



Investigating Students' Reading Habit and Reading Interest in The West Aceh, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: The act of reading is frequently linked to the application of language and cognitive functions. The core essence of the reading process lies in the usage of the reader's memories and personal experiences to facilitate the comprehension of the textual material. Thence, the objective of this study is to examine the reading habit and reading interest of students in West Aceh, Indonesia. This study used qualitative descriptive research design involving 7 universities with 83 respondents altogether. The instruments used were open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The data were collected through google from for later analyzed using interactive analysis. Meanwhile the interviews were recorded as a means of triangulation. The results reveal that most of the students like reading (90.8%) and they prefer Bahasa Indonesia (92.1%). Most of them obtained reading materials from book stores (54%). They found out that the reason to read is to increase knowledge (69.7%) and to seek information and knowledge (43.4%). Regarding the obstacles, most of them faced the fact that spending more time on social media and watching TV prevent them from reading (39.5%). The books read are varied from history and politics, literature and romance, religion and psychology, motivation and self-development, and economy and technology. The findings from this study could inform educational policymakers and curriculum developers in the West Aceh Coast and beyond that understanding students' reading habits and interests can help shape reading programs, library resources, and curriculum content to better engage students and promote literacy.

Corresponding Author:

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Published Online:

June 13, 2026

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KEYWORDS:

coastal region, literacy, reading preferences, reading enthusiasm, reading skills.

Cite the Article: *Rahma, E.A. *,Oktavinanda, G.,Rahmatillah, R.,Syahputri, V.N.,Ismail, N.M.. (2026) Investigating Students' Reading Habit and Reading Interest in The West Aceh, Indonesia. International Journal of Human Research and Social Science Studies,3(6),578-587. <https://doi.org/10.55677/ijhrsss/09-2026-Vol03I06>*

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a crucial language skill. The major objective of education in the modern day is to create people who can think, explain themselves clearly, criticize, do research, read, interpret, apply, and impart information to others. Reading is regarded by a skill of professionals as one of the most effective educational tools (Gopal et al., 2023). In addition to speaking, listening, and writing, reading is one of the four primary abilities utilized in language instruction. To thrive at reading, as well as to understand the subject and advance the language command, especially reading, students must cultivate reading habits, including the reading habit and reading interest.

It is an important fact to note that reading, as well as literacy, is a problem that the entire world is currently highly concerned about. The results of the PISA (2015) show that there are still a number of nations with low literacy levels; in fact, some of these nations have not much improved despite repeated assessments. In reality, according to a PISA report, Indonesia is among the lowest literate nations, coming in at number 64 out of 72. Indonesia was placed 60th out of 61 countries in terms of reading interest in a different research by Central Connecticut State University about the world's most literate nations in 2016. Indonesia ranks above Botswana—which is in the place of 61st and below Thailand—which is in the place of 59th. Reading is therefore a serious concern in order to develop superior human resources in the future.

Regardless of the mentioned facts, the ability to read and reading preferences varies significantly around the world, posing a range of challenges. These challenges are not isolated but interwoven with complex social, economic, and cultural factors. One of the foremost challenges in reading worldwide is the issue of illiteracy (Kovač & Mohar, 2022). Illiteracy, defined as the inability to read and write, affects a substantial portion of the global population. According to UNESCO, around 773 million adults cannot read or write, and two-thirds of them are women. Illiteracy perpetuates a cycle of poverty, limiting individuals' access to information and opportunities for personal development. Next, the issue of language barriers pose another significant hurdle to reading. With thousands of languages spoken worldwide, not all individuals have access to reading materials in their native tongue. This limits comprehension and hinders the development of eloquent reading skills. In many low-income households, books and other reading materials are considered luxury items (Biswas et al., 2023). Families struggling to meet basic needs often prioritize food, shelter, and healthcare over books. This leads to a dearth of reading materials in these households which prevents children's development (Haleem et al., 2022)

More challenges are still being considered. Children growing up in conflict environments face not only the trauma of conflict but also limited opportunities for education and personal development through reading (Downey & Crummy, 2022). Gender disparities are also deeply intertwined with reading challenges. In many cultures, girls are discouraged from pursuing education and are often expected to prioritize household chores and caregiving over reading and learning. This gender bias limits their access to books and stifles their potential. Furthermore, girls and women face barriers such as early marriage and pregnancy, which can disrupt their education and reading opportunities (Chuy & Nitulescu, 2014). Finally, the fast-paced nature of modern life has led to a decline in leisure reading. With the constant demands of work, family, and technology, many individuals find it challenging to carve out time for reading. This trend threatens not only reading proficiency but also the potential for personal growth and creativity that comes from engaging with literature.

