

## **Investigating the pleasure of reading habit during the Covid-19 pandemic: A study in University of Islam Malang**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research aimed at investigating the students' pleasure reading habit during pandemic since they spend most of their time at home including their school activities done at home. This research used qualitative descriptive method. There were 25 students of 8th semester of English education Department of University of Islam Malang as the subjects of this study. The data were collected using questionnaire and interview. The findings showed that the students' reading habits during this pandemic continued but with a different frequency than before the pandemic. Then, the students revealed that their duration of using devices, especially mobile phones increased because they spent most of their time at home during the pandemic. All students said that they used their mobile phones more often to read because it was more practical. Next, from the data collected, it could be concluded that the main factor that hindered students from reading during the pandemic was social media.

**Keywords:** reading habit; pleasure reading; factor influencing reading habit

### **INTRODUCTION**

Reading is the key to opening a window to the world. According to Rachmat (2020), reading is the most efficient way to enrich information in many aspects of this world, including science and technology. Theoretically, reading can be interpreted as a cognitive process that plays a role in building knowledge through negotiation of meaning (Jian, 2018) as cited in Yunus and Ubaidillah (2021). Reading has a very important role and becomes a daily necessity for every person who wants to acquire whatever information is required. Then, for most learners, it is the most important skill to master to ensure success. With strengthened reading skills, learners will make greater progress and development in all other areas of learning English skills (Ismail, 2017). On the other side, students should master this skill because when they study in their school, they will confront several English textbooks.

Reading English texts is very important because the reading activity will open the opportunity to absorb another existing knowledge. University students are expected to master the comprehension skills of reading English texts at an advanced level. This is because at the university level the lectures most likely are required to read English reference books on several subjects. According to Ganie and Rangkuti (2019), the ability to read English text will open new knowledge and opportunities. By reading especially reading English text, students will be able to get a lot of new information, and pleasure and also do many other things with the information that they get from the reading activity. In addition, Ayun and Yunus (2017) stated that reading involves a complex process. Therefore, to understand the whole text, the reader needs to decode the text and make interpretations. To understand the meaning of a text, the reader must have a variety of strategies, methods, and skills.

According to Adeyemi (2020) readers are successful people because they are often faced with a world of possibilities and motivations, therefore developing the habit of reading can open the door to success and possibility. Then, (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2014) explained that students' academic

achievement is also largely determined by reading habits because both reading habits and students' academic achievements are related to each other. However, Iklima et. al., (2020) stated that EFL learners often faced various difficulties when understanding English texts. This is because students have no idea of unfamiliar vocabulary and the concepts of the text. This is influenced by context and culture because any habit can be affected. In brief, reading is an essential skill in students learning activities, such as getting information in all aspects, improving their thinking process, also reading can be one of the alternatives for students to entertain in their spare time.

Pleasure reading means any reading that is freely chosen for enjoyment. It consists of a wide range of genres and publications including both fiction and nonfiction. In line with Abimbola et al., 2021 who explained that pleasure reading is a reading activity that is carried out for pleasure in spare time which not only aims to find information about school lessons but also for entertainment. Pleasure reading can include reading various fiction books such as prose, poetry, comics, stories, magazines, and so on while non-fiction such as biographies, motivations, textbooks, and others.

Students who frequently do pleasure reading will be developed more cognitively and it will make them tend to do better in school than their peers (Sullivan & Brown, 2015). In addition, Whitten et.al, (2019) said that students who do pleasure reading have better academic abilities than others, not only in English but also in mathematics, science, and history. This statement is supported by Muawanah (2016) who stated that reading is the best receptive skill in learning a language to gain knowledge. In other words, successful reading determines educational achievement and helps in the development of knowledge and language skills. Through reading activities, students will find it easier to understand the message and meaning of a text. In addition, regular reading activities can also optimize student learning achievement at school. In short, reading is a receptive activity that has an impact on academic life.

