politics/governments. Furthermore, when the respondents were asked to indicate the barriers they mentioned that the newspaper section was often overcrowded. Zerba [8] investigated on the young adults' reasons behind avoidances of daily print newspapers and their ideas for change where the researcher conducted the study with young adults (ages 18-29) to understand why they don't read daily print newspapers. The study examined news media avoidances, like "inconvenience" and "lack of time," to uncover underlying meanings. Participants also suggested ways newspapers could improve. Participants were studied as two age groups, 18- 24 and 25-29. Small group differences did emerge. The older group wanted less negative news, while the younger group justified it; the younger age group was more skeptical of the news and mentioned needing greater effort to understand it. Larkin & Grotta [9] did a study on Consumer Attitudes toward and Use of Advertising Content in a Small Daily Newspaper where they indicated that the advertising content of the newspaper in the study was viewed as local news by its subscribers and consequently has the highest readership of any type of content in this paper. While it was assumed that the advertising content of this newspaper would be well-read, the magnitude of readership and reader-interest in advertising was surprising. It was also found that rather than feeling there was too much advertising in the paper, the majority felt that it was either "just right" or that they wanted more advertising in the future. Fendrick [10] worked on newspaper reading interests of high school and college students and found that Illustrations and amusements appear to predominate among the reading interests of both high school and college students. High school girls do not appear to be particularly concerned with news covering politics and government. Labor, Industrial and Farm News are more likely to be disliked than liked by the girls in high school. A sex difference postulating the preference of girls for such topics as Book Reviews, Religion, Vital (births, marriages, etc.) News, Poetry, Scandal, and Society News was found. Speeches and Financial News topics were consistently disliked by high school and college students. Sivankutty & Sudhakaran [11] have investigated on the use of online newspapers among librarians in India and found that librarians are aware of online newspapers. These newspapers whether international, national, regional or local, can be accessed with just a click of the mouse; among them the librarians prefer the national digital dailies as their first choice. The survey shows that librarians are aware of the developments that happen around them and they circulate and archive the important news items appearing in the newspaper sites. The survey confirmed that the online edition of the Times of India is the preferred newspaper site. Flavián & Gurra [12] have done a research on users' motivations and attitude towards the online press which show the existence of significantly positive relationships between motivations "Knowledge of current news", "Search for specific information" and "Search for updated news", and the attitude of readers towards digital newspapers. However, the study finds evidences to support a positive effect of Habit on the attitude to digital dailies. Yamamoto [13] did a study on use of community newspaper to promote social cohesion where he observed that community newspaper reading is positively

associated with a sense of social cohesion. Above and beyond demographics and residential and community ties variables, community newspaper reading was related to a stronger sense of social cohesion characterized by the shared values of a community. He also observed that community newspaper reading has an enhanced effect on a sense of social cohesion among those who lived in a community for a longer period of time than among those who did not. The results of this study show that community newspapers foster a sense of social cohesion by promoting community values, interests and solidarity.

Newspaper reading, therefore, can infuse a sense of social responsibility among the readers while providing news, views and analyses on various issues important to the advancement of the society. By undertaking a survey-based empirical study focusing on the newspaper reading habits of students, this paper aims at providing important information and insights which, in turn, would help us strengthen and popularize reading habits among the larger-cross sections of people in the society.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To explore state of the newspaper reading habit of the graduate students of Rajshahi University in Bangladesh.

METHODOLOGY

The population of this study comprised of the graduate students belonging to the nine departments of the Social Science faculty of University of Rajshahi in Bangladesh which included Anthropology, Information Science and Library Management, Mass communication & Journalism, Social Work, Sociology, Economics, Political Science, Public Administration, and Folklore. In the year 2012, there were 578 students enrolled in the nine departments. Among them, 150 students (25.95%) were randomly chosen for administering the questionnaire.

Data Collection

Since the target population of this study is from university area and all of them are educated, a questionnaire method has been used. The questionnaires were personally distributed among the graduate students of the faculty of Social Science. A questionnaire and personal interviews were used for data collection from individual students about the newspaper reading habits.

Data were collected during January 01, 2013 to January 30, 2013. To assess a student's newspaper reading habit some specific issues were asked through questionnaire. Data, as the basis, was analyzed, using in the tabular, percentage and graphical representation.

ANALYSIS

Ninety percent respondents read newspaper regularly, while 10% indicated that they don't maintain regularity in reading newspapers.

