

Factors related to Children, Parents and School Teachers Influencing Children Reading Habits: A Review of Literature

Abdul Jabbar ¹ Dr. Nosheen Fatima Warraich ²

1. Ph. D Scholar, Institute of Information Management and Librarian, Department of Political Science, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan
2. Professor, Institute of Information Management, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

The reading habits of children are affected by the penetration of electronic devices, social media applications and games. Hence, there is general decline in reading habits / culture in society and specifically among children. In this situation, the current study will look into the factors influencing children reading habits. The study is a significant support in relevant literature by reporting contributing factors related to children, family, and teacher in developing reading habits among children. The beneficiaries are children, their families, school teachers as well as school administrators to appropriately use the methods and techniques to inculcate reading habits.

Key Words: Children, Parents, School Teachers, Reading Habits, Literature Review, Pakistan

Introduction

Reading is considered helpful in gaining wider range of world's exposure and becoming lifelong learner. Reading habit may be measured by the amount and frequency of reading in leisure time. "Reading for pleasure refers to reading that we do of our own free will anticipating the satisfaction as we will get from the act of reading. It also refers to reading that having begun at someone else's request we continue because we are interested in it" (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988, p. 23). Onwubiko as cited in Ogunrombi, and Adio (1995) proposed four major objectives of the reading: 1) Reading for pleasure, fun and relaxation; 2) Informational reading; 3) Reading to gain knowledge and 4) Combining any of above mentioned objectives.

Gambrell (2011) suggested seven rules to stimulate reading motivation among students. However, following two rules "students are more motivated to read when they have ample opportunities to engage in sustained reading" (p. 174) and "access to a wider range of reading materials" (p. 173) emphasized on parents' role in developing reading habit among their children. These rules are helpful to stimulate reading motivation among students as providing variety of reading materials in home and engaging them in reading. Dent (2013) added that most of the students are visiting library to complete their school work, want to know more about the world and to do work independently by interacting with peers. There are three main purposes reported of visiting library; academic, social and cultural.

Literature established that reading habit might be nurtured in early ages. It found that parent-child early age interactions have positive impact on literacy skills of their children (Dodici, Draper & Peterson, 2003). Netten, Voeten, Droop and Verhoeven (2014) found significant decline in reading of children in Netherlands

from 2001 to 2006. Similarly, Kush and Watkins (1996) reported substantial decline in both academic and recreational reading among children.

Linnakyla, Malin and Taube (2004) disclosed the factors contributing to the decline of reading in developed countries with high literacy such as Finland and Sweden. The prominent factors are male-gender, several siblings and low economic background. Clark and Akerman (2006) compiled statistics in context of developed countries on reading for pleasure and mentioned that teenagers are reading an average of books per month. It had been evidenced that reading habit decreases with growing age. The boys are spending only 3 to 4 hours in a week on reading for pleasure and fun while girls are reading more than boys.

The decline in reading among children even in developed and high-literacy countries is cautious. Hence, it has considered necessary to look into the factors especially those related to children, family and teacher contributing to the development of reading habit among children.

Literature Review

The related literature has been reviewed in light of in-hand problem by searching published as well as unpublished relevant research studies. Relevant databases are approached i.e. Tylor and Francis Group, ERIC, Emerald, Elsevier, LISA, LISTA, ProQuest Theses and Dissertations and Wiley Online Library. The reviewed literature has been presented through figures and further explained to show the affecting factors of children, family and teacher.