On the other hand, when talking about reading ability in college level, the reading assignments differ from those in lower educational levels. According to Wijayani (2019), reading preferences and interest in high school have an impact on those in college. This is similar because reading and writing make up the majority of academic tasks in higher education—which is college level. Students' academic achievement, comprehension of the material they read, and writing ability all improve as they read more. It may be claimed that in order for pupils to be able to generate high-quality work, they must read, re-view, and study a lot of literature. According to Poedjiastuti (2018), there are several sociocultural viewpoints on Indonesian students' reading habits. Firstly, rather than reading anything themselves, most pupils prefer to be informed about it. In Indonesian classrooms, lecturers or teachers prefer to lecture students rather than utilizing cooperative learning strategies that require a lot of reading, which is a reflection of the culture in a certain place. Second, reading interests are influenced by heredity or genetic determinism elements. A person who likes to read is typically either born into or grows up in a reading family. Third, students are not required by Indonesia's educational system to look for information outside of what is being taught. The students generally rely on the teacher's expertise. Without objecting on any information, they accept the teacher's knowledge. Fourth, students' low interest in reading is mostly caused by a lack of reading and a lack of school libraries. Students are not encouraged to read at schools or universities. Despite having a library, they don't always use it effectively. In general, not many people visit libraries.

Similarly, universities in West Aceh also struggle to get their students interested in reading. According to research by Novianti (2021), the lack of students' needs and willingness, the absence of a family role, the influence of the immediate environment, and the scarcity of the newest books in libraries are the root causes of the low interest in reading among teenagers in Meulaboh, West Aceh. Most of them patrons only use the internet at the library for social media or other purposes. Additionally, Novianti (2021) said that the majority of youngsters like companionship that provide enjoyable activities, such as getting together at coffee shops to simply chat, instead of reading activities. Thence, this study is urgent because it merely serves as an evaluation tool for students' reading interests and habits, helping to raise the level of reading interest among teenagers in general and students in West Aceh's coastline region in particular. This information is beneficial for not only teachers but also for educational policy developers as a whole.

More specifically, the research novelty offered in this study lies in several potential areas. First, it focuses on a specific region like the West Coast of Aceh which provides a unique perspective, as reading habits and interests can be influenced by local culture, resources, and environmental factors. Besides, there is limited existing research on this topic in the West Coast of Aceh, hence this study could contribute valuable insights that were previously unexplored. Moreover, understanding how reading habits and interests vary in this particular cultural context can shed light on the dynamics of literacy and education in Aceh, which may differ from other regions; and this research could potentially identify specific challenges or opportunities for improving literacy and education in the West Coast of Aceh, which could have broader implications for educational policy. Very little is currently known about reading habits and reading interest among university students in the West Coast of Aceh. This is then considered as a gap to be filled in this study.

Based on the aforementioned issues, the authors have formulated this study to investigate more about the reading preferences and interest of university students in West Aceh's coastal region in order to evaluate the phenomena of low interest in reading. Thus, the

particular objectives of this study are to explore the reading habits of students in West Aceh and to learn more about their reading interests. It is believed that this research would provide information about the reading preferences and interests of students in West Aceh, which will help colleges find ways to get more students interested in reading. These objectives are generated into research questions as follow:

To what extent has reading habit and reading interest among university students in West Aceh developed?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In reading, the concept of "habit" has been defined as an action or behavior that is frequently or routinely performed (Grellet, 1987). The process of comprehending meaning from written or printed words, commonly referred to as "reading," is a fundamental aspect of acquiring knowledge and a crucial skill in various aspects of daily existence (Guthrie et al., 2007). This elucidates the reason for the typical association of reading with books, as written words exclusively offer a comprehensive representation of the reading process. Reading is commonly associated with the utilization of language and cognitive processes. The act of reading encompasses not just the process of recognizing words, but also the reader's ability to retain, apply, and respond to the information encountered. This includes the development of skills such as word recognition, vocabulary expansion, and comprehension.