Table 1: Number of Newspapers that the User Read Daily

S.N.	Number of Newspaper	Respondents	Percentage
1	1-3	85	56.67
2	4-6	55	36.67
3	More than 6	10	6.66
4.	Total	150	100

The result in table 1 reveals the information on the number of newspapers that the user read daily where the

majority number 85(56.67%) of the respondents read 1-3 newspapers while 55(36.67%) respondents read between 4 to 6. Moreover, 10(6.66%) read more than 6 newspapers daily.

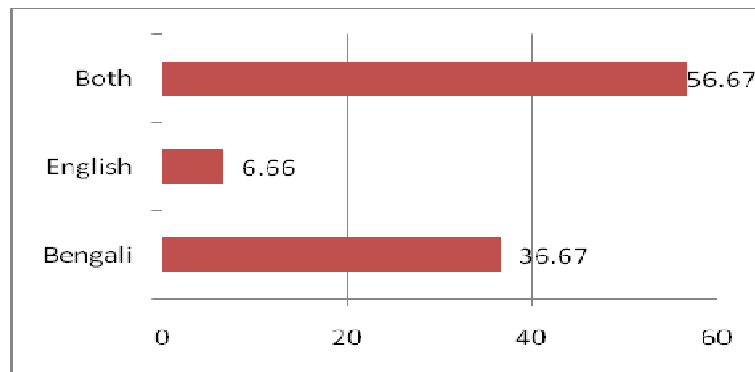


Figure 1: Preference of Language in Reading Newspaper

Figure 1 shows that 56.67% respondents read newspapers in both medium (Bengali and English), while 36.67% respondents read only Bengali newspapers. Among the respondents, 6.66% read English newspapers only.

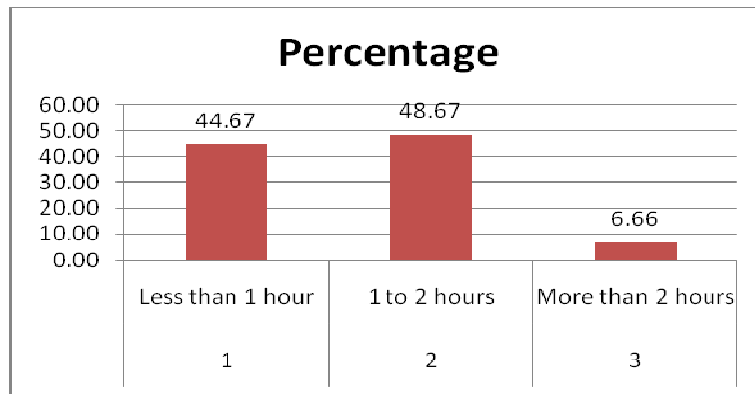


Figure 2: Time Spent on Reading Newspaper Daily

Reading the daily newspaper has come to be considered an essential activity in our cultural development, selective aspects of its approval or rejection by students at different academic levels might well be a matter of value to students of personality development (Fendrick, 1941). Figure 2 reveals that 48.67% respondents spent 1 – 2 hours per day reading newspaper followed by 44.67% that less than 1 hour and 6.66% more than 2 hour

Table 2: Purpose of Reading Newspaper

S.N	Purposes	Respondents	Percentage
1.	To get information	130	11.85
2.	To broaden the horizon of general knowledge	125	11.39
3.	For searching new jobs	120	10.94
4.	For educational purpose	122	11.12
5.	For entertainment	80	7.29
6.	To know the sports news	120	10.94
7.	As usual task of the day	70	6.38
8.	To pass the time	60	5.47
9.	It improves status in the society	10	0.91
10.	To keep abreast with the present happenings of all over the world	115	10.48
11.	For getting various scholarship news	40	3.65
12.	To improve the health consciousness	70	6.38
13.	Others	35	3.19
14.	Total	1097	100

Multiple Responses (N=1097)

Newspapers are a vital source of information in enlightened societies; providing the most recent information to readers. Newspapers serve various purposes for different categories of users (Bankole & Babalola, 2011). Students were asked about the various purposes of reading newspapers and they mentioned different reasons for reading newspapers. Table 2 expresses that majority 130 (11.85%) number of the respondents read newspaper to obtain information while the second largest 125 (11.39%) respondents read newspaper to broaden the horizon of general knowledge and 122 (11.12%) respondents read for educational purpose while 120 (10.94%) respondents read for the purpose of searching new jobs and to know the sports news respectively. The least number of respondents i.e. 10 (0.91%) for improving the status in the society.