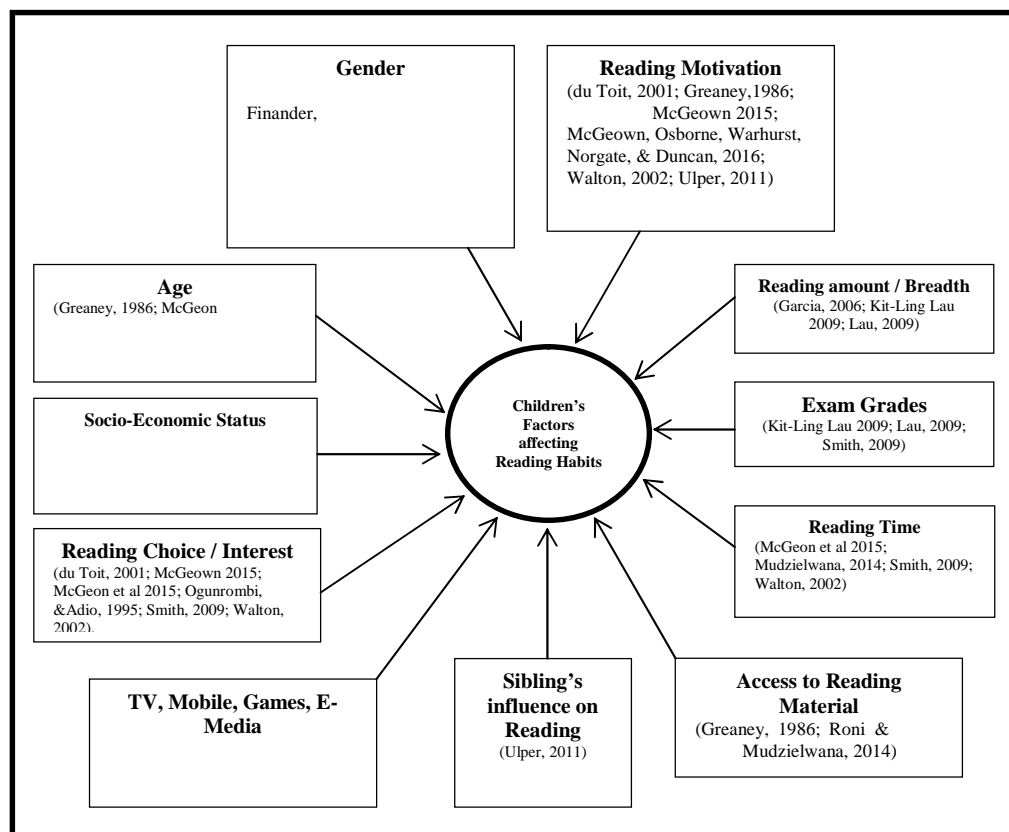


Figure 1
Studies that have addressed children's factors affecting their reading habit

Family and Children related Factors affecting Reading Habit among Children Impact of Parents' Educational Level on Reading Habit of Children

Literature established that the families who had at least graduate degree and small in size showed more interest in pleasure reading (Himmelweit & Swift, 1976; Morrow, 1983). Baker, Scher and Mackler (1997) conducted a review-based study and demonstrated that home literacy experiences among children were directly influenced by the educational and income level of their parents.

Burgess (2005) found that the knowledge of mothers regarding available children's literature, their academic level and experience with print materials were associated with the literacy level of children. It had been further added that the mothers who were more interested in watching television and less in reading were unsuccessful contributors to the academic achievement of their children. It had been reported by Hansen (1969) that a conducive literacy environment provided by parents was important but parent's educational level and occupation had no effect on children's reading development. Lyytinen, Laakso and Poikkeus (1998) also endorsed that the mother's education, literacy and reading sharing practices had significant influence on lexical and grammatical development among 2-year old children. Contrarily, education of father was found insignificant in this respect. Hartas (2012) evidenced through a UK based research study that maternal educational level was significant factor in contributing to reading and writing of their children. Yet, Yusof (2010) commented that the qualification of father was associated with the level of reading interest of children.

Influence of Social and Economic Status (SES) of Parents on Children's Reading

Children from low economic status were reading less for fun comparatively with children of high economic status (Clark & Akerman, 2006). Linnakyla, Malin and Taube (2004) demonstrated that the contributing factors in decline of reading were male gender, low social and economic status and less engagement in reading of the children. Farver, Yiyuan, Eppe and Lonigan, (2006) found that there was significant relationship existed in social and economic status (SES) of a family and development of reading in a child. The family size and available facilities at home were heavily influencing children's reading. Hartas (2012) reported that family income was statistically found significant with reading, writing, speaking and listening of students. The rich children were found better in all four factors comparing with poor children.

A Dutch nationwide survey was carried out by Kraaykamp and Dijkstra (1999) to explore role of class differentiation in preferring books. It had been inferred that reader's social characteristics were contributing to the preference of readings. The elite class and readers having friend of elite class liked to read complex books. Burgess (2005) added that the low income mothers having fewer reading resources so their children were underprivileged in reading. McCarthey (1997) had reported that access to the literacy had been maintained by color and working-class of the students. Yusof (2010) found that economic status was foundation of reading habit among children. She commented that the fathers of higher class children could provide varied reading materials as they had sources and knowledge of reading materials through their networks. Netten, Voeten, Droop and Verhoeven (2014) found socio-

economic status as a strong predictor of reading achievement. The performance of the low SES students was worst in reading attainment than the students having high SES. Hung and Marjoribanks (2005) found that the parents were unable to provide effective learning and reading environment without having strong economic capital. Contrarily, Scher and Baker (1994) have found that first-graders were showing positive attitude towards reading regardless of their socio-economic status and Yusof (2010) also agreed that economic status was not associated with the literacy achievement of children.

Parents' Beliefs and Value to Reading

A strong association existed in reading belief of parents and their home reading practices (DeBaryshe & Binder, 1994). The parents who were providing more reading related opportunities had stronger belief on reading which could be judged as parents who had enrolled their children in public library and given value to reading (Baker, Scher & Mackler, 1997). DeBaryshe and Binder (1994) concluded that the belief of parents towards reading was significantly associated with their children's reading and attitude towards reading if education and income level were controlled.

Parents' Reading and Impact of Home-Literacy

Bailey (2006) declared that those children were improving their grades whose parents were reading for them. Positive early and preschool literacy experiences were also contributing to the reading success of children. Greaney and Hegarty (1987) said that parent's reading frequency had substantial impact on children's literacy achievement.

Camp (2007) found that most of the children were motivated from reading of their dads and moms who were helping them in school-related tasks and reading-aloud to them. It had been found in a study conducted by Feitelson and Goldstein (1986) while investigating Israeli families' reading practices that almost all families were reading to their children at least half an hour daily. They were reading in fixed time mostly in evenings before going to bed. A study by Hartas (2012) had confirmed that the maternal reading enjoyment and interest significantly associated with reading attainment of children. Moreover, mother's reading habit was contributing to the reading, writing, listening and speaking fluencies of the children. Mothers' reading frequency also significantly affects children reading development. Kim (2009) found that home reading was associated with the literacy achievement of children. The author further added that the home reading was helpful in enhancing vocabulary and phonological experiences of the children. Lyytinen, Laakso and Poikkeus (1998) added that the children who had experienced reading by mothers or fathers were showing more interest in books. Clark, Osborne and Akerman (2008) claimed that most of the students were sharing reading with their mothers than fathers however boys liked to share with their fathers. Most of the students said that their mothers motivated them for reading than their fathers.

Morrow (1983) commented that the children who were taking reading as pleasure activity, their parents were presenting themselves as reading role models and sharing their readings with their children. However, Ogunrombi and Adio (1995) lamented that many homes in Nigeria were noisy and poorly structured providing

unfavorable reading environment. The electricity problem further added to the negativity of home literacy environment.

Parents' Support to Develop Reading Habit

Greaney (1986) carried out a study to infer the role of parents in developing reading habit and reading skills among their children. Six contributing factors to develop reading habits among children were identified as follows: 1) *verbal interaction* parents' verbal interaction with child enhanced cognitive and language skills, 2) *reading interest* had also positive impact on reading development among their children, 3) *parents' reading to children* had considerable influence on early literacy, 4) *access to wider range of materials* was also considered positive indicator of reading development, 5) *provision of reading atmosphere and reading opportunities at home* could help parents to support children in reading development and 6) *parent-child reading* in which parents were mostly reading-aloud to their children and sharing their reading experiences. These were considered contributors to the development of reading habit among children.

Greaney and Hegarty (1987) commented that the children with supportive environment for reading were taking reading as pleasure. Moreover, availability of reading materials at home, reading and reading behavior of parents were associated with the reading habit of their children. Clark and Akerman (2006) considered parents as "literacy teachers" for their children by engaging them in pleasure reading. Farver, Yiyuan, Eppe and Lonigan, (2006) elaborated that parents' literacy involvement with the children had impact on children's literacy interest. A study conducted by Goux, Gurgand and Maurin (2017) to explore the effects of parental support on students' learning by choosing those first-grade students from 109 French schools children with less parental support.

