READING INTEREST OF UNDERGRADUATES IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

A commonly accepted factor with regard to successful education is that the undergraduates ought to refer to their library books very often. But the reading interest differs from one another and hence differ their methodology in studying too. Reading interest of undergraduates is not decided upon merely a certain factor, but of many factors. Specially, it depends upon the subject stream which has been selected by each individual.

The sample of the research has been selected using stratified sampling method. The research was done, including the identified factors to specific questionnaire in order to tabulate the factors which affect the reading interest. The results were tabulated statistically so as to reach the conclusions.

According to the results of this research, the factors which affected the reading interest is obtained or not user education, time spent to use the library, usage of library catalogue, awareness of the library classification systems, time spent to read magazines, staff support and library inside environment.

Keywords: Reading interest, Reading habit, Library usage. Information seeking behaviour

INTRODUCTION:

It is compulsory to acquire the vast additional knowledge by undergraduates except their lectures. It is needed to refer books and magazines for this purpose. The development deployment of the technology, non-printed media like internet, data banks, and CDs etc. has become major sources to deliver the information except to printed media. An environment is built in the universities to widen the knowledge of academics who involved in the studies by referring print and non-print media and vast sum of money spend for this purpose annually.

It is necessary for all the undergraduates do with the dedication of interest of reading and use of libraries. It should be expected from undergraduates. But it happens differently on a person's desire of one and another. It should be accepted that their desires will be varied due to their needs of information and fluency of languages. The interest of reading is different from one and another and it is more or less to be seen. There must be various factors that affect for this. But main factors which effects on the interest of reading are their family background, economy, education level, School education, language medium followed and subject stream.

There are some effect on the interest of reading in undergraduates even who have interest of reading and love for books because of the environment and the facilities in their residences, boarding places, distance between the library and their living places. This is why the more attention should be needed to use strategies to provoke them to read and make them aware and arranging the internal resources of the libraries. It timely needs to find out whether there factors affect more or less on interest of reading among the undergraduates and any other main reasons are involved in it.

The undergraduates who enter the university should be trained to self-study. By this, they may become armed with their subjects and also creative people. The lecturers should guide them somewhat in their higher studies. The undergraduates should develop their rapid learning process through the guidance of the lecturers. The knowledge and information update frequently with the result of research and experiments done in the world day by day. So the knowledge should not be limited to one's own notes or lectures.

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Reading interest refers to the settle tendency or practice of people to voluntarily seek reading material and devote time to reading. (Devarajan, 1995). Desire for reading is defending on personal attitudes and it is an essential thing of human life style. It is clearly to be seen that the desire for reading may different from person to person according to with their attitudes, intelligence, social status and age. This is same as the among undergraduates. Their language capability, necessity for course and full-pledged library facilities assist to vary reading interest. Since the reading is essential for undergraduates for their researches and studies, it should be in a higher level. But if it is in a low level, there are may be reasons. So depth study is necessary to find out whether reading interest of undergraduates is in a low or higher level and what reasons and factors affected for it.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To identify the reasons and factors influence in interest and desire of reading of undergraduates
2. To find out whether the undergraduates use library only to read their notes
3. To whether the user education programme influences their reading interest.
4. To identify whether the undergraduates are satisfied with reference tools in the library.
5. To looking into whether the undergraduates are satisfied with the support and assistance given by the library staff.

METHODOLOGY:

Needed sample was selected by using stratified sampling system because it is difficult to take all the undergraduates for this research. Although there are (16) sixteen universities in Sri Lanka, only three universities were selected to cover all subject streams and they were done as follows;

Table 1

University of Colombo	Arts, Science, Medicine, Management and Law.
University of Moratuwa	Engineering
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka	Agriculture

When the sample was selected, it was limited to two hundred fifty (250) for the convenience of this study. When allocating this selected sample according to the faculties using stratified system, some faculties got the highest number and others got lowest. First of all, Undergraduates were selected to represent each faculty from selected university for the convenience of the study. The selected sample was divided according to each faculty and as well as year of the study. The selection method is described in the following table.

Table 2

Faculty	Population	Selection criteria	Sample	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
Arts	1925	1925/9152x250	53	14	13	13	13
Science	1716	1716/9152x250	47	12	12	12	11
Medicine	1349	1349/9152x250	36	9	9	9	9
Commerce & Management	1174	1174/9152x250	32	8	8	8	8
Agriculture	157	157/9152	05	2	1	1	1
Law	797	797/9152x250	22	6	6	5	5
Engineering	2034	2034/9152x250	55	14	14	14	13
Population	**9152**	**Sample**	**N=250**	**65**	**63**	**62**	**60**

DATA COLLECTION:

Questionnaire system was used as the tool of obtaining data and it was distributed among the few students as a pilot study and again it was prepared as closed ended questionnaire. Although researcher prepared the closed ended questionnaire, an open-ended question to elicit to get any additional comments from the respondents about the programme. Additional comments are vital mainly various aspects for the researcher.

LIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH:

At present, there are 16 universities in Sri Lanka. Some of them are well established where as the recently started universities are still in process of proper establishment. When considering the degree programmes of all these universities some have equal programmes while the others differ from each other. A research was designed to measure the reading interest of the undergraduates of Sri Lankan universities. Since it was unable to select all the universities for this research, only major three universities were selected.

The research was designed to represent undergraduates those who study in all subject stream. University of Colombo, University of Moratuwa and University of Sabaragamuwa had been selected with a view to representing all the subject streams. Well-established library facilities of those universities were one of the major reasons for this selection.

The research has been limited only to the undergraduates. Postgraduate students, other certificates course students and external undergraduates were not taken into consideration. Mainly it was targeted only to the internal full-time undergraduates.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Required results were obtained by Chi-Squire and Stepwise Regression by using Minitab computerized numerical Scientific method to analyse the received data.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

In 1994, Karin De Jager made a research familiar to reading interest. Her title was "A study of the use of books on open shelves at a university library". It was done base on the main library of Cape Town University. This study has shown that older books in a library primarily used for studying purpose by undergraduates. (Choudhury,1993) explored the facts about reading habit of undergraduates. Results of a questionnaire survey of the reading habit and interest of 200 undergraduates in Rourkela College, India. The objectives were to: find out the reading interest of the students; asses the relative priority of those library in promoting and improving reading habit by providing proper facilities; reveal how far the college library helps in the effecting use of the library and suggest appropriate measures for the promotion of good reading habit.

Devarajan (1995) has done the research on reading interest in the university level. His major objectives of the study were to ascertain the level of adequacy of library resources and services available in Kerala university library and Calicut University of Science and Technology based on users point of view. The reading spaces of in the various sections in Kerala university library, inadequate in periodical section and partially adequate in the reference section. The user community in the university libraries in the Kerala is not adequately aware of the existing services are not suitably organized for fulfilling the actual requirement of users. This is due to lack of proper user education and user studies.

There are probably additional factors such as library instructions and special programme and that may influence library use. And also opening hours and quality of the collection may affect the reading interest.(Shoham, 1991). The number of socio-economic factors influence reading interest of students.(Devarajan, 1994). He further pointed out in his research that three major factors affected the reading interest;

- Relation between the socio- economic background and the reading interest of the students.
- Variation in the nature of reading interests among students hailing schools situated in urban, semi urban and rural areas.
- The degree of the variance between socio-economic variables and reading materials.

Lundblad (1999) did the research on reading habits of secondary school students and this study was made with the questionnaire including 88 students. This study revealed that although female students are more interested in reading, male students read more frequently. The book versus electronic publishing was based a preliminary summary of a survey of reading interest among scholars and researchers done by Friedman (1996). This study examined how online information sources effect book consumption. Some hypotheses suggest that the fixed time available for reading will be spent increasingly online sources and hence fewer books will be bought.

Senior level students reading and library habits was done by Anderson (1999). His study was based on how 13-16 year old senior level students use the library in their spare time and what their reading interest was. In particular, the differences between students in different grades were examined. The results were compared with the results from previous studies, in order to establish if there have any changes. The results showed that use of library by these students had changed to some extent. Most teenagers still go to the library in order to borrow books. There are no major differences in reading and library interests of students in the different grades. The most distinctive difference in those younger students was more positive towards reading and they read more books in their spare time. The older students visit the library more often and utilized the library resources.

READING INTEREST IN SRI LANKA:

There were a few research was found in Sri Lanka regarding reading interests. Silva(1978) has done the research on Reading habit of teacher trainee students in Sinhala medium training colleges. It was presented University of Jayawardanepura, Sri Lanka. Among his findings the following conclusions were significant;

- According the reading of those trainees 65% of the total had spent five or six hours per day on reading and they were all from central colleges or urban high school. Others have spent less than three hours per day on reading.
- Out of married students those who were in colleges hostels spent greater number of hours for reading than who live with their family.
- Extensive reading outside of the field of their study done only by 16.22%. It seemed that they did not bare amount of reading that is just enough to pass their exams, but had not developed a reading as a discipline at all.

The readership survey in Sri Lanka was commissioned by the Documentation Unit of the Department of Cultural Affairs and executed by the Department of Sociology, University of Colombo. The main objectives of the survey were to obtain data on the needs and taste of the reading public, the manner and the extent of the utilization of a variety of reading material by different groups of people and to present the findings in a manner that could be used by educationist and policy planners for promoting reading interests as a means of disseminating knowledge among people.

1. No time to read
2. Watch television
3. Not so enthusiastic to read
4. No facility to read
5. Illiterate
6. Sports activity

According to the findings the majority of the respondent 63.7% said that their reading habit was reduced during the recent past. Only 36.3% submitted that their reading interest was not reduced.
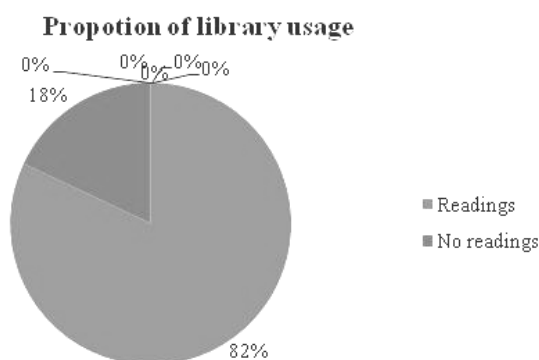
Result and Discussion

Figure 1

Figure 1 depicts the distribution of reading; a factor largely depends on the reading interest among the undergraduates. Depending upon the selected sample, it is observed that 82% use the library for reading purposes whereas the other 18% do not use the library for that purpose.

Distribution of attitudes on classification system among undergraduates
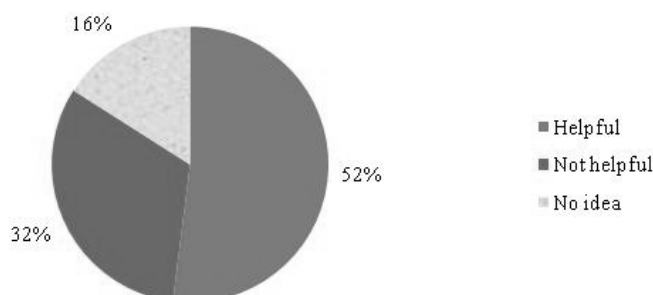

Figure 2

Figure 2 shows the attitudes of the undergraduates regarding the library book classification system. According to this 52% of the students have expressed that the classification system helps their reading interest. About 32% have presented their idea saying that the classification system does not help them for their reading interests whilst the other 16% had no idea about the above system. It is necessary that every undergraduate should have a good knowledge about arrangement of books. If so they can reach to the correct place where the books are kept and can identify it correctly.
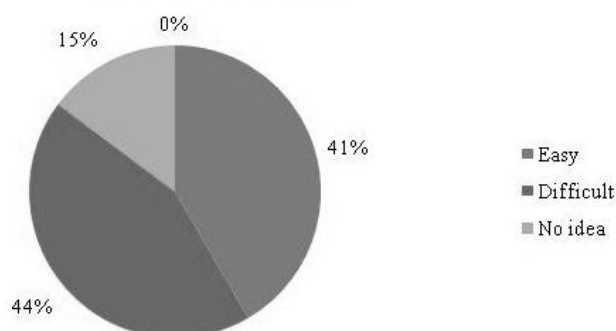
Usage of library catalogue

Figure 3

Library catalogue is a tool that included physical description of the library books. By using this, reader can easily reach to the library books and get details about name of books, author etc. 41.6% of undergraduates told that it is easy to use such a tool to disclose whereabouts of relevant library materials. But 43.6% told that is a difficult thing and 14.8% told that they have not clear understanding about this.

When explore about the library book collection of university libraries, they are accessioned according to the user requirements. So many books are placed in various locations inside the libraries and it is developed annually, it is called that library is growing place. So that large collection is necessary to have a formal mechanism and knowledge of which it is. It may assistance to the concept of "a book for every reader".

There are library catalogue can be seen that prepared according to the world recognized standards. This can be mentioned as easy tool to reach mainly for the books and also prepared as an index included with the physical descriptions of the book for the convenience of the readers. The reader who is aware with this can refer the library resources by saving the time. This awareness will be helpful to use of books into goo level. Catalogue is a scientific and technological systems to select the books and also helpful to raise the reading interest. (Otike, 1999.)

User education programmes are designed by all the universities for the first year undergraduates make awareness of library use. It is prepared with purpose of rising up library usage and all the new comers should participate of the awareness programme. But this research was revealed that the only 72% undergraduates participated it and rest did not take part. To make an investigation about the importance of this programme 42% expressed that it was important them. 45% and 13% undergraduates said respectively that it was no importance and was complicated them. The use of libraries in a good tendency among those who attended the user education programme than those who failed to attend this programme, and it affects to the reading interest. It

makes good rapport in between the reader and library resources by the awareness about library and the picture drawn in the mind same thing. (Shoham, 1991).

Currently, some obstacles are occurred when implementing this programme, specially the main impact involved in it is language barriers and time duration allocated for the programme. It can be reinstate as a main factor of raising desire of reading by giving awareness about library user education in the second, third and fourth year respectively without limiting it only for the first year. (Rathnayake, 2004).

It is look into that which materials was preferred by undergraduates read mostly in the libraries. According to that most of students means 43.6% used the library to read their notes given by the lecturers, and 38.2% and 18.2% undergraduates used the library to read the books and periodicals respectively.
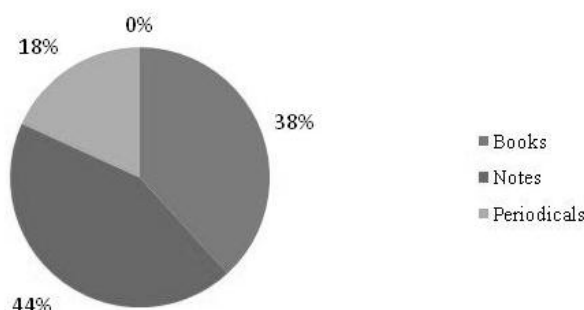

Figure 4

As shown in this research, the students who preferred to read the lecture notes and spent 8-14 hours per week was 43.2%. The student who spent 0-7 hours were 31.6 and the group of 25.2% spent 15-21 hours. Those who have intention of only to read periodicals spent 0-4 hours in the library and it was to be seen that very low number of the students. It was as low as 12%. From the undergraduates, 50.4% in percentage who used only to read the library books spent 9-6 hours per week in the library. The percentage of 46.4% and 3.2% spent 0-8 hours and 17-24 hours per week respectively. Major fall down can be seen in the number of students who spent more hours to read the books.

It was clearly shown by the analysis that the majority of students (44%) used the library to read the lecture notes. From the rest of the students 38% used the library to read books and 18% used the library to read the periodicals.
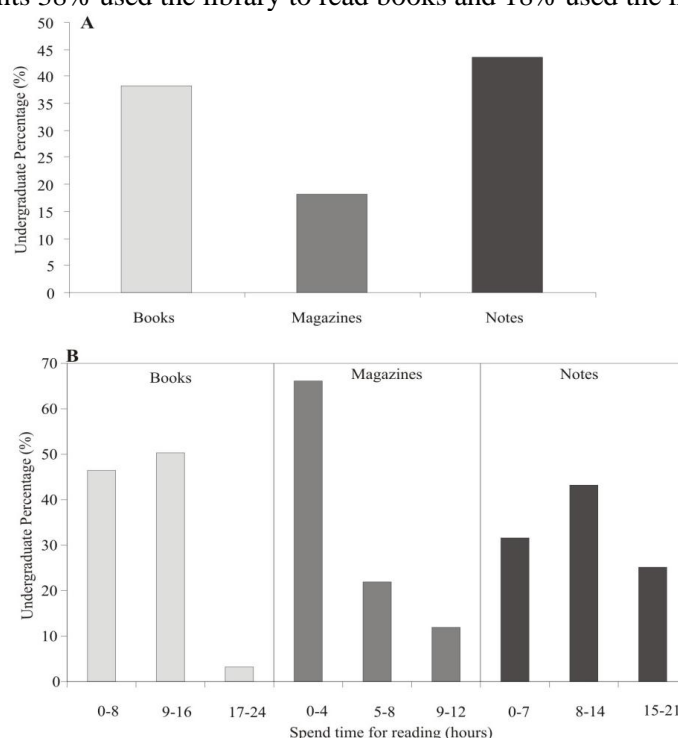
The main features are clearly shown in the above graph that undergraduates are trying to pass the degree examination by reading lecture notes and they do not need to read the books. And also what they believe above is confirmed as it is. In addition to that the time period is in a highest level that they spent per week for only to read the lecture notes.

Figure 5

It is essential to grasp extra knowledge by reading more books and periodicals. And it should be not to expect the low tendency for that as same. Evan though the undergraduates who use the library to read the books and the periodicals also spent less time and low tendency can be seen in the time period per week. It is clear from the above graphs and by that it can be comparatively study about the time periods spent by undergraduates.

There is no any research done in the Sri Lanka about the reading interest of undergraduates, but only one research has done about the reading habit of students of teacher training colleges. (Silva, 1978). It is mentioned that they spent 5-6 hours per day for reading. So according to that their desire of reading is in higher level than the undergraduates.

There will be an effect on reader to read reference materials by the environment of the library. The fascinating, attractive and pleasant environment in the library can have a good impact on reader to stay there every time. When asking about the ventilation in the libraries, 63% of students told that they could not satisfy themselves. So the attention should be focused on building of libraries to be applied recognized standard when they are designed inside and outside.

When undergraduates use the libraries sometimes they need the help from staff of the library. The reader enter to the library, it will be novice place to the reader. So staff should help the students to find out the information what they prefer. But the readers' attitudes are not satisfactory level about the support from the staff. And it is confirmed by below graph clearly.

Figure 6

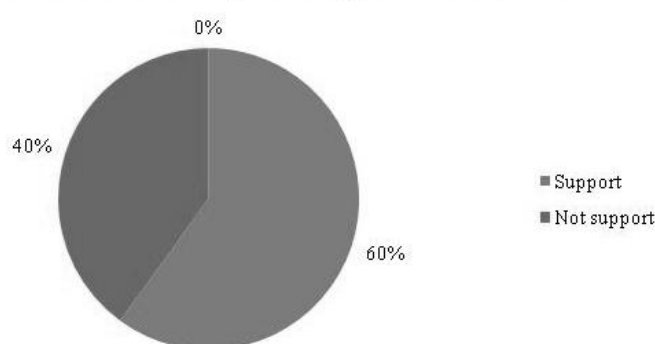## ADVANCED ANALYSIS OF DATA:

A main objective of this analysis is to identify the factors influencing for the reading interests of undergraduates. In order to select most suitable variables, Stepwise Regression was done using the MINITAB Statistical Package.

Table 3

F-to-Enter: 4.00   F-to-Remove: 4.00
Response is Library on 33 predictors, with N= 250

Step	1	2	3	4	5	6
Constant	0.6978	0.8709	0.6809	0.8522	0.8208	0.7432
Attitude on classification	0.267	0.659	0.573	0.556	0.501	0502
T- value	12.62	19.56	15.85	15.95	12.86	13.05
Opinions on classification		-0.534	-0.467	-0.426	-0.388	-0.384
T-Value		-13.27	-11.54	-10.72	-9.43	-9.44
Staff support			0.167	0.153	0.146	0.148
T-value			5.17	4.94	4.74	4.87
User education				-0.148	-0.191	-0.190
T-value				-4.80	-5.67	-5.72
Importance of user education					0.083	0.091
T-value					2.93	3.24
Spend hours for library usage						0.060
T-value						2.75
S	0.298	0.228	0.217	0.208	0.205	0.202
R-Sq	39.12	64.47	67.95	70.71	71.10	72.56

According to the output of the Stepwise Regression, it can be seen that only six variables are mostly affected to

the reading interest of undergraduates. This model was automatically given by the MINITAB Statistical package by choosing the smallest standard error and the highest R^2 value. According to the final model, standard error is 0.202 and R^2 value is 72.56%. So the final model selected contains six(6) variables, which are attitudes on classification, opinions on classification, library staff support, user education, importance of user education and spend hours for library usage.

CONCLUSION:

The classification of library books is very much helpful for them to find the relevant books. So it gives a positive point to the reading interest. Majority of the undergraduates think the system of classification of library books help them very much and others do not know about this factor. Nearly 18% of students out of the selected sample spent much time on reading magazines in order to gain the latest information and knowledge. It has again been proved that it is a sub-stratum of the study-oriented group of students in the university. Furthermore the majority of students (82%) spent hardly time for reading magazines.

The help of library staff toward the undergraduates is considered as a major intensive factor for library staff possess a thorough knowledge of the library system to help the undergraduates to develop their reading interest. It is compulsory to do a research on the user education methodology. It can be ratified doing a study whether to find out a relationship in between such methodology and reading interest.

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