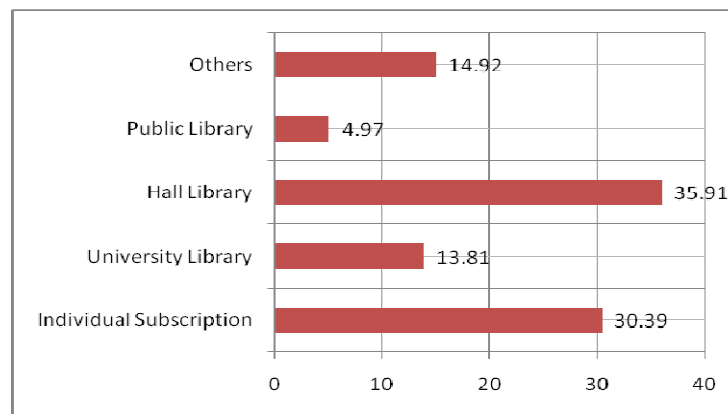


Figure 3: Sources of Getting Printed Newspaper

Figure 3 represents that hall libraries are the most common sources of paper based newspapers of students i.e. 35.91% students depend on hall Libraries while 30.39% students depend on individual subscription, and 13.81% students rely on university library. And the least number of students i.e. 4.97% students depend on public library and 14.92% students depend on other sources for getting newspapers.

Table 3: Section of Newspaper that the Users Usually Prefer

S.N.	Section of Newspaper	Respondents	Percentage
1.	Sensational News	80	7.98
2.	Advertisement	15	1.50
3.	Editorial page	121	12.06
4.	International	130	12.96
5.	Politics	127	12.66
6.	Sports	120	11.96
7.	Entertainment	70	6.98
8.	Business	65	6.48
9.	Education	115	11.47
10.	Agriculture	60	5.98
11.	Health	70	6.98
12.	Letters	30	2.99
13.	Total	1003	100

Multiple responses (N=1003)

The above table represents the information regarding the section of newspaper that the users usually wish to read in their day to day newspaper reading. Different people prefer to read different sections of newspapers. Table 3 shows that the highest number 130(12.96%) of students prefer international section for the purpose of gathering the day to day happenings of the different parts of the world followed by 127(12.66%) politics, editorial page 121(12.06%), sports news 120(11.96%), education 115(11.47%), 80(7.98%) sensational news, business section 65(6.48%), agriculture 60(5.98%) and

letters 30(2.99%). Moreover, entertainment section and health section is preferred by the 70(6.98%) respondents respectively. The lowest portion i.e. 15(1.50%) of the respondents prefer the advertisement section of newspaper.

Table 4: Name of the Newspaper that the Users Read Daily

S.N.	Newspaper	Respondents	Percentage
1.	The Daily Prothom Alo	87	21.53
2.	The Daily Jonokontha	12	2.97
3.	The Daily Shomokal	28	6.93
4.	The Daily Amar Desh	11	2.72
5.	The Daily Amader Shomoy	8	1.98
6.	The Daily Ittefaque	20	4.96
7.	The Daily Inkilab	3	0.74
8.	The Daily Jugantor	55	13.61
9.	The Daily Star	85	21.04
10.	The Independent	3	0.74
11.	New Age	6	1.49
12.	Bangladesh Observer	0	0.00
13.	The Daily Sun	12	2.97
14.	The Daily News Today	3	0.74
15.	The Daily Kaler Kontho	56	13.87
16.	Others	15	3.71
17	Total	404	100

Multiple responses (N=404)

Table 4 attempts to disclose the information on the name of the newspaper that the users read daily where the majority number of respondents 87 (21.53%) read the daily Protham Alo, while the second largest number 85 (21.04%) of students prefer the daily Star newspaper.

Moreover, the daily Kaler Kontho is being preferred by 56 (13.87%), 55(13.61%) respondents read the daily Jugantor, while 28(6.93%) respondents read the daily Shomokal, 20(4.96%) the daily Ittefaque. Moreover, the daily Sun and the daily Jonokontha is preferred by 2.97% respondents respectively while 3.71% respondents choose to read other newspapers.