A study conducted by High, Hopmann, LaGasse and Linn (1998) to evaluate how sharing books and stimulating reading in bedtime by two groups of families of different ethnic and low-income level was affecting reading development. The parents were provided books and information as how to share these books with their children. They were eagerly sharing books and considering it their best activity. In this regard, Kush and Watkins (2010) advised that the school should work with cooperation of parents to effectively develop reading attitude among readers. Lyytinen, Laakso and Poikkeus (1998) reported that sharing reading with fathers was associated with the early interest of children. Nichols (2000) reported through review-based study conducted to explore Australian family's patterns to read before their children. It had been demonstrated that the mothers were focusing on providing reading exposure to their young children than fathers. Ogunrombi and Adio (1995) commented that the attitude and support from parents towards the children who were trying for better reading habit was considered very important. Shapiro and Whitney (1997) inferred that the encouragement from parents was the factor which differentiated between enthusiastic and reluctant reader.

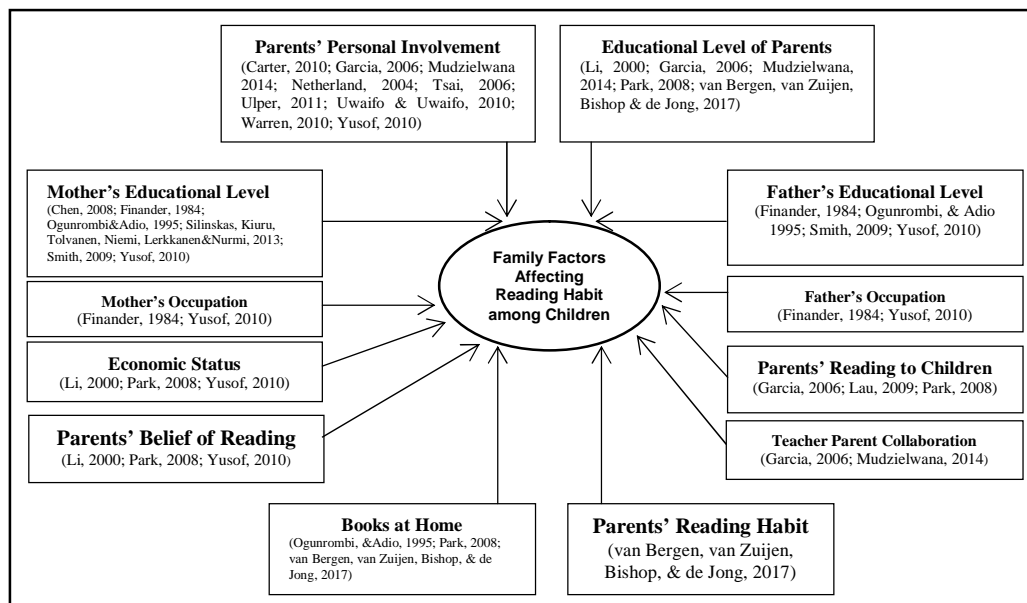


Figure 2
Studies that have addressed family factors related to children's reading habit

Availability of Reading Materials and Reading Habit

Debaryshe and Binder (1994) found that reading habit among children nurtured where parents were reading to their children regularly, having varied materials at home and adopting different reading practices in early age of their children. Literature established that where adults were reading regularly to the children with availability of sufficient reading materials children were improving their language and oral skills (Burgess, Hecht&Lonigan, 2002; Lonigan, 1994).

The study carried out by Ko and Chan (2009) to explore environmental family factors and children's reading achievement. It had been found that the parent's attitude towards reading was positive having a number of books at home but Chinese community having fewer books than non-Chinese community. The number of books at home and early literacy skills were strongly associated with the later reading achievement of children. Rikin et al. (2015) demonstrated that the homes were contributing to the effective development of reading where reading was bedtime activity regularly along with availability of wider range of reading materials.

Gender Differences in Reading Habit of Children

Gender was strong predictor of reading motivation and reading preference among children as girls had more intention for reading than boys (Abeyrathna&Zainab, 2004). Kush and Watkins (2010) approved the literature findings that boys were found reluctant readers while girls were approaching reading with happiness. Clark and Akerman (2006) added that decline in reading enjoyment was significant in boys than girls.

Moreover, there were differences of reading preferences and reading volume on the basis of gender as boys were liked to read newspapers while girls were reading text-books. Clark and Foster (2005) had found difference of volume of reading on gender basis as girls were reading more than boys. Greaney (1986) proved that the gender was the dominant factor in preferring reading materials as girls were interested in books while boys were more interested in comics.

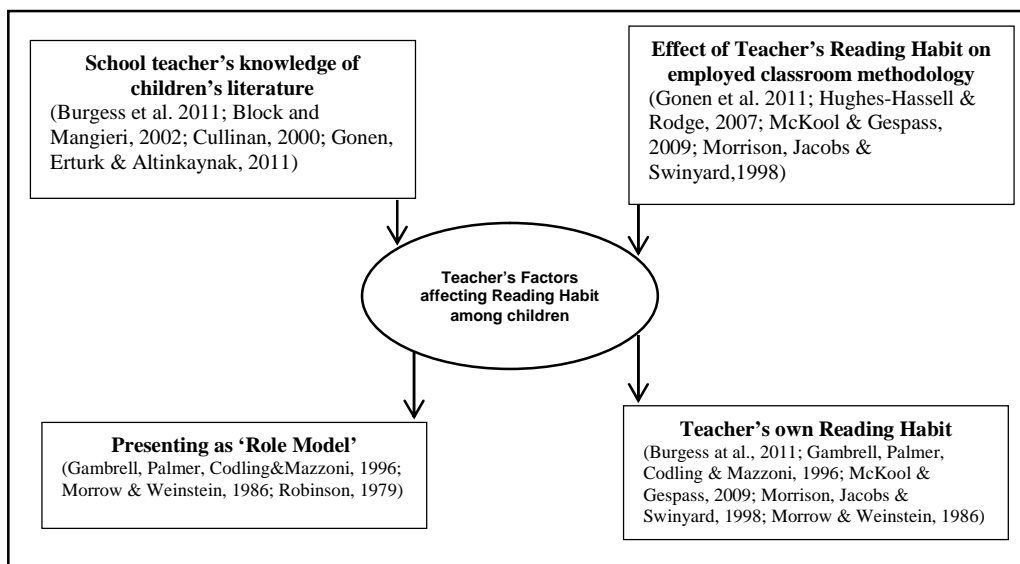


Figure 3

Studies that have addressed teacher's factors affecting reading habit among children

Reading Habit among School Teachers

"The teacher (or librarian) who doesn't read will fail for sure" (Trelease, 2006) as quoted by Burgess et al.(2011 p. 102). It has been emphasized that school teachers must be readers themselves and should present themselves as explicit role models for their students (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling & Mazzoni, 1996; Morrow, & Weinstein, 1986). Manna and Misheff (1987 as cited by Morrison, et al., 1998) investigated self-reported reading habits of school teachers. Two categories of readers were emerged: 1) the transactional reader and the 2) reduced reader. They explained that transactional readers approached reading with pleasure while reduced readers took reading as boring activity.

McKool and Gespass (2009) surveyed school teachers to know whether they read for pleasure or not. It was found that less than half of the school teachers read for pleasure while a large number of teachers mentioned that they had no time for pleasure reading. Similarly, it had found that most of the school teachers are not enthusiastic readers and they had no or little interest in voluntary reading (Mour, 1977 as cited by Burgess, Sargent, Smith, Hill & Morrison, 2011).

The positive attitude of the school teacher towards reading, his/her own reading enjoyment and recreation, familiarity with children's interests and literature, and recommending material according to their interest positively affect the love of

reading among school children (Duffy, 1967) whereas Robinson (1979) lamented that the school teachers did not prove themselves as role models for their students. They themselves were not good readers. It was strongly recommended by Oyelude (2013) that the teacher's use of library and reading habit should be promoted by the school authority.

Effect of School Teachers' Reading Habit on their Employed Methodologies

Morrison, Jacobs and Swinyard (1999 as cited by Morrison, et., al. 1998) explored the personal reading habit of school teachers and its effect on their employed instructional practices. They found that the school teachers who read more employed greater number of strategies in classroom including best practices. Morrison et al. (1998) examined the personal leisure reading habit of school teachers and their employed instructional classroom strategies. They collected data from 2000 elementary school teachers from United States. They discovered that older teachers read more than younger teachers and the teachers who enjoyed books used innovative instructional strategies in their classrooms. There was a significant relationship between reading amount and teacher's grade level, age and experience. It was recommended that the teachers should read, have time for reading and share books with students in a variety of ways.

McKool and Gespass (2009) explored the relationship between teacher's reading habit and their employed instructional strategies in class. Sixty-five elementary school teachers were surveyed. The study demonstrated that there were a small number of teachers who read for pleasure daily even for 10 minutes while most of them had engaged in other activities. It was also found that the teachers who read for pleasure outside the school more than 30 minutes used more innovative strategies such as literature circles, recommending books, implementing sustained silent reading and guiding reading lessons. The teachers who valued reading opined that inculcation of reading habit among students more important. Surprisingly, the study verified that there was no difference in motivating students for pleasure reading among the teachers who read for pleasure and who did not read for pleasure.

The school teachers who mentioned that they read for pleasure most of the time employed a variety of best practices in class to promote reading habit. These practices included; reading aloud activity, sustained silent reading and recommending interesting books. A school teacher must be able to encourage reading culture through suggesting the right book to children, s/he be well aware of book, author and genre (McCuthen, et al., 2002 as cited by McKool&Gespass, 2009).

School Teacher's Knowledge of Children's Literature

Burgess et al. (2011) examined the relationship between reading habit among school teachers, their knowledge of children's literature and their role in the promotion of reading habit among school children. A group of 161 fifth grade teachers from the United States participated in the study. The study inferred that the school teacher's role in fostering reading skill among students was heavily influenced by his/her own reading ability and knowledge of children's literature. Moreover, it was established that the teachers having more knowledge of children's literature used best practices of literacy.

An interesting study by Block and Mangieri (2002), replicated after 20 years, explored the recreational reading habit among school teachers and their knowledge of children's literature. A sample of 549 elementary school teachers was taken and the teachers who mentioned more than three activities were interviewed. The study revealed that the teachers who had good knowledge of children's literature were lifelong readers also. They were able to provide wider experiences by book sharing to engage students. These teachers were providing numerous opportunities to students as reading books of their own choice, offering reading incentives and discussing books that had been read during recreational reading. Short and Pierce (1990 as cited by Cullinan, 2000) demonstrated that most of the teachers were lacking in knowledge of children's literature so they were unable to suggest material according to the interest of children. Further, they were found unaware about the effects of their teaching methodology on children's reading motivation.

Unfortunately, we are mainly relying on picture story books and novels rather than focusing on narrative text to stimulate voluntary reading habit among children. We should make balance among fiction, story and information books. For this, the school teachers should be expert in children's literature and should have the knowledge of global literature publishing worldwide which could be helpful in developing leisure reading habit among children (Morrow & Gambrell, 2001 as cited by Doiron, 2003).

Studies related to Children Reading Habits in Pakistan

In Pakistani context, some research studies have been conducted to explore reading habit, preferences and trends among different educational groups i.e. children (Khan, 2017) primary school children (Awais & Ameen, 2013), secondary school students (Hussain & Munshi, 2011), and undergraduate students (Ahmad, Malik & Azeem, 2014; Soroya & Ameen, 2016). Few studies investigated the information literacy skills of school children that play role in their effective learning (Batoool & Mahmood, 2016). Literature also investigated reading habit of different professional groups in Pakistan; information professionals (Naveed & Ameen, 2015), journalists (Shahid, 2015) and faculty members (Zia & Samreen, 2017). Literature established different factors those effect the reading habits including gender differences among university students (Dilshad, Adnan & Akram, 2013) technology impact (Ahmad, Malik & Azeem, 2014) role of school teacher (Jabbar, 2015) and role of libraries (Mahmood, 2004) in promotion of reading habit. However, the phenomenon has not been explored in terms of three major role players in reading habit among children i.e. children, family and teacher. The role of teacher/librarian in promoting reading habits among children has been explored in few studies (Jabbar, 2015) but the role of family and children is not covered in local literature. There is need to holistically study all the three contributing factors i.e. children, family and teacher to understand the phenomenon and to draw practical implications. Therefore, there is an urgent need of conducting the study to fulfill the literature gap.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The current study aimed to reported factors affecting children reading habits related to children, parents and school teachers that influence children reading habits. The prominent factors related to children identified through relevant literature were

gender, age, use of television, mobile and computer applications and access to varied reading materials. The factors related to parents included socio-economic status, educational level, occupation, their personal interests towards reading and involvement in children reading habits. School teachers own reading habits, their knowledge of children literature, presenting themselves as reading role models and effect of their reading habits on their employed classroom methodologies had been analyzed. The study concluded that triangulation of children, parents and school teachers could help to initiate a collaborative reading programs for school children to stimulate their reading habits. The school administrators, librarians, school teachers and parents should work in collaboration to prepare struggling readers to become avid readers and lifelong learners. The factors that were contributors to the children reading habits related to parents and school teachers need to be investigated through empirical evidence.

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