Multiple definitions of reading habits have been posited. The initial concept is proposed by Sangkaeo (1990), who defines reading habits as a behavioral manifestation of an individual's inclination towards specific types of reading material and personal reading preferences. In his work, Wagner (2002) discusses the concept of reading habits, which he defines as encompassing three key factors: the amount of reading material consumed, the frequency of reading, and the duration of time dedicated to reading. This explanation bears resemblance to Shen's (2006) concept of reading habits, which encompasses the content, frequency, and extent of an individual's reading activities. Numerous investigations have been undertaken to explore reading habits and preferences across diverse environments. The study conducted by Applegate et al. (2014) examined the reading behaviors of American teaching students. The researchers discovered that a significant proportion of individuals, specifically 48.9%, who possess aspirations to pursue a career in teaching, exhibit a lack of interest or enjoyment in engaging with reading materials. In a study conducted by Nathanson et al. (2008), a significant occurrence of literacy was observed, characterized by individuals possessing the capacity to read but actively choose not to engage in personal reading activities.

According to Mc Kool (2007), the concept of interest in reading encompasses reading activities that are undertaken by students outside of the formal educational setting. Moreover, according to the US Department of Education (2005), reading interest is characterized by students' inclination towards reading during their leisure time, at home, or their affinity for visiting libraries. In addition to this, the level of reading interest can be influenced by factors such as the frequency of book consumption, the regularity of reading habits, as well as personal preferences.

According to the research conducted by Anderson et al (1988), it was determined that the level of students' interest in reading served as a highly reliable indicator for assessing the progress of children's reading abilities. In addition to this, it has been found via several studies that there exists a correlation between the inclination towards reading and the advancement of vocabulary, comprehension skills, fluency, and overall intellectual growth (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). In addition, it is noteworthy that a positive inclination towards reading is intricately linked to academic achievement. This correlation arises from the fact that pupils who possess a genuine like for reading are likely to exhibit proficient writing skills and demonstrate an enhanced capacity for generating novel and imaginative thoughts (Grabe, 2003; Stansberry & Tothoro, 2009). Consequently, those who possess minimal or nonexistent inclination towards reading will encounter difficulty in compelling themselves to engage in academic reading activities.

Previous research on reading habits among students has been carried out by several researchers. Kaur, Rasiah and Nagaratnam (2011) examined the reading habits of generation Y students at Taylor University in Malaysia. The research results stated that most of the respondents preferred reading online websites followed by newspapers. 39% of students dedicate 1-3 hours to reading per week while 21% of them spend less than one hour per week reading. Regarding casual reading materials, they revealed that most students read the true story genre followed by mystery books. Furthermore, most students with 42% of the majority of respondents read to pass exams, 30% to increase their knowledge, and only 28% read for pleasure. Similar research was also conducted by Huang, Capps, Blacklock, and Garza (2014) which revealed that students spent 7.72 hours on academic reading, 4.24 hours on casual reading and 8.95 hours using the internet. Additionally, they reported that students preferred reading online materials often followed by newspapers and magazines while books unrelated to their field of study were the least popular reading materials. They also revealed that students spend more time on the internet and online applications compared to reading.

Research in Indonesia conducted by Tanjung, et al. (2017) on the reading habits of 320 undergraduate students at the University of Borneo in Indonesia shows that students use the internet for 1-3 hours because it allows them to access information easily and quickly. They also reported that they sometimes read newspapers, novels and magazines, students often read information online. Thus, students are increasingly accustomed to accessing information in digital form while printed books are less popular. The next study, recently conducted by Parlindungan, et al. (2022), examined the interests and attitudes of Indonesian students towards academic reading during the Covid-19 pandemic. Their research results show that most students choose print books over digital.

The factors that cause them to choose printed reading materials are the type of course, access, and the habit of reading printed books. Based on this research, this latest research focuses more deeply on the reading habits of students in Aceh, especially West Aceh which is a coastal region where the students' backgrounds are regional children, so researchers are interested in finding out more about their level of reading interest and reading habits. What differs from previous research is that this research investigates students' reading habits and interest in reading both academic material and specific purposes.

3. METHODS

This study is a qualitative descriptive research seeking to explore the reading habits and reading interests of students residing in West Aceh. Employing this approach in researching the reading interest and reading habit gives a chance for a valuable method to be applied. The use data collection such as interviews, focus groups, and surveys to collect qualitative data from students, teachers, and community members in the West Coast of Aceh, help the researchers gather rich, in-depth information about students' reading habits and interests. During the interview, open-ended questions encouraged participants to share their experiences, preferences, and motivations related to reading. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of the topic thematically because this process involves coding and categorizing responses to discover commonalities and variations in students' reading habits and interests. All in all, descriptive qualitative approach indeed develops rich and detailed descriptions of students' reading behaviors and interests. These descriptions can provide a nuanced picture of the topic and help answer research questions by ensuring the rigor and validity of the data collected.

