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Newspaper Reading Habits among Undergraduate Students: A Case Study

Devendra Kumar

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ABSTRACT

The present study explored the newspaper reading habits of undergraduate students attending higher education institutions and degree colleges in the Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh. The study aimed to determine the frequency of reading, purpose, preferred language, choice of newspaper, content preferences, and reasons for limited readership among the students. A descriptive research methodology was employed, and a structured questionnaire (via Google Forms) was distributed through Whatsapp. Out of 450 questionnaires distributed via WhatsApp groups, 386 valid responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 85.78%.

The findings indicate that the primary objective for reading newspapers is to obtain the latest information (59.33%), followed by reading as a hobby (37.05%) and enhancing general knowledge (34.97%). Hindi newspapers are the most preferred (92.19%), while 63.73% people also read English newspapers. Approximately 41.82% of students read newspapers every day, and the majority (61.66%) of students spend 30 minutes to 1 hour reading newspapers. The most read newspapers were Dainik Jagran (83.35%) and Hindustan (62.95%). Political news (79.63%) and sports (67.62%) are the most preferred sections. The results showed that the increasing use of the internet and social media (69.43%) was the most important reason for the decline in newspaper readership. Other reasons included spending too much time on television and radio (40.93%) and the declining quality of newspapers (36.52%).

KEYWORDS

• Newspaper Reading Habits • Undergraduate Students • College Students • Reading Culture • Higher Educational Institutions • Information Sources • Digital Media

AUTHOR'S AFFILIATION:

Associate Professor, Department of Library Science & College Library, Government Girls Degree College, Kharkhauda, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, India.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Devendra Kumar, Associate Professor, Department of Library Science & College Library, Government Girls Degree College, Kharkhauda, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, India.

E-mail: dkdeobhu@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Reading not only provides people with new perspectives but also makes them better and more well-rounded individuals in every respect. According to Goodman (1967), "Reading is a precise process. It involves the accurate, detailed, and sequential recognition and understanding of letters, words, spelling patterns, and larger linguistic units."

Reading is the process of understanding written language and constructing meaning from text (Hussain & Munshi, 2007). Reading should not be viewed as being confined to printed texts alone, as it also encompasses the ability to interpret and understand messages communicated through various forms of content. According to Majumder & Hasan (2013), a newspaper is a regularly published source that contains news reports, articles, and advertisements. As an important medium of information, newspapers enable individuals from different social and educational backgrounds to remain informed about local, national, and global events. In addition to disseminating information, newspapers encourage the development of reading habits and contribute to the growth of a reading culture. Regular newspaper reading enhances people's awareness of society and provides valuable insights into everyday life and contemporary issues.

1. The Fundamental Principle of Reading

In developing countries, reading continues to play a fundamental role in traditional education, beginning within the family and later being reinforced in early childhood education settings such as kindergartens. Before the 1970s, the behavioral perspective defined reading primarily as the act of vocalizing written symbols, focusing on its observable aspects. Contemporary perspectives, however, recognize reading as a metacognitive process that involves active thinking and self-regulation (Ocak & Karsh, 2022). The habit of reading regularly throughout life, driven by both personal needs and enjoyment, is referred to as reading propensity (Yılmaz, 1993). Yagcıoglu & Deger (2002) describe reading as a complex process in which individuals perceive printed words, interpret and comprehend their meaning through cognitive structures, and engage in perception, interpretation, integration, and response. Similarly, Linse and Nunan (2005) define reading as a set of interconnected skills that enable individuals to derive and construct meaning from written texts. Thus, reading is a multifaceted activity that requires the integration of perceptual abilities and higher-order cognitive processes.

Reading is a complex process that involves both perceptual and cognitive abilities. It requires learners to recognize written symbols while simultaneously interpreting and constructing meaning from the text. Since reading underpins the development of other language skills, fostering strong reading abilities from an early age is vital for enhancing students' overall language proficiency (Bernhardt & Kamil, 2003).