However, the spread of the COVID-19 virus that has occurred in recent years has affected various spheres of life. This is ranging from health, education, economy, religious practice, society, and so on (Jahan et al., 2021). Corona virus infection or Covid-19 is a disease caused by the corona virus and causes the main symptoms in the form of respiratory problems. This virus first appeared in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019. The spread of the virus is very fast and increases every day. This made the government set some policies as measures to reduce the increase in the number of patients infected by corona virus. One of the policies implemented is "Lockdown". Sun et al., (2021) claimed that the COVID-19 pandemic makes students should study in an unusual opportunity for children's print and digital reading preferences in an out-of-school context. Restrictions on most activities outside the home have forced children to find their reading resources from home through online orders of physical books, online reading materials, online loans, or purchases of e-books.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested to investigate the students' pleasure reading habit during pandemic since they spend most of their time at home including their school activities done at home.

## **METHODS**

### ***Research Design***

The method of this research was qualitative descriptive methodology. Qualitative research method is used to observe question that may best through verbally describing how participants in a study perceive and interpret numerous elements in their surroundings. Qualitative research refers to process-oriented methods use to understand, interpret, describe and develop a theory on a phenomena or

setting. It is a systematic, subjective approach used to explain life experiences and provide them meaning (Lele, 2019). Data collection of qualitative descriptive studies focuses on discovering the nature of the specific events under study. So, the purpose of this research is to provide an overview of various phenomena naturally on the students' pleasure reading habit during pandemic.

### ***Participants***

The subjects of this research were University of Islam Malang students in semester 8 of English Education Department of teacher Training and Education. The students in this semester had been through reading class before pandemic era which was in that class they got reading log in one semester full for pleasure reading and reported their daily reading log to the lecturer in each week. The researcher believed that their daily pleasure reading habit was still continuing until this time in this covid-19 pandemic era. There were 6 classes of 8 semesters and the researcher chose students in D class that researcher believed had a good ability in pleasure reading habit as the subjects. There were 25 subjects were chosen for this research.

### ***Instruments***

In order to get the result of the research, the researcher used questionnaire and interview. The researcher used questionnaires to collect the data to investigate the students' pleasure reading habit during pandemic time, while the interviews were done to get more information to complete their answer from the questionnaires. Both of the instruments of this research were adapted from previous research experts from Sun et al., (2021). In this case, there were a few statements from questionnaire questions that had been changed which tend to be unclear without losing the meaning or the essence of the questionnaire. Overall, there were 25 statements which were discussing about purpose of reading, reading frequency, students' reading material/devices, and factors that were hindered students pleasure reading habit. In addition, the questionnaire used in this research was Likert scale. There were 3 participants were interviewed to represent all the subjects that had given the respond to the questionnaire before. There were 7 main questions that would be given during the online-interview. This interview was conducted in order to get the necessary data related to investigate the pleasure reading habit of the students during Covid-19 pandemic.

### ***Data Collection***

Due to the current condition which was still unstable because of Covid-19 pandemic and the lectures activities were still done in online, the researcher made online questionnaires in the form of Google form. Then, the researcher distributed those questionnaires by personal message in WhatsApp to the students of university of Islam Malang who were asked to be the subjects in this research. Next, the researcher conducted semi-structured interview to follow up and get more deep information from the subjects. The researcher used Zoom application to conduct online-interview.

### ***Data analysis***

The data from questionnaire were analyzed descriptively by using formula percentage calculations based on Sugiyono's. Meanwhile, the data from interview were analyzed by using flow model by Miles and Huberman (1992) as cited in Sugiono (2015).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study adapted the indicators of reading habits from Adeyemi (2020) that were the purpose for reading during the pandemic, the device used for reading, the time spends for reading before and after the pandemic, and the factors that hindered reading during Covid-19. To answer the first problem of this research, the participants were asked to complete some questions which were divided into two parts. The first part contained the purpose for reading during the Covid-19 pandemic (6

statements), the second part contained materials/devices used during the Covid-19 pandemic (7 statements).

The result of the questionnaire on students' pleasure reading habit performance can be seen in table 1.