The participants of this study consisted of students from seven campuses located in West Aceh, specifically Teuku Umar University, Dirundeng Islamic College (STAIN), Meulaboh State Community Academy (AKN), Bina Bangsa Meulaboh Teacher Training and Education College (STIKIP), and Bina Bangsa College. Indonesian Management Science (STIMI) Meulaboh, Poltekkes Meulaboh, and STIKES Meulaboh. The participants in question are students who have reached their fifth semester and beyond, as it is during this period that they commence their preparations for graduation. The sample size for each class, determined by random sampling processes, constitutes 10% of the entire population of pupils. All in all, there were 83 participants gathered as the respondents in this study.

Regarding the instrument, the utilized data include of open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires, as well as in-depth interviews conducted with student representatives from each institution. These methods were employed to ascertain the reading habits and reading interests of the participants. A total of 10 individuals representing 5 different schools will be selected for the purpose of conducting in-depth interviews in order to gather more comprehensive information. Two representative participants from each campus were selected for the interviews. The questionnaire pertaining to reading habits was derived from Wijayanti's (2021) work, while the questionnaire about reading interest was adapted from the studies conducted by Erderm (2015). Questionnaires pertaining to reading habits encompass various dimensions, including reading habits before to and upon transitioning to a new educational institution, reading habits exhibited within the campus environment, frequency of reading engagement, motivations for reading, and the perceived significance of the campus library in facilitating reading practices. The questionnaire pertaining to reading preferences encompasses inquiries on frequently read book genres, popular books, and sources of reading material.

The utilization of Google Docs and tape recorders as instruments for conducting semi-structured interviews is employed to investigate participants' motivations behind their selection of reading content and their experiences associated with reading. The questionnaire responses were subjected to qualitative processing through the use of percentage tabulations, while the interview results were transcribed to facilitate thematic and qualitative analysis of the verbal data.

The involvement of students in this research entails assisting the principal investigator and other team members in various tasks, including the distribution of questionnaires and the documentation of research activities. Additionally, students are responsible for supporting the research team during participant interviews, which may involve recording the interview proceedings using a tape recorder.

4. RESULTS

The following table show the result of the participants' reading interest and reading habits from questionnaire data.

No	Questionnaire item	Responses (%)				
1	Do you like reading?	Yes (90.8)	No (9.2)	-	-	-
2	How do you access books as your reading materials?	buy book from the bookstore (54)	read free e-books provided on the internet (21)	Go to library (9.2)	Borrow friend's book (15.8)	-
3	What is your language preferences in your reading?	Indonesia (92.1)	English (7.9)	-	-	-

4	What is your reason to read?	Increase knowledge (69.7)	Duty (6.6)	Self-indulgence (21.1)	Bored (1.3)	Do not like reading (1.3)
5	What is your obstacles when reading?	Spending more time on social media and watching TV (39.5)	Lack of motivation (10.5)	Activities (36.8)	Hangout with friends (6.6)	Do not like reading (6.6)
6	What is your favorite book genre?	History and politics (22.4)	Literature and romance (35.5)	Religion and psychology, motivation and self-development (31.5)	Economy (6.8) Technology (1.3)	All genre (1.3)
7	How many books have you read in the last 2 months?	1 book (48.7)	2 books (14.5)	More than 2 books (17.1)	None (19.7)	
8	What is your reading purpose?	Seeking information and knowledge (43.4)	Leisure time (38.2)	Assignments (7.9)	Hobby (10.5)	

The item number 1 reveals that an overwhelming majority, comprising 90.8% of respondents, expressed a positive sentiment towards reading, indicating that they do indeed like reading. This strong affirmation suggests that a significant portion of the surveyed individuals find enjoyment, fulfillment, or value in the act of reading. For those who answered "Yes," reading likely holds a special place in their lives. However, 9.2% responded with "No", this reflects a spectrum of attitudes and experiences. The majority of respondents derive enjoyment, knowledge, or other forms of fulfillment from reading, while a smaller fraction does not share the same enthusiasm. These diverse perspectives highlight the rich tapestry of individual preferences and experiences when it comes to the world of books and literature.

From item 2, a majority of respondents, constituting 54%, indicated that they prefer to acquire books by purchasing them from physical bookstores. This approach reflects a traditional and tangible connection to literature. These individuals may cherish the experience of browsing through bookstore shelves, flipping through pages, and selecting books that catch their eye. For them, owning physical copies of books can also be a source of pride and a way to build a personal library. A significant portion, 21%, relies on the digital age's convenience by accessing free e-books available on the internet. This method appeals to those who appreciate the accessibility and affordability of digital reading materials. It also aligns with the modern trend of carrying an entire library on a digital device, making it easy to read on the go. These readers may explore various genres and titles through online platforms, public domain works, or legal e-book repositories. Approximately 9.2% of respondents prefer the classic approach of visiting libraries. These individuals value the quiet, serene atmosphere of libraries and enjoy the sense of community they offer. A notable percentage, 15.8%, rely on their social networks to access reading materials. Borrowing books from friends allows for sharing literary interests and recommendations within one's social circle. It's a cost-effective way to discover new titles and engage in discussions about the books they've read. This approach underscores the communal and interpersonal aspects of reading.

The results on item 4 reveal a significant and large preference for reading in the Indonesian language, with 92.1% of respondents indicating this as their language of choice for reading materials. This strong preference for Indonesian reflects the deep connection that respondents have with their native language and the literature produced in it. On the other hand, 7.9% of respondents expressed a preference for reading in English.

According to the fourth item in the results, a significant majority of respondents, comprising 69.7% of the sample, saw reading as a method to enhance their knowledge. Reading is an essential means by which individuals can acquire new knowledge, broaden their perspectives, and remain well-informed across diverse topic matters. A notable subset of participants, amounting to 21.1%, identified self-indulgence as their primary incentive for engaging in reading activities. For these individuals, the act of reading serves not only as a means of acquiring knowledge, but also as a source of immense enjoyment derived from engaging with skillfully crafted narratives or delving into preferred literary genres. It embodies a mode of diversion, tranquility, and amusement that engenders delight and contentment. The concept of duty, as indicated by 6.6% of participants, denotes a perception of responsibility or obligation in relation to the act of reading. This emphasizes on duty-oriented readers who perceive reading as an essential and occasionally obligatory endeavor in their daily routines. It is worth noting that 1.3% of the participants surveyed reported engaging

in reading activities as a means of alleviating boredom. Reading serves as a means for individuals to occupy their time or ease periods of inactivity. In contrast, an additional 1.3% of respondents indicated a lack of preference for reading. These individuals are inclined to perceive reading as a less pleasurable or captivating activity in comparison to other pursuits. The replies provided by individuals underscore the wide range of tastes, underscoring the fact that there exists a lack of universal love for reading.

Question item 5 explores in detail the obstacles that respondents face when it comes to reading. The most common obstacle cited by survey respondents is the temptation to spend more time on social media and watching television, which is (39.5%). Approximately 10.5% of respondents mentioned a lack of motivation as a hurdle when it comes to reading. A substantial portion of respondents, totaling 36.8%, identified engagement in other activities as an obstacle to reading. Some respondents, approximately 6.6%, mentioned that socializing with friends can hinder their reading habits. A modest yet significant proportion of participants (6.6%) expressed a dislike for the activity of reading.

Item 6 provides in detail the preferences of respondents when it comes to their favorite book genres. The result shows that a significant portion of respondents, comprising 35.5%, expressed a preference for literature and romance as their favorite book genre. This genre often includes novels, short stories, and poetry that delve into the complexities of human emotions, relationships, and personal journeys. They are likely captivated by well-crafted characters and narratives that resonate on an emotional level. The combination of religion, psychology, motivation, and self-development accounts for a substantial 31.5% of respondents' favorite book genres. This diverse genre encompasses spiritual and religious texts, self-help books, and works that delve into the intricacies of the human mind and personal growth. Readers in this category may seek wisdom, guidance, and insights to enhance their well-being, spirituality, or understanding of the human psyche. History and politics emerged as the favored genre for 22.4% of respondents. This genre includes books about historical events, biographies, political analysis, and social commentary. A smaller but still notable percentage, 6.8%, expressed a preference for books related to economics. This genre often encompasses books on financial management, economic theory, and analyses of economic systems. Readers in this category may have a particular interest in understanding economic principles, investment strategies, or the global financial landscape. A small fraction of respondents, at 1.3%, favored books related to technology. This genre typically includes works on emerging technologies, computer science, and digital trends. Readers interested in technology may seek to stay updated on the latest advancements, deepen their knowledge in the field, or explore the societal impacts of technological innovation. Lastly, a few respondents (1.3%) indicated that they enjoy all genres equally. These individuals may have eclectic tastes and find value in exploring a wide range of literary genres, from fiction to non-fiction, history to science fiction, depending on their mood and interests at any given time.