2. Newspapers and its scope

One of the most important sources of information is the newspaper. A newspaper is a daily or weekly publication that reaches readers from small villages to across the country. Timely reporting, interesting headlines and varied coverage of current affairs make it special. Beyond merely delivering news, newspapers play a vital role in raising awareness about education, human rights, and democratic values. In today's interconnected world, where personal stories often intersect with global challenges, newspapers help shape public opinion. It is the duty of newspaper journalists to inform the public so that citizens can participate in civic life. Newspapers differ from other media forms by providing timely coverage of a wide range of contemporary events and issues. They serve communities by educating the public, influencing opinions, and encouraging participation in public life, all while delivering news through compelling headlines.

Newspapers are different from other forms of media because they provide timely coverage of a variety of current events and issues. They serve communities by informing the public, shaping perspectives, and fostering civic engagement, while also presenting news through engaging headlines. Newspapers also contain sports reporting, editorials, cartoons, job listings, gossip columns, and schedules of radio and television programs. They offer in-depth commentary and perspectives on business, social issues, the arts, and current affairs. They also include articles about leisure

activities such as travel, food, wine, gardening and home renovation.

3. Characteristics of Newspapers

General-interest newspapers provide comprehensive coverage of topics such as politics, crime, business, culture, sports, and public opinion through editorials, columns, and political cartoons. Editorial cartoons are typically used to convey a point of view, while photographs enhance news reports. Newspapers play a vital role in raising awareness, expanding knowledge, and fostering a regular reading habit. For students across various academic disciplines, they serve as an essential resource for developing effective learning practices. As a developing country with rich cultural and ethnic diversity, India needs sustained and multi-pronged efforts to strengthen social and cultural integration. In this context, citizens' reading habits and their use of library resources play a vital role in maintaining and enhancing the country's multicultural identity.

Review of Literature

According to Napa et al. (2026), students who preferred analytical genres performed significantly better in reading comprehension (Cohen's d = 1.36). Regression analysis also revealed that genre preference was the strongest predictor of reading performance. These results highlight the role of consistent reading habits and interest in specific genres in developing literacy and improving reading comprehension. This study offers important suggestions for teachers, curriculum developers, and reading intervention programs, as it emphasizes the importance of promoting genre-based reading activities. Similarly, Dhiman (2022) examined the newspaper-reading habits of undergraduate and postgraduate students at Kurukshetra University. The results indicated that newspapers serve as a vital source of information extending beyond mere current affairs; they provide access to editorials, educational articles, and discussions on the nation's socio-economic issues. This study emphasizes the educational importance of newspaper reading to enhance students' knowledge and help in their academic and intellectual development. Mondal (2022) the study revealed that students had a common newspaper reading habit and most of them were interested in news related to politics, education, career and entertainment. Also, it was observed that social science students give great importance to newspapers as a source of information. According to Awuttey (2020), debate club members mainly access newspapers through the school library. Their reading practices vary from briefly scanning the content to reading articles in detail. When newspapers are available at home or in locations outside the school library, students read them either silently or aloud. The findings indicate that reading newspapers provides students with a sense of enjoyment and fulfillment. The study further recommends that teachers emphasize the educational value of newspapers and encourage students to cultivate regular newspaper reading habits alongside broader reading practices, as newspaper readers tend to develop effective scanning skills. Kothainayagi & Karthikeyan (2019) demonstrated in their study that "to foster the habit of reading newspapers, people should rely more on online newspapers rather than printed ones." Gupta (2018) found that both types of students liked English the most. Additionally, 48% of postgraduate students read newspapers for one to two hours, whereas 72% of undergraduate students spend less than an hour doing so. Furthermore, 'The Tribune' is the top choice for both undergraduate and postgraduate students (at 11% and 10%, respectively). Students—including 34% of undergraduates and 40% of postgraduates—read newspapers to broaden their knowledge, stay updated, prepare for competitive exams, and gather information on topics such as jobs, sports, vocabulary enhancement, and other subjects. Finally, 66% of undergraduate students and 68% of postgraduate students consider the library's newspaper service to be excellent. Kumar, Singh, and Siddiqui (2011) reported that Hindi was the primary language of nearly all respondents (96.75%) and the preferred language for newspaper reading (96.61%), while English was also widely read (67.57%). Most students spent one to two hours daily reading newspapers and primarily accessed them through personal subscriptions. *Dainik Jagran* emerged as the most popular Hindi newspaper, whereas *The Times of India* was the leading English daily. Editorials, sports, and political news were the most preferred sections. The study further found that students mainly read newspapers to obtain information and improve their general knowledge, with

only a small proportion reading newspapers as a hobby.

Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is to examine the newspaper reading habits of undergraduate students. It takes into account aspects such as their preferred language, reading frequency, time spent reading, daily reading pattern, favourite newspaper and favourite section of the newspaper. Furthermore, this study also explores the reasons for the decline in newspaper reading among undergraduate students to better understand their reading behavior.

METHODOLOGY

A Google questionnaire was used for data collection. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed through various WhatsApp groups, of which 386 completed responses were received from the participants. One of the primary objectives of the study was to ensure the inclusion of the main target population. The study population consisted of undergraduate students.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This study examines the newspaper-reading habits of undergraduate students enrolled in various higher educational institutions and degree colleges in the Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh. The data collected for the study has been systematically organized, classified, and tabulated using statistical techniques, including frequency tables and percentage analysis. The analysis and interpretation of the collected data are provided in the table below:

Table 1: Size of the Sample

Courses	Questionnaire		Total Percentage
	Distributed	Received	
BA, BBA, BCA, B.Com, B.Sc.	450	386	85.78

Table 1 shows that questionnaires were sent via various Whatsapp groups to a total of 400 selected undergraduate students drawn from the total student body pursuing undergraduate courses at various higher educational institutions and degree colleges of Meerut district (Uttar Pradesh) out of whom 386 responded.

Table 2: Respondent's Gender

Gender	Respondents	Percentage
Male	265	68.65%
Female	121	31.35%
Total	386	100.00%

Table 3: Purpose of reading newspapers

Purpose	Percentage
For the latest updates	59.33%
It is my hobby	37.05%
For general knowledge	34.97%
For seeking jobs	8.03%
Time pass	07.51%
All above	35.49%

***Multiple responses** allowed*

Table 3 presents data regarding the students' purpose for reading newspapers. It is clear from the Table 3 that most of the people (i.e. 59.33%) like to read newspaper for the latest updates, while 37.05% people read newspaper as a hobby, 34.97% people read it for general knowledge, 08.03% people read it for job search, 07.51% people read it for passing time and 35.49% people read newspaper for all the reasons mentioned in Table 3.

Table 4: Languages Read

Languages	Percentage
Hindi	92.19%
English	63.73%
Others	5.44%

***Multiple responses** allowed*

Table 4 shows that 92.19% students use Hindi language to read newspapers, while 63.73% students use English and 5.44% students use newspapers in other languages.

Table 5: Frequency of read newspaper

Frequency	Percentage
Daily	41.82%
Occasionally	25.13%
Twice or trice in a week	33.05%
Total	100%

Table 5 measures the frequency of newspaper reading, which shows that 41.82% of undergraduate students read newspapers daily, while 33.05% respondents read newspapers two or three times a week and 25.13% read newspapers occasionally.

Table 6: Time devoted to reading the newspaper

Time Spent	Percentage
30 Minutes - 01 hour	61.66%
Less than 30 minutes	30.98%
More than 01 hours	07.36%
Total	100%

According to Table 6, most people (61.66%) spent less than 30 minutes reading the newspaper, while 30.98% spent between 30 minutes and one hour and only 7.36% spent more than one hour reading it.

Table 7: Read Newspaper Daily

Newspapers	Percentage
Dainik Jagran	83.35%
Hindustan (Hindi)	62.95%
Amar Ujala	52.11%
The Times of India	36.13%
Janwani	31.24%
Hindustan Times	23.69%
The Indian Express	17.74%
Navbharat Times	14.14%
The Hindu	6.99%
Others	11.07%

***Multiple responses** allowed*

Table 7 shows that Dainik Jagran and Hindustan (Hindi) are the most preferred newspapers among the survey respondents; 83.35% and 62.95% of them, respectively, reported reading these newspapers. Other newspapers with substantial readership include Amar Ujala (52.11%), followed by Janwani (36.13%), The Times of India (31.24%), Hindustan Times (23.69%), The Indian Express (17.74%), Navbharat Times (14.14%), and The Hindu (6.99%). In contrast, only 11.07% of people said that they read newspapers other than those listed.

Table 8: Preferred Section of the Newspaper

Newspaper Section	Percentage
Politics	79.63
Sport	67.62
Sensational news	60.80
Sensational news	54.66
Cinema news	26.94
Editorial	13.24
Advertisement	14.89
Letter to editors	08.10

***Multiple responses** allowed*

Table 8 reveals that 79.63% of people prefer the political news section of the newspaper the most, followed by sports news 67.62%, sensational news 60.80%, cinema news 26.94%, editorials 13.24%, advertisements 14.89%, and letters to the editor only 08.10%.

Table 9: Main reason behind the declining trend of newspaper reading

Main Reason	Percentage
More time spent on TV and Radio	40.93%
Internet popularity specially social media	69.43%
Lack of interest in world around	25.90%
Declining standard of newspaper	36.52%
Other	10.98%

***Multiple responses** allowed*

Table 9 shows the main reasons for the decline in newspaper reading: 69.43% believe that the popularity of the Internet (especially social media) and 40.93% believe that spending more time on TV and radio are the major reasons; whereas 36.52% people consider the declining standard of newspapers and 10.98% people consider other reasons responsible for this.

Major Findings

- This study shows that despite changes in media habits, newspapers remain an important source of information for students.
- Majority of the people (59.33%) said that they read newspaper mainly to get current information, while some read it for hobby (37.05%), to increase general knowledge (34.97%). Approximately 35.49% indicated that they read newspapers for all the aforementioned reasons. (Table 3).
- Hindi is the most widely used language for reading newspapers; 92.19% of people prefer Hindi newspapers, followed by English (63.73%) (Table 4).
- Regarding the frequency of newspaper reading, 41.82% of students read newspapers daily, 33.05% read them two to three times a week, and 25.13% read them occasionally. (Table 5).
- Most people spend a fair amount of time reading newspapers; 61.66% people spend 30 minutes to 1 hour daily, and only 7.36% people spend more than 1

hour with the newspaper. (Table 6).

- Among newspapers, Dainik Jagran (83.35%) emerged as the most widely read, followed by Hindustan (62.95%). Other newspapers read by respondents included Amar Ujala, Janwani, The Times of India, Hindustan Times, The Indian Express, Navbharat Times, and The Hindu (Table 7).
- Based on content preferences, the most popular sections are political news (79.63%), followed by sports (67.62%), sensational news (60.80%), cinema (26.94%), advertisements (14.89%), editorials (13.24%), and letters to the editor (8.10%). (Table 8)
- Finally, the results indicate that the growing popularity of the internet and social media (69.43%) is considered the primary reason for the decline in newspaper readership. Other factors include spending more time watching TV or listening to the radio (40.93%), the declining quality of newspapers (36.52%), and various other reasons (10.98%). (Table 9).

Overall, the results suggest that while newspapers continue to play an important role in disseminating information to students, digital media poses a significant challenge to retaining traditional newspaper readership.

CONCLUSION

Newspapers are an important source of daily information. These newspapers, published in multiple languages, help people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds stay updated with the latest news and current affairs. Students and other educated individuals read newspapers to stay informed about events occurring around them. Reading newspapers not only enhances students' reading and comprehension skills but also keeps them abreast of trends and developments regarding national and international events. The entire process of learning and achieving success hinges on one's reading ability. Reading newspapers improves conversational skills, provides insights into lifestyle matters, and strengthens command over the language. To encourage students to read, you must ensure that newspapers are easily accessible to them.

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