**TABLE 1.** Purpose for Reading and reading frequency during Pandemic Covid-19

<b>Reading Habit Question</b>	SA	A	D	SD
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
I read to eradicate boredom during the Covid-19 pandemic.	20	52	24	4
I read for entertainment during the Covid-19 pandemic.	12	56	28	4
<b>Reading Habit Question</b>	SA	A	D	SD
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
I read to add general information/knowledge during the Covid-19 pandemic.	20	72	4	4
I read to find information on Covid-19 during the Covid-19 pandemic.	16	72	12	0
I read for examination/academic studies during the Covid-19 pandemic.	12	64	24	0
I am relaxed and feel pleasure to read during the Covid-19 pandemic.	16	56	28	0
I spend 15-30minutes to read English text every day before the Covid-19 pandemic.	16	44	40	0
I spend 31 minutes-1 hour to read English text every day before the Covid-19 pandemic.	12.5	29.2	50	8.3
I spend more than 1 hour to read English text every day before the Covid-19 pandemic.	8	20	68	4
I spend 15-30minutes to read English text every day during the Covid-19 pandemic.	8	40	48	4
I spend 31 minutes-1 hours to read English text every day during the Covid-19 pandemic.	4	32	56	8

According to table 1 most participants were reading to add general information and knowledge during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially about the current information on the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the students' reading habits during this pandemic continued but with a different frequency than before the pandemic. This data was supported by the statement from participant 1 as follows:

*"I spend more time with my device during the pandemic. Sometimes I open websites to look for news".*

In addition, some students also agreed with the statement "I read for examination/academic studies during the Covid-19 pandemic".

*“During the pandemic, my habit of reading English texts improved quite rapidly. I can spend up to 3 full hours reading English journals. Yes, I enjoy reading texts in English more during the pandemic. I spend more time reading English journals for my final project”.*

Meanwhile, only few students read for entertainment which means that they probably got their entertainment from other activities.

More than 50% participants spent 15-30 minutes and 31 minutes-1 hour reading daily before and after the pandemic. Some of them even told that the duration of their reading habit was decrease during the Covid-19 pandemic compared to before the pandemic. The decline in students' reading habits could be caused by various factors.

*“During the pandemic, my reading habit of English texts is still continuing, but it decrease more than before the pandemic because I sometimes preferred to do other activities such as watching movies. I read a few comics during the pandemic, but I do not read as intense it was before the pandemic”*

Based on the data it could be seen that participants who spent more than one hour reading every day had no changes in their reading habit frequency. They remained consistent with their reading habits during the Covid-19 pandemic.

*"I enjoy reading English texts because my hobby is reading, so before the pandemic, I already had the habit of reading English texts. I feel more motivated when I read English text because English text is usually more interesting"*

*“During this pandemic, my reading habits have increased because I have no other activities, so I prefer to spend my time for reading”.*

In short, from the data in table 1, it could be seen that this pandemic situation did not affect the reading habits performance of students who already had good reading habits long before the pandemic.

Next, based on the data collected which can be seen in table 2, most participants used their textbooks and notebook as their reading material. Then, smartphones were the most popular device for reading among the participants during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**TABLE 2.** Materials and Devices Used to Read during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Reading Habit Question	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
I use textbooks as my material to read during the covid-19 pandemic.	12	56	32	0
I use fiction books as my material to read during the covid-19 pandemic.	16	44	36	4
I use magazines as my material to read during the covid-19 pandemic.	8	40	40	12
I use notebooks as my reading material during the covid-19 pandemic.	24	44	32	0
I use newspapers as my material for reading during the covid-19 pandemic.	8	28	48	16
I use my computer/laptop as my device to read during the covid-19 pandemic.	24	44	28	4
I use my phone as my device to read during the Covid-19 pandemic.	48	48	4	0

Due to the unstable condition in this pandemic era, the lecture activity was done online. It made the participants have more time to read their textbooks as well as their notebook for their pleasure reading and also for other reasons. In addition, several textbooks they got were in the form of pdf. They agreed that using a smartphone for reading was more convenient than the other devices.

*"I spend more time in front of my device especially mobile phones because I use this device the most".*

Table 3 shows that social media was the most inhibiting factor for participants to read during the pandemic. While other factors such as laziness, lack of motivation, and unavailability of reading materials, did not significantly affect their reading habits.

