

The Relationship Between Reading Habits, Experiences, Collaborations, and Academic Achievement: The Case of Adama Science and Technology University

* Atlabachew Getaye,  Abera Kassaye

Arsi University, Ethiopia

Keywords

Reading Habits,
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Abstract

This study examined the relationships between Adama Science and Technology University students' reading habits, experiences, collaboration skills, and their academic achievement. It applied a quantitative method. A correlational design was used. The study used both primary and secondary sources. The data-gathering instruments were structured questionnaires and document analysis. The researchers selected 200 participants from a total of 4579 students using simple and stratified sampling techniques. The researchers analyzed the data using means, standard deviations, correlations, ANOVA, t-tests, and simple regression. The study found no statistically significant differences by gender or year of study, but significant differences by department and religion in reading habits and experiences. The study found no statistically significant differences in reading collaborations by gender, year of study, department, or religion. Subjects' reading habits, experiences, and collaborations showed positive relationships with each other and with academic achievement, with differences in the strength of these relationships. Reading practice predicts both reading habits and reading collaborations.

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*Correspondence to Atlabachew Getaye, Arsi University, Ethiopia. Email: getaye.atlabachew@yahoo.com

Introduction

Research on reading shows that reading is a complex cognitive activity crucial to the proper functioning of higher learning. Students should use a repertoire of reading strategies to understand and apply various academic genres in their field of study (Alfassi, 2004; Cabrera-Pommiez et al., 2021). Through reading, learners internalize a wealth of experience, which can enable them to solve problems and be creative and innovative (Quach, 2018).

To cope with the present education system, students in the higher education system must know how to read effectively; according to Barbara et.al. (2018) cited in Chuchuca and Chuchuca (2023, p.5), "Reading is key in the university context, an important element in academic and scientific activities, as a means of access to information and knowledge, and as an essential element for the acquisition of professional skills." Most university classroom activities are closely linked to readings, including module readings, textbooks, handouts, proceedings, articles, slides, texts for technological applications, or other online resources that require frequent, repeated reading.

Deeper learning requires reading multiple texts and understanding different text genres, which can enhance learning because repeated exposure to information in different contexts may create strong, rich knowledge representations. Doing so demands reading comprehension skills such as understanding words and statements, activating prior knowledge, integrating information, validating information, process monitoring, memory, selecting and applying several reading strategies, and so on, which are tasks that effective comprehenders can do. Effective readers, unlike poor readers, infer information from texts and represent more information accurately and in an organized manner, which are directly related to developed reading habits and experiences (Beker et al., as cited in Leon & Escudero, 2017).

Shen (2006) and Kolawole (2015) define reading habits as how often, how much, and what students read. An individual's interests are determined to a considerable extent by the amount s/he will read and the intention with which s/he will pursue her/his reading activity. Having a strong reading habit means contributing "to the students' possession of the logical strength to educate themselves throughout their lives, the interest to know constantly, the enrichment of their intellect, the expansion of their vocabulary and the possibility of improving their human relations and their attitude towards life". (Martínez et al., 2010 in Chuchuca & Chuchuca, 2023, p.6).

In light of these points, researchers over the past decades have examined learners' reading habits (Al Jarf, 2023). Through these efforts, researchers have found that reading habits are associated with students' past reading experience, collaborative activity, gender, age, educational background, academic performance, and professional growth. Many factors affect students' reading habits. Parents, teachers, libraries, access to reading materials, peer influence, school curriculum, and other factors can affect students' reading habits positively or negatively.

Reading habits can be developed positively in the following ways. Parents can serve as role models by reading books and discussing issues with their sons and daughters. Teachers can shape students' reading habits by being exemplary, voracious readers and by offering assignments that involve intensive and extensive reading related to the curriculum. Further, the availability of reading materials in print and digital forms - at home and in the library can develop students' reading habits. Social circles are another factor that help learners develop their reading habits. For example, reading clubs can build readership by

encouraging learners to read materials and discuss their understanding in group settings (Anyaegebu et.al, 2016).

University disciplinary content should be read in different formats to access information for learning purposes. Such learning requires effective reading habits. Mature reading habits are therefore one of the most important components of efficient comprehension and learners' academic success (Ameyaw & Anto, 2018). Healthy intellectual growth requires it and plays a crucial role in enabling practical efficiency. Academic achievement requires reading and comprehending textbooks and other related texts voraciously, critically, and deeply. In line with this, Beker et al., in Leon and Escudero (2017, n.p.), argued that "Although it is possible to memorize information in such texts by rote learning of superficial textual features, meaningful learning requires a deep level of comprehension."

Reading time, frequency, and experiences determine one's success or failure. This explains the relationship between reading experiences and academic achievement, since limited reading experiences focused on literal comprehension and a lack of exposure to challenging texts may contribute to students' poor reading habits and skills (De-la-Peña & Luque-Rojas, 2021; Livingston et al., 2015). Similarly, Jiya's (1993) and Ameyaw et al.'s (2018) research on tertiary and high school students indicates that students with underdeveloped reading skills seem to have difficulties in their academic work. While explaining the negative impact of poor reading habits, Ameyaw et al. (2018, p.9) pointed out that "Students with poor reading habits get terrible scores in their examinations, get effortlessly distracted and eventually drop out from school."

These arguments suggest that achieving quality education in higher learning requires good reading habits and experiences. Appropriate reading habits pave the way for effective comprehension and academic success (Florence et al., 2017). They help students support their learning independently. Without effective comprehension skills, academic success is a wishful thinking for a student (O'Reilly & McNamara, 2007a). This is because students should be able to transfer information, identify main ideas, infer messages, compare and contrast, synthesize, analyze, and evaluate complex texts, which are, by and large, the daily activities of higher-learning students. This will happen if students develop mature reading habits and experiences during primary and secondary school (Atlabachew, 2017).

In relation to reading experiences, for instance, when individuals develop strong reading ability, they take advantage of reading opportunities and succeed in their reading. As they read, they improve their reading speed and vocabulary, which in turn strengthens reading comprehension (Anyaegebu et.al, 2016; Dong et al., 2020; Ho & Lau, 2018). Nevertheless, poor readers do not read much since they face reading difficulties. These difficulties reduce their reading because they avoid the opportunities to read, which can worsen their problems. This reduced reading limits struggling readers' opportunities to gain valuable practice and experience. The gap between mature and struggling readers widens as strong readers gain more reading experience while struggling readers do not (Chettri & Rout, 2013; Stanovich, 1986).

Having mature reading habits and rich reading, if students apply collaborative reading by sharing their feelings, ideas, or understanding of a print or electronic material in a group, they can easily realize deep learning since collaborative reading paves the way for group members to get different perspectives from heterogeneous readers on a topic at a time. According to Gokhale (1995), "The active exchange of ideas within small groups not only increases interest among the participants but also promotes critical thinking." This is because

collaborative reading engages students and improves meaning extraction, enabling learners to use higher-order thinking skills to understand and access higher-level texts (Sulistiyani et al., 2022).

Despite the increasing prevalence of poor reading habits, poor reading comprehension, and poor academic performance among higher-learning students, many educators tend to shift the blame to instructors' teaching methods, delivery, and subject-matter knowledge, which contain a grain of truth. However, these might not be the main reasons why students perform poorly in language and other academic examinations. Their failures may stem from students' lack of reading experience and poor reading habits and styles. Nevertheless, adequate research evidence is needed to show whether students' reading experiences and habits are key factors in why students fail or pass academic examinations. We also need to examine whether students view reading as a shared and collaborative act and how this affects their academic achievement.

When we examined the studies done in the field of reading in Ethiopia, most of them focused on students' reading ability (Mendida, 1988; Taye, 1999; Tesgaye, 1992), reading speed (Molla, 1987), approaches of teaching reading (Gebremedhin, 1993; Gessesse, 1999; Hailmichael, 1984), the effects of teacher mediation on students' conceptions and approaches to reading (Abiy, 2008), factors affecting high school students' reading habits (Anteneh, 2018; Getachew, 2018; Shiferaw, 2024), teachers' reading habits (Rukia, 2016).

In other words, we could not find research that examined university students' reading experiences, collaborations, and habits and their relationship to academic achievement. Therefore, this study is driven by the lack of available research and the decline in students' academic success. The present study, hence, tries to address the following research questions:

1. Are there differences in terms of department, gender, and year of study regarding students' reading habits, reading practices, and reading collaborations?
2. Do reading practices, reading collaborations, and reading habits have a positive/negative relationship with one another?
3. Do reading practices, reading collaborations, and reading habits have a positive/negative correlation with learners' academic performance?
4. Do reading practices predict reading collaborations and reading habits?

Methods

Design of the Study

The study used a quantitative method, applying a correlational design. The study aimed to examine correlations among the independent variables and between the independent and dependent variables, so a correlational design was appropriate.

Sources of Data

This study used both primary and secondary data sources. Based on a review of related literature, other studies, and standardized questionnaires developed and used by other researchers, we distributed questionnaires to first-year and third-year Business & Economics and Technology students at Adama Science and Technology University to enable self-appraisal of their reading collaboration styles, practices, and habits. For secondary data, the University's Office of the Registrar provided student scores.

Sampling Procedure

The study population was first- and third-year students. A sample of 200 students was taken from a total of 4579 students. 142 students were selected from the Pre-Engineering and Engineering divisions, and 58 students were randomly selected from the School of Business based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Table of sample size determination. The Business and Technology Faculties were selected by academic stream, year of study, and department using random and stratified sampling. In other words, it employed probability sampling techniques. Table 1 shows the samples taken from each academic unit, year of study, and department.

Table 1

Demographic profile of the sample

SN	Yr	Dep't	Total number of students		
			Male	Female	Total
1	1 st	Pre-engineering	754(33)	327(14)	1,081(47)
2	1 st	All in the School of Business and Economics	412(19)	188(8)	600(26)
3	3 rd	In School of Business & Economics			
		a) Management	108(5)	41(2)	149(7)
		b) Accounting	92(4)	44(2)	136(6)
		h) Logistics	93(4)	20(1)	113(5)
		c) Marketing	66(3)	42(2)	108(5)
		f) Economics	74(3)	16(1)	90(3)
		d) ITIM	42(2)	12(1)	54(3)
		g) BIS	35(2)	8(0)	43(2)
		e) Tourism	25(1)	14(1)	39(2)
		Grand Total	535(24)	197(9)	732(32)
4	3 rd	All in School of Engineering			
		a) Civil Engineering	399(18)	136(6)	535(24)
		b) Mechanical Engineering	369(16)	26(1)	395(17)
		c) Electrical Engineering	234(10)	92(4)	326(14)
		d) Chemical Engineering	53(2)	75(3)	128(5)
		Grand Total (including others)	1547(68)	619(27)	2166(95)

* SAMPLE=200 TOTAL POPULATION=4579 S/TP=200/4579=0.044

To determine the sample, we multiply the total of male and female students by .066. The samples are the ones in brackets before each total.

Instruments of Data Collection

Questionnaires and document analysis, particularly students' CGPA, were the data-gathering instruments. The questionnaire, containing items of questions on reading collaborations, practices, and habits developed by Stock (2011), was used, entailing different indicator variables such as reading collaborations, reading frequency, number of books read, time spent on academic reading, time spent on non-academic reading, academic environment, library attendance, information search skill, etc.

The structured questionnaire had three parts: the first part asked students about their past reading experiences and consisted of a series of statements designed to assess these experiences and understand their impact on reading attitude and development. A five-point

rating scale was used to specify: 1=never, 2=rarely (1-2 times per month), 3=sometimes (3-5 times per month), 4=very often (6-7 times per month), and 5=always (8+ times per month). The second section asked about students' reading collaborations, which addressed students' collaborative reading. It asked them whether students shared what they read with their friends and recommended books to their classmates. Respondents answered the statements using a rating scale: 1=never, 2=rarely (1-2 times per month), 3=sometimes (3-5 times per month), 4=very often (6-7 times per 44 month), and 5=always (8+ times per month). The last one inquired about their reading habits. The set of questions addressed learners' reading habits, such as text choice and reading frequency. A five-point rating scale was used to specify: 1=never, 2=rarely (1-2 times per month), 3=sometimes (3-5 times per month), 4=very often (6-7 times per month), and 5=always (8+ times per month). Stock (2011) used the questionnaires to test the instrument's validity and reliability, and subsequent researchers modified them. Using Cronbach's (1951) alpha method, the internal consistency of the RHQ (Reading Habit Questionnaire) was established. Subscale coefficients were: reading experiences = .88, reading habits = .78, and reading collaborations = .82 (Stocks, 2011). Nevertheless, we adapted it to our context and retested its validity and reliability. After making all the required amendments, the questionnaires were piloted on 30 students, and Cronbach's alpha was used to check the internal consistency of the questionnaires; the findings revealed that they were above 0.70

Method of Data Analysis

We analyzed the data using both descriptive and inferential statistics. We applied descriptive statistics (mean, median, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (correlation, t-tests, ANOVA, and regression) to analyze the data.

Results

Below are the analyses and interpretations of the findings regarding the relationships and predictive power of students' reading habits, practices, and collaborations.

Table 2

Mean Comparison of Reading Practices by Department

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Groups</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Reading Practices	Between Groups	1268.355	4	317.089	3.560	.008
	Within Groups	17102.569	192	89.076		
	Total	18370.924	196			

As can be seen in Table 2 above, the comparison of mean differences in reading practices among students by their departments depicted a significant difference ($F=3.560$, $p<.05$) at an alpha level of .05. Thus, the result showed that there was a statistically significant difference among students in their reading practices due to their being from different departments. The observed difference was beyond chance error. Moreover, the

Tukey HSD post hoc test was used to determine which pairs of group means differed. The results showed statistically significant mean differences in reading practices between the Department of Economics and the Department of Management ($P=.037$) and between the Department of Management and the Department of Civil Engineering ($P=.006$).

Table 3
Mean Comparison of Reading Habits by Department

Variables	Groups	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Reading Habits	Between Groups	3228.939	4	807.235	5.600	.000
	Within Groups	27675.447	192	144.143		
	Total	30904.386	196			

As shown above in Table 3, a comparison of mean differences in reading habits among students by their departments revealed a significant difference ($F=5.600$, $P<.05$) at an alpha level of .05. Thus, the result showed that there was a statistically significant difference among students in their reading habits due to their being from different departments. Moreover, when a post hoc test was employed, the Tukey test for significance of difference indicated significant mean differences in reading habits between the department of Pre-engineering and Management, the department of Economics and Management ($p=.002$), the department of Management and the department of Accounting ($p=.000$), and the department of Management and Civil Engineering ($p=.001$).

Table 4
Mean Comparison of Reading Co-operations by Department

Variables	Groups	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Reading co-operations	Between Groups	1926.579	4	481.645	1.547	.190
	Within Groups	59785.877	192	311.385		
	Total	61712.457	196			

As can be seen in Table 4 above, the comparison of mean differences in reading co-operations among students by their departments did not indicate a significant difference ($F=1.547$, $P<.05$) at the alpha level of .05. Thus, the result showed that there was no statistically significant difference among students in their reading co-operations due to their being from different departments.

Table 5
Mean Comparison of Reading Practices by Study Year

Variables	Groups	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Reading Practices	Between Groups	390.219	2	195.110	2.105	.125
	Within Groups	17980.705	194	92.684		
	Total	18370.924	196			

As shown in Table 5 above, the comparison of mean differences in students' reading practices by their year of study did not yield a significant difference ($F=2.105$, $p<.05$). Thus, the result showed that there was no statistically significant difference among students in their reading practices due to their being from different study years. It can be concluded that participants do not differ significantly in their reading practices by year of study.

Table 6
Mean Comparison of Reading Habits by Study Year

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Groups</i>	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Reading Habits	Between Groups	158.222	2	79.111	.499	.608
	Within Groups	30746.164	194	158.485		
	Total	30904.386	196			

Table 6 compares respondents' mean reading habits by study year. The comparison of mean differences in students' reading habits by year of study showed no significant difference ($F=.499$, $p<.05$). Thus, the results showed no statistically significant difference in students' reading practices across years of study. Respondents do not differ significantly in their reading practices by year of study.

Table 7
Mean Comparison of Reading Co-operations by Year of Study

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Groups</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Reading Co-operations	Between Groups	1343.318	2	671.659	2.158	.118
	Within Groups	60369.139	194	311.181		
	Total	61712.457	196			

As Table 7 displays above, the comparison of means for students' reading co-operations by their year of study did not show a significant difference ($F= 2.158$, $p<.05$). Thus, the result showed that there was no statistically significant difference among students in their reading practices due to their being from different years of study. It can be concluded that participants do not significantly differ in their reading co-operations as a result of their year of study.

Table 8
Mean comparison of reading practices by Religion

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Groups</i>	<i>Sum Of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Reading Practices	Between Groups	1021.303	4	255.326	2.826	.026
	Within Groups	17349.621	192	90.363		
	Total	18370.924	196			

Table 8 above compares mean reading practices by religion. Comparison of mean differences in reading practices among students by religion revealed a statistically significant difference ($F = 2.825$, $p < .05$) at the .05 alpha level. Thus, the results showed a statistically significant difference in students' reading practices across religious groups. Moreover, the Tukey post hoc test indicated significant mean differences in reading practices between Muslim and Catholic ($p = .023$), Protestant and Catholic ($p = .029$), and Orthodox and Catholic ($p = .009$).

Table 9
Mean Comparison of Reading Habits by Religion

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Groups</i>	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Reading Habits	Between Groups	2445.122	4	611.281	4.001	.004
	Within Groups	29335.609	192	152.790		
	Total	31780.731	196			

As seen in Table 9 above, a comparison of mean differences in reading habits among students by their religion revealed a statistically significant difference ($F=4.001$, $p < .05$) at an alpha level of .05. Thus, the result showed that there was a statistically significant difference among students in their reading habits due to their being from different religious groups. Moreover, the post hoc Tukey test indicated significant mean differences in reading habits between Muslim and Catholic ($p = .017$), Protestant and Catholic ($p = .014$), and Orthodox and Catholic ($p = .001$).

Table 10
Mean Comparison of Reading Co-operations by Religion

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Groups</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Reading Co-operations	Between Groups	1762.080	4	440.520	1.411	.232
	Within Groups	59950.377	192	312.242		
	Total	61712.457	196			

As can be observed in Table 10 above, the comparison of mean differences in reading co-operations among students by their religion did not yield a statistically significant difference ($F=1.411$, $P<.05$) at the alpha level of .05. The result showed that there was no statistically significant difference among students in their reading co-operations due to differences in their religion. Thus, participants do not significantly differ in their reading co-operations as a result of differences in religion.

Table 11

t -Test for Equality of Means for Reading Practices, Reading Habits and Reading Cooperation's by Gender

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean difference</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Reading practices	Male	146	35.58	-.477	10.095	195	-.302	.763
	Female	51	36.06		8.470			
Reading Habits	Male	146	36.53	1.822	13.719	195	.891	.374
	Female	51	34.71		8.353			
Reading co-operations	Male	146	49.88	5.073	19.714	195	1.767	.079
	Female	51	44.80		9.364			

As indicated in Table 11, a comparison of students' reading practices, reading habits, and reading co-operations by gender reveals that there were no significant variations between students due to their difference in gender ($t = -.302$, $p < .05$) in reading practices, ($t = .891$, $p < .05$) in reading habits, and ($t = 1.767$, $p < .05$) in reading co-operations, indicating that the observed mean differences were due to chance error. Thus, the results showed no statistically significant differences among students in their reading practices, reading habits, and reading co-operations by gender. It can be concluded that participants do not differ significantly in their reading practices, reading habits, and reading co-operations as a result of gender differences.

Table 12

Reading Practices as Predictor of Reading Habits

<i>Model</i>		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1	Regression	14693.176	1	14693.176	167.676	.000 ^b
	Residual	17087.555	195	87.628		
	Total	31780.731	196			

a. Dependent Variable: RHs
b. Predictors: (Constant), Res

Table 12 shows that when students' reading habits were regressed on the reading practices, the results of the regression analysis indicated that students' reading practices were found to be a statistically significant predictor of their reading habits ($F = 167.676$, $P < .05$). As a result, we can conclude that students' reading habits were significantly predicted by their reading practices.

Table 13

Reading Practices as Predictors of Reading Co-operations

<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Regression	6835.109	1	6835.109	24.288	.000 ^b
Residual	54877.348	195	281.422		
Total	61712.457	196			

a. Dependent Variable: RCs
b. Predictors: (Constant), REs

Table 13 shows that when students' reading habits were regressed on the reading practices, the results of bivariate regression analysis indicated that students' reading practices were found to be statistically significant predictors of their reading co-operations ($F = 23.288$, $p < .05$). As a result, we can conclude that students' reading practices were a significant predictor of their reading co-operations.

Table 14

Pearson Correlation among Reading Practices, Reading Habits, Reading Co-operