

# Reading Habits Among sample of Hawler Medical College Students in Erbil

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## Abstract

**Background and objectives:** Acquiring knowledge through reading is crucial for learning process to improve the teaching methods. Aim of study is to know level of reading habits, how to access books and causes of decline in reading in addition to subjects of interest for reading. **Methods:** Descriptive cross-sectional study was carried among a random sample of Hawler College of medicine in Erbil City from 22nd of January to 25th of February 2015, including 200 students from third and fourth stage using a self-administered questionnaires. Data entered to OpenEpi version 2.3 and chi-square was used to test significant association at  $p \leq 0.05$ . **Results:** Among those 200, 106 (53%) were males, 177(91%) with medium socioeconomic state. One hundred fifteen students read in their spare time, 43% read more than 1hour/day, 43% read in Kurdish language, 42% prefer print books to be read at home, 37% get information of reading materials from book store, 67students (50%) would like to read medical books followed by religious books 56(49%) with gender difference which is highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). Half of total participants (50%) said that there is decline in reading habits and the major cause was lack of interest of reading followed by television. The main inspiration for reading was self-interest followed by parent's encouragement. **Conclusions:** It is important to create an atmosphere comfortable to reading at home, educational institutions and libraries. Again, faculty staffs should engage students in several assignments and presentations and these should form a greater part of the assessment process of students.

**Keywords:** Reading habit, Academic performance, Medical student, Electronic media, Reading interest.

## Introduction

Reading has been the passion of the greatest personalities of all times. Humans have been reading since ages and thus words of knowledge have been passed on through generations. The reading habit influences in the promotion of one's personal development in particular and social progress in general. Regular and systematic reading sharpens the intellect, refines the emotions, elevates tastes and provides perspectives for one's living, and thereby prepares a person for an effective participation in the social life. Reading fires the imagination of the person. It adds new sight to eyes and new wisdom to mind. Reading loads the mind with new software<sup>1</sup>; reading is considered as cornerstones for success, not just in schools, but also throughout the adult life of an individual. Reading is regarded as a process, a mode of thinking, a kind of real experience and involves many complex skills. As the internet has increasingly become an important source of

requiring information, medical students rely on internet resources<sup>2</sup>. The electronic media is challenging the reading habit in the society by shifting the attention to computer and television viewing<sup>3</sup>. Reading habit is an essential life skill. It not only increase our knowledge, but it also builds maturity and character, sharpens our thinking, and widens our awareness in social, economic, political and environmental issues. Acquiring knowledge through reading is crucial for learning process of medical students. In clinical practice, it is important as it relates to clinical competencies<sup>4</sup>. Medical students encounter a huge volume of different subjects with which they are not familiar and on the other hand remembering the various facts and new diagnostic and therapeutic methods seem difficult. Thus, learning all facts needs enough time and regular curriculum planning<sup>4</sup>. The most marked problems facing medical students are time management, concentration, reading

speed, notes taking, study habits and provide an insight into their information background and helps develop educational plans that meet their learning needs. Reading habits can be instilled during the school days of students. For this reason, classroom teachers have a great responsibility for instilling reading habits in students. It is expected from teacher, as individual with basic reading habits, to set a good example for their students and to improve professional knowledge through reading 5. This study was conducted as an attempt to understand reading habits of Hawler medical students in Erbil/Kurdistan Region to know what to choose to read, reading language, and amount of time that students spent on reading per day, favorite location for reading and for which purpose the students are reading.

### Subjects and methods

The study design was Cross-sectional study carried out in Erbil city. The study is done on students of Hawler College of medicine during the period 22<sup>nd</sup> of January to 25<sup>th</sup> of February, 2015. The study enrolled 200 students of third and fourth stage selected randomly. During the period of study we asked the students to fill a self-administered questionnaire designed to assess student habit for reading including socio-demographic characteristic (gender, residency, socio-economic status according to monthly income of father and mother) in addition to what type of reading materials do they read and how frequent do they read in a day and what are factors that attract them to a book, what motivates them to read and how they get information about the books. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents and a verbal consent was obtained. The study preserved the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. Data collected entered to Microsoft excel sheet. Graphs were used to describe data Frequency and percentage. OpenEpi version 2.3 was used to describe any statistical significant of gender with subjects of interest for reading using chi square test or fisher exact test as appropriate with P value of  $\leq 0.05$  as statistically significant.

### Results

Table 1 shows that one hundred fifteen of medical students(57.5%) read in their spare time with gender difference as female read more than male and the difference is statistically significant ( $p=0.001$ ). Among those who read 49 (43%) spend more than 1 hour in reading, 40 (35%) spend 30 – 60 minutes, while 22 (19%) spend 15 – 30 minutes which is statistically not significant ( $p=0.08$ ). About reading language mostly preferred by the students, first was Kurdish 50 (43%), followed by English 34 (30%), third was Arabic 17(15%) which is statistically significant between male and female ( $p=0.004$ ). The study showed that 48 (42%) of the readers prefers print books, 26 (23%) e-books, 16 (14%) websites with statistical significant difference ( $p=0.014$ ). About half of students 53(46%) liked to read at home, 47(41%) liked to read at library with gender difference which is statistically significant ( $p=0.007$ ). Forty three (37%) get information about reading materials from bookstores, 27(23%) from friends, 20(17%) from library with no gender statistical difference ( $p=0.09$ ).

**Table (1):** Distribution of readers according to time spend, Language preferred, Choosing materials, favorite location and information for reading materials

Variable	Male	Female	Total	P value
How much time				
- More than 1 hours	19	30	49(43%)	0.086
- 30-60 minute	18	22	40(35%)	
- 15-30 minute	15	7	22(19%)	
- < 15 minute	3	1	4(3%)	
Language preferred				
- Kurdish	30	20	50(43%)	0.004
- English	13	21	34(30%)	
- Arabic	14	3	17(15%)	
- Others	4	10	14(12%)	
What you choose to read				
- Print book	15	33	48(42%)	0.014
- E-book	16	10	26(23%)	
- Website	10	6	16(14%)	
- Magazine	9	4	13(11%)	
- Newspaper	8	4	12(10%)	
Favorite location for reading				
- Home	18	35	53(46%)	0.007
- Library	27	20	47(41%)	
- Park	8	2	10(9%)	
- Other places	4	1	5(4%)	
Information about reading materials				
- Book store	20	23	43(37%)	0.09
- Friends	10	17	27(23%)	
- Library	5	15	20(17%)	
- Family	4	14	18(16%)	
- Newspaper	5	2	7(6%)	

Table 2 shows that when we asked readers how they prefer to get their books, we found that majority of them buy books 57(50%), 24(21%) borrow books from friends or family members with gender statistically different (p=0.048). About the reason for decline in reading habit, 57(50%) said that it is because of lack interest in reading, 16(14%) think that it is because of TV, 22(19%) due to easy availability of e-books with gender statistical difference (p=0.004). About inspiration or encouragement of reading, 43(39%) reports self-efforts and interest in reading, 35(30%) were encouraged by parents to read, 16(14%) by teachers, 10(9%) by friends with gender difference not statistically different (p=0.8). Majority of students 67 (58%) would like to read medical books,56(49%) read religious book, 35(30%) read both politics and science, 32(29%) read history book, 25(22%) read romance, 19(17%) read stories while the least read is literature 16(14%) and art13(11%).Males interested more in reading medical, religious, and politics (37, 33, 25), respectively, while females prefers to read more Romance, history, and stories (19,18,13) respectively, which is statistically highly significant (p=0.0004)

**Table (2):** Distribution of readers according to access to reading materials, causes of decline, inspiration and subjects

Variable	Male	Female	Total	P value
Access to reading material				
- Buy books	24	33	57(50%)	
- Borrow from friends	10	14	24(21%)	
- Borrow from library	6	15	21(18%)	0.048
- Read them online	10	3	13(11%)	
Causes of decline in reading habits				
- Lack of interest	60	40	100(50%)	
- TV	9	25	34(17%)	
- Easy availability of e-book	17	13	30(15%)	
- Lack of access to books	15	7	22(11%)	0.004
- Cost factor	10	4	14(7%)	
Inspiration for reading habits				
- Self	15	28	43(39%)	
- Parents	10	25	35(30%)	
- Teachers	6	10	16(14%)	
- Friends	2	8	10(9%)	0.8
- Brother/Sister	4	4	8(7%)	
- Others	1	3	3(3%)	
Subjects of interest for reading				
- Medical	37	30	67(58%)	
- Religious	33	23	56(49%)	
- Science	22	13	35(30%)	
- Politics	25	10	35(30%)	
- History	14	18	32(29%)	
- Romance	6	19	25(22%)	0.0004
- Stories	6	13	19(17%)	
- literature	12	4	16(14%)	
- Art	3	10	13(11%)	

**Discussion**

The questionnaire investigated the students’ reading habits. One should read books to acquire knowledge ‘Reading to learn’ are an essential tool for life- long learning. Promoting a reading culture among students is therefore one of the key tasks in the curriculum reform with the aim to strengthen students learning capabilities. It was revealed that (35%) of students read 30-60 minutes per day. this result is somewhat expected due to academic activities that require a signifi

cant amount of reading time. Other research done in India for hours spent on reading daily among teacher trainees Found that 10% of participants spent less than an hour on reading per day<sup>5</sup>. Inconsistent with john Hopkins University results which showing reading for an average of 10.8 hours per week<sup>6</sup>. The present study revealed that 43% of student’s read in native languages. Consistent with research done in India<sup>5</sup> and Malaysian polytechnic students<sup>7</sup> shows students prefer to read in mother tongue

language books, inconsistent with study in Kashmir<sup>8</sup> that majority of students 72% read in English which means not read as per expectations in their mother languages and possible reasons may be lack of reading materials in their own language. Most common reason given for reading books need more information (48%) followed by enjoyment (26%), inconsistent with study in Kashmir<sup>8</sup>

and Malaysia<sup>3</sup> that the main reason for reading is for educational purposes followed by information. This could be due to pressure from parents and teachers to improve their academic performance. inconsistent with Malaysian polytechnics students<sup>7</sup> were found reading for entertainment only, and not for academic purposes. The prevalence of e-book reading is markedly growing, but printed books still dominate among our readers, inconsistent with John Hopkins school of medicine<sup>6</sup>. That shows most source rated by students were online source which are easily accessible and provide up to date information also inconsistent with Malaysian study<sup>3</sup>. That internet was found to be the most frequently used sources to get the reading materials followed by library, friends and bookstore. Nearly half of the students liked to read at home and library is the second preferred place of reading. Consistent with Indian study<sup>8</sup>, that home is the dominating place for reading as majority 76% read in home followed by library so that provision of reading room facility in the libraries can attract students towards libraries for reading. Majority of readers prefer to buy books than to borrow books from friends, family members and colleagues While very few of them get it from library and lastly to download e-books from internet, consistent with Koforidua polytechnic<sup>9</sup> that library should attempt to make sure that students are aware of the holding of the library by giving them continuous publicity on the holding of the library. Half of students said that there is lack of interest in reading consistent with Rajshahi university students.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the results reveal that television was the second factors identified as those hindering them from developing good reading habits as the electronic media is challenging the reading habit by shifting the attention to computer and television viewing. Palani<sup>11</sup> confirms that due to the in

fluence of the mass media, students do not show much interest in reading books, magazines and journals. This was consistent with Indian study<sup>5</sup> that easy availability of e-book is the factors identified hindering them from developing good reading habits. Time was a barrier stated by majority of female medical students in Taibah and Annamalai University<sup>1,4</sup>. As time management is crucial to keeping up on reading assignments. Reading medical books was the most common reading-related activity among students as they read subject-related material because it is required to improve their academic performance followed by Religion books. However, when male and female are looked separately they show different type of reading which is highly significant  $p < 0.001$  Inconsistent with Malaysian polytechnic<sup>7</sup> that 70% read newspaper while consistent with Kashmir study<sup>1</sup>. That female students read more about history and romance than males whereas males read more about politics and religious than females. The factor responsible for different reading choices is that male students are more actively involved in politics and religious than female counterparts. It is clear that students develop reading habits through self-efforts and interest followed by instruction or assistance of parents and teachers to improve their academic performance while the least is from brother or sister which is consistent with study in Kashmir<sup>1</sup>, Medical College King Saudi University<sup>2</sup>, Koforidua polytechnic in Ghana<sup>9</sup> shows that most inculcating mechanism is self-efforts and interest followed by parents and teachers also indicated the need for parents to encourage their children to develop the habit of reading from infancy so that it will be a part of them. This issue needs to be enhanced in the first year of medical school to teach students' how to be self-learners and how to make use of the available learning resources.

## Conclusions

With the lack of interest in reading among Hawler medical students; academic institutions should regularly organize events like study circles, debate clubs, seminars, essay competitions to inspire students to gather knowledge and make their marks in these events in addition to

provision of reading room facility in the libraries with all necessary infrastructure, sanitation, ventilation that can attract students towards libraries for reading.

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