Besides, the daily Amar Desh is read by 2.72% respondents. Furthermore, the daily Amader Shomoy, the daily Inkilab, the Independent, New Age, the daily News Today are preferred by below 2% respondents while no respondents read Bangladesh observer.

Table 5: Access to the Internet for Reading Online Newspaper

S.N	Access to the Internet	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	80	53.33
2	No	70	46.67
3	Total	150	100

The rapid growth of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has lead to the wide spread use of Internet in all the developmental activities of human life. Through the Internet people in the present world now access to the newspapers, magazines of both home and abroad. Table 5 demonstrates that majority number i.e. 53.33% of respondents access the Internet for reading online newspaper while 46.67% respondents do not access the Internet for that purpose.

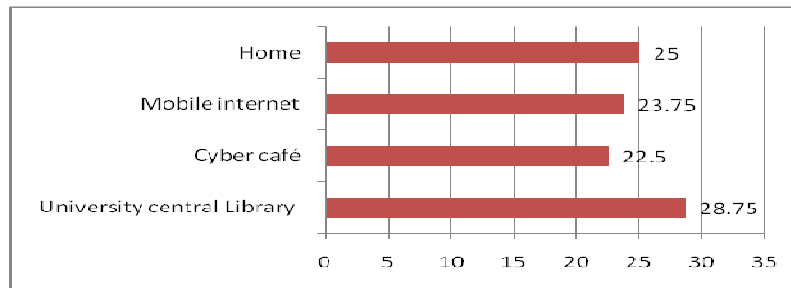


Figure 4: Place of Accessing Online Newspaper

Figure 4 shows that majority numbers i.e. 28.75% of respondents prefer the computer center of university central library as a place to use and access to online newspaper followed by home 25%, mobile Internet 23.75% and cybercafé 22.5%.

Table 6: Barriers of Newspaper Reading

S.N.	Barriers	Respondents	Percentage
1.	Limited space in newspaper section of university library/seminar/hall library.	64	10.17
2.	Newspapers are not available in time	45	7.15
3.	Limited time	40	6.36
4.	High price of newspaper	55	8.74
5.	Watching TV, gossiping etc	34	5.41
7.	Few copies of Newspaper	60	9.54
8.	Low speed of Internet	80	12.72
10.	Internet subscription rate is high	62	9.86
11.	Poor knowledge in ICTs	34	5.41
12.	Interruption of electricity	85	13.51
13.	Excessive heat or cold inside the library	55	8.74
14.	Indifferent attitude	15	2.38
15	Total	629	100

Multiple responses (N=629)

Table 6 shows that there are various reasons for what students face difficulties while reading newspapers. The major problems they face are - frequent interruption of power supply (13.51%), low speed of Internet (12.72%), limited space in the newspaper section in the University Library / seminar/hall library (10.17%), high cost of Internet subscription (9.86%), inadequate copies of newspapers in the library (9.54%), delayed arrival of newspapers in the library (7.15%) etc.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Newspapers not only provide current news, they also contain thought-provoking and informative article, features, editorial and sub-editorials, analyses and observations. In today's highly competitive world, newspapers could equip students with necessary information, knowledge and insights which will give them the much needed edge for being successful not only competitive examinations or job interviews, but also in their professional and social life. Newspaper reading also improves the communication skills and creative faculties and help the readers achieve a unbiased and informative worldview. Therefore, newspapers are considered essential for university students. This study reveals that, both Bengali and English newspapers are frequently read by the graduate students of Rajshahi University and they prefer international section to the national section for the purpose of keeping abreast of the day to day happenings in different parts of the world. The study also indicate that, in spite of their interest in newspaper reading, students are prevented from newspaper reading because of various socio-cultural, administrative and environmental problems. Concerned authorities of the university must take proper actions to make sure that students can read newspapers without facing any problem. The

number of newspapers being subscribed in central library as well as hall and departmental seminar libraries must be increased, the exorbitant price of Internet subscription must be lowered significantly and various socio-economic-environmental problems mentioned in this paper should be solved. There are some responsibilities on the part of the newspaper publishers and editors as well. News, views and analyses should be written in an unbiased way, morality and ethics should be upheld at any cost. A substantial number of educational and informative articles and features should be published in the newspapers on a regular basis so that students can be gain knowledge and understanding from these articles and features. Besides, an awareness raising campaign should be initiated among the students so that more and more students become interested in reading newspapers and can be successful not only in their study and research, but also in their personal and professional life.

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