Question on item 7 delves into a detailed narrative regarding the question about the number of books respondents have read in the last 2 months, based on the survey results, nearly half of the respondents, accounting for 48.7%, reported that they had read one book in the last 2 months. About 14.5% of respondents stated that they had read two books in the past 2 months. This group represents individuals who are moderately active readers, consuming a book per month on average. Then, a notable 17.1% of respondents reported that they had read more than two books in the last 2 months. Lastly, 19.7% of respondents indicated that they had not read any books in the past 2 months.

The final item of the questionnaire delves into an in-depth analysis of the diverse reading intentions articulated by the participants. The findings indicate that the largest group of respondents, representing 43.4%, indicated that their primary reading purpose is to seek information and knowledge. For these individuals, reading serves as a valuable tool for learning, staying informed, and acquiring new insights. They engage with a diverse range of materials, including books, articles, and research papers, to expand their horizons, deepen their expertise, and satisfy their curiosity. This purpose underscores the importance of reading as a means of personal growth and intellectual enrichment. A substantial portion of respondents, comprising 38.2%, read primarily for leisure and entertainment. For these readers, books provide a delightful escape from the daily routine, a way to unwind, and a source of enjoyment. They are likely drawn to a variety of genres, including fiction, non-fiction, and literature, that offer engaging narratives, intriguing characters, and emotional experiences. Reading as a form of leisure allows individuals to explore different worlds, cultures, and perspectives from the comfort of a book. A smaller but significant percentage, at 7.9%, mentioned that their reading purpose is related to assignments. This category likely includes students, researchers, and professionals who read as part of their academic or work-related tasks. They engage in targeted reading to complete assignments, conduct research, or gather information to meet specific goals and responsibilities. About 10.5% of respondents identified reading as a hobby or pastime. For these individuals, reading is more than a means to an end; it is a source of joy and fulfillment in itself. They may collect books, join book clubs, and eagerly explore various genres, authors, and literary trends as part of their reading hobby. The act of reading, independent of any specific purpose, is a cherished pursuit.

To delve deeper into the data obtained from the field, in the following are provided several excerpts from the interview data.

Excerpt 1:

(jarang) membaca, kalau dirumah lebih banyak membantu orang tua 'I (rarely) read, I spend more time at home to help my parents'. From the excerpt above, it can be said that, firstly, it indicates that this respondent showed a strong commitment to his family and a willingness to prioritize his family's needs over personal academic pursuits. This could suggest a deep sense of responsibility and

care for their parents or potentially a cultural or economic context that places a significant emphasis on family support. Secondly, the statement implies that the student may have limited time for dedicated academic activities like reading, which could potentially impact their performance in their university studies. It hints at a potential challenge in balancing their academic responsibilities with their family duties, which might lead to time management issues.

Excerpt 2:

Ke pustaka kalau ada tugas 'I go to the library only if I have assignment to do'.

The excerpt above indicates that the student may not have a regular or proactive study routine. Instead, they tend to use the library as a resource primarily when there is a specific academic task at hand. This could imply a potential lack of consistent self-motivated learning—especially in reading—and a tendency to rely on external factors, like assignments, to drive their academic efforts. Furthermore, this excerpt hints at the student's study habits and their view of the library as a tool for assignment-focused work rather than continuous learning and exploration.

Excerpt 3:

Lebih suka main game sih daripada membaca. Tapi kalau cerita dari novel lebih suka menonton dari pada dibaca. Memang ga suka membaca sih. 'I prefer playing game than reading. But if it is a story from a novel, I prefer watching it than reading it. I just don't like reading'.

From the excerpt, it is learned that the student reveals a preference for interactive and visual forms of entertainment, such as gaming and watching adaptations of novels. This suggests a potential inclination towards multimedia experiences that offer more immediate gratification and engagement compared to reading. It may also reflect a preference for visual storytelling and a desire for a passive rather than active role in consuming narratives. However, the phrase "I just don't like reading" signifies a general aversion to reading, which could have implications for academic performance, as reading is a fundamental skill in higher education. It is important to consider that people have diverse learning styles and preferences, but in an academic context, the statement implies a need for the student to explore strategies that can help improve their reading habits and adapt to the demands of their university education.

5. DISCUSSION

From the first item in the questionnaire, it is learned that many individuals (90.8% of respondents) enjoy reading because it allows them to escape from the everyday and immerse themselves in fictional worlds, historical accounts, or the experiences of others. They relish the opportunity to use their imagination and transport themselves to different times and places through the pages of a book. Some respondents may have a deep curiosity and thirst for knowledge. They view reading as an essential means of acquiring new information, expanding their horizons, and staying informed about various subjects. This group values non-fictional works, academic texts, and informative articles that contribute to their personal growth. Books often evoke strong emotions and resonate with readers on a personal level. Those who love reading might have a deep emotional connection to certain books or genres, finding solace, inspiration, or a sense of belonging within their pages (Smith, 2002). Reading is a form of entertainment for many. They see it as a pleasurable pastime, much like watching movies, playing sports, or listening to music. These individuals may have a passion for specific genres, such as science fiction, romance, mystery, or fantasy. Meanwhile, turning attention to the 9.2% who responded with "No," it is evident that not everyone shares the same enthusiasm for reading. Their reasons for not liking reading could be diverse and may include the facts that some individuals simply do not find reading enjoyable or engaging. They may have other interests and hobbies that they prioritize over reading. For others, the demands of a busy lifestyle may leave little time for leisure reading. They might perceive reading as a time-consuming activity they cannot afford. Some individuals may have alternative learning preferences, such as visual or kinesthetic learning, that make traditional reading less appealing to them (Yulmiasri et al., 2008). Negative experiences with reading, such as struggling with reading comprehension or being forced to read uninteresting material, could contribute to a dislike of reading, as found by Gordon & Lu (2021).

The results also demonstrate a statistically significant and strong preference for reading in the Indonesian language. The cultural identity of numerous participants may be intricately linked to their engagement with reading in the Indonesian language. Indonesian literature comprises a diverse array of narratives, cultural practices, and historical accounts that evoke a profound resonance among its readership (Pujiharto & Sudiby, 2016). It offers individuals a mechanism for establishing a connection with their cultural heritage and gaining insight into their ancestral origins. Considering the fact that Indonesia is mostly inhabited by Indonesian-speaking individuals, there is a substantial availability of reading materials in the Indonesian language. A diverse selection of Indonesian reading materials, including books, magazines, and other literary resources, can be found at nearby bookstores, libraries, and educational establishments within the local community. The ease of access associated with this language leads to its widespread popularity for reading purposes. Indonesian language serves as the primary instructional medium in educational institutions throughout the nation. Consequently, a significant number of participants have been exposed to and have developed proficiency in reading and interpreting intricate literature in the Indonesian language. Given its educational base, this reading material becomes an obvious selection. Although the proportion of individuals who express a preference for English is relatively modest, it nevertheless

constitutes a noteworthy minority that exhibits a preference for materials in the English language. The English language is frequently linked to the domains of international literature, scholarly investigation, and worldwide communication (Parupalli, 2019). Certain individuals may have a need for English reading proficiency in order to pursue their academic or professional endeavors (Mohammed, 2018). This assertion holds particular validity for persons working in disciplines such as science, technology, commerce, and academia, where there is a widespread prevalence of English-language resources.

In today's digital age, these forms of entertainment can be highly engaging and easily accessible, often leading individuals to prioritize them over reading. The constant notifications and captivating content on social media, along with the allure of binge-watching TV series, can create distractions that make it challenging to devote time to reading. Respondents also mentioned a lack of motivation as a hurdle when it comes to reading. As supported by Doiron (2002), motivation plays a significant role in sustaining reading habits, and when it is lacking, individuals may find it difficult to pick up a book. A substantial portion of respondents, identified engagement in other activities as an obstacle to reading. Life is filled with various commitments and responsibilities, including work, family, and hobbies. These competing activities can leave little time and energy for reading, especially for individuals with busy schedules (Pressman et al., 2014). Some respondents also mentioned that socializing with friends can hinder their reading habits. Spending time with friends is a valuable aspect of social life, but it can sometimes conflict with solitary activities like reading. Social interactions and outings may take precedence over reading time. A small but notable percentage of respondents (6.6%) stated that they do not like reading, which in itself is an obstacle to engaging with books and written content. When individuals do not have an inherent interest or enjoyment in reading, they are less likely to invest time in this activity. The obstacles that individuals face when it comes to reading are diverse and reflective of the challenges of modern life. Distractions from digital media, a lack of motivation, competing activities, social engagements, and personal preferences all play a role in determining whether or not people engage with reading (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020).

From the data, regarding the reading genre, the data shows that respondents' favorite book genres span a diverse spectrum, reflecting the wide array of interests and preferences within the reading community. Whether drawn to the emotional depth of literature and romance, the insights of religion and psychology, the exploration of history and politics, the intricacies of economics, the advancements in technology, or a love for all genres, these preferences highlight the richness and variety of the literary world and its capacity to cater to a broad and diverse readership. The diverse range of preferred genres reflects the cultural, personal, and individual significance of reading choices (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). For many, the books they choose to read are an integral part of their identity, providing a sense of connection to their cultural heritage, personal experiences, and intellectual pursuits. The emotional resonance of literature and romance, the spiritual depth of religion and psychology, or the intellectual stimulation of history and politics all play a role in shaping individuals' preferences (Davis et al., 2016). Finally, the survey data highlights the adaptability of the literary world to cater to diverse readers. Whether one's interests lie in traditional forms of literature or emerging fields like technology, there is a book or genre that can accommodate those interests. This adaptability ensures that literature remains a relevant and vital medium in an ever-changing world (Santiago et al., 2021).

Based on the available data, it is evident that the respondents reported reading a single book throughout the preceding two-month period. The data presented indicates that a significant proportion of the participants in the survey maintain a consistent reading routine, successfully finishing a minimum of one book during a period of two months. For many individuals, a solitary book might serve as a gratifying exploration of a literary realm, a helpful repository of information, or a brief respite from reality. The second cohort, comprised of those who read more than two novels, can be characterized as moderately active readers, with an average consumption rate of one book per month. The act of completing the reading of two books within a span of two months may suggest the establishment of a regular and disciplined reading practice, or the adeptness in effectively managing one's time and responsibilities to accommodate reading alongside other obligations (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). This demonstrates a dedication to examining several literary pieces within a condensed timeframe. The collective has successfully completed a total of over two literary works throughout the preceding two-month period, indicating their enthusiastic commitment to reading and their profound involvement with the realm of literature. The act of reading more than two books within a given timeframe can indicate a strong inclination towards reading, a profound affection for the activity, or particular situations that have facilitated prolonged periods of reading (Lynch, 2013). Regarding the subset of respondents including approximately 9.7% who reported abstaining from reading any books throughout the preceding two-month period, this finding serves to acknowledge the existence of individuals who do not consistently engage in reading activities or experience intervals during which alternative obligations assume greater importance. The participants in this study may have encountered various challenges, such as limited time or diminished motivation, which temporarily impeded their reading habits.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study explored the intricate relationship between reading, language application, and cognitive functions. It emphasized that reading involves the utilization of personal memories and experiences to comprehend textual material, highlighting the cognitive nature of the reading process. The specific aim of this research was to investigate the reading habits and

interests of students in West Aceh, and it employed a qualitative descriptive research design, involving 83 respondents from seven universities. The study's findings indicated a strong inclination toward reading among the majority of students (90.8%), with Bahasa Indonesia being the preferred language for reading (92.1%). Notably, most students accessed reading materials through bookstores (54%) and had a primary motivation of increasing knowledge (69.7%), aligning with the overarching purpose of seeking information and knowledge (43.4%). Challenges in the form of distractions from social media and television (39.5%) were identified as obstacles to reading. Furthermore, the study unveiled a diverse range of reading genres, including history and politics, literature and romance, religion and psychology, motivation and self-development, as well as economy and technology.

The implications of these findings extend to educational policymakers and curriculum developers, as they can use this knowledge to tailor reading programs, enhance library resources, and adapt curriculum content to better engage students and foster literacy. Overall, this study underscores the significance of understanding and nurturing students' reading habits and interests in West Aceh, with the potential for broader application in educational and literacy promotion endeavors.

While this study offers valuable insights into students' reading habits and interests in West Aceh, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. The study involved a relatively small sample size of 83 respondents from seven universities. While this sample can provide meaningful insights into the reading habits of students in West Aceh, it may not fully represent the diverse range of students across the region. A larger and more diverse sample could provide a broader perspective. In addition, the study's timeframe focused on the last two months, offering a snapshot of reading habits during that period. A longitudinal approach or a more extended timeframe could reveal changes and trends in reading habits over time. Despite these limitations, this study serves as a valuable starting point for understanding students' reading habits and interests in West Aceh.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was supported by the Research Fund provided by Universitas Teuku Umar.

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