**TABLE 3.** Factors That Hindered Students' Pleasure Reading Habit during Covid-19 Pandemic

Reading Habit Question	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
I feel lazy to read during the Covid-19 pandemic.	12	24	56	8
I prefer to work to earn money during the Covid-19 pandemic.	16	40	40	4
I do not have any motivation to read during the Covid-19 pandemic.	4	32	56	8
I don't have printed and online material to read during the Covid-19 pandemic.	4	32	56	8
I'd rather spend time browsing my social media than reading during the Covid-19 pandemic.	20	56	20	4
It's difficult for me to find interesting topics to read.	20	40	30	10

Based on the data from interview, according to the first participant (participant 1), he said that he used his device more for accessing social media than reading.

*"Yes, I spend more time with my device during the pandemic. Sometimes I also open websites to look for foreign news. However, during the pandemic I used my phone more often to open social media".*

His statement was in line with the responses obtained by the researcher from the previous questionnaire distributed. Most participants preferred to access their social media rather than read during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Based on the findings, even though the pandemic conditions had affected various things in daily life including education, the students were continuing their reading habit activity during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was because this habit had been carried out long before the Covid-19 pandemic occurred. It was in line with Bana (2020) who stated that when someone already has a good reading habit, then he will continue to do this activity as his daily routine that he will always do. However, based on the data analyzed by the researcher, the frequency of reading habits of the participants did not improve significantly. This was in contrast with the previous study from Adeyami (2020) who found that the Covid-19 pandemic had a positive impact on the increasing reading hours. He found that there was a significant improvement in inhabitants' reading hours during the pandemic. From the data obtained in this research, most students preferred others activities to reading. They only read to get the information and for academic reasons with the frequency of reading for about fifteen minutes to one hour.

Next, students spent more time with their devices during the pandemic. The habit of using devices during this pandemic affected the reading habits of students. According to Kuhlemeier & Hemker (2007) who said that students' digital literacy ability can be predicted by looking at the frequency of computer and internet use at home. Based on the finding of this research, most of the participants chose mobile phones as their devices to read during the pandemic. The reason why the students chose mobile phones over other devices was that mobile phones more practical. Some students gave positive responses to the use of the device during this pandemic. First, they had more time in front of their devices to read at their pleasure time. Second, they also could use their devices to find various references for their reading materials through their phone because most of them were choosing e-books as their reading material. In line with Angelica et al., (2022) who said that students like reading e-books in various forms such as PDF, PDB, HTML, and Web the reason that they are easy to save e-book documents on their mobile phones, and it also makes them easy to take their book wherever they want to read. In addition, Manalu (2019) also stated that the use of the internet makes it easier for students to access information such as online news, journals, Wikipedia, and others.

However, some students stated that they mostly used their devices to do other activities. According to the data obtained from questionnaires and interviews, the researcher found that most of the students preferred to use their devices to open their social media. This reason of course made the students' reading habits decline from before the pandemic. Therefore, the data reveals that social media was the main factor that hindered students from reading during the pandemic. This statement was in line with the theory stated by Priajana (2015), as cited in Fitri (2020), who said that students spend more time playing on their devices to open social media than reading. They spend more of their free time watching television, listening to music, playing games, and interacting on social media. As a result, they waste their time on useless activities, and their reading frequency is decreased.

All in all, the subjects in this study agreed that they got many benefits from reading habits, especially the habit of reading English texts. Besides eradicating boredom, they also got a lot of advantages from their habit of reading English texts such as adding new vocabulary that they don't know, adding insight, improving English skills, improving their knowledge, and getting the current information. It is related to the theory from Daim, (2021) stated that the readers can learn new vocabulary, get new information, and become more knowledgeable from reading activities.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and the discussions from the previous chapter, the researcher took some conclusions. First, the students' reading habits during this pandemic continued but with a different frequency than before the pandemic. Most of the students only read to get the information and for the academic reason with the frequency of reading about fifteen minutes to one hour. Second, the data showed that mobile phones became the most popular device for reading among the participants during the pandemic. The students revealed that their duration of using devices, especially mobile phones increased because they spent most of their time at home during the pandemic. All students said they used their mobile phones more often to read because it was more practical. The last from the data collected, it could be concluded that the main factor that hindered students from reading during the pandemic was social media. It was because in this pandemic situation, no one controlled students' activities. Consequently, the students preferred to spend their free time playing social media rather than reading during the pandemic. Therefore, the researcher suggests to teachers to make strategies to improve students' pleasure reading habits that can be accessed by students wherever they are in any situation.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

We would like to declare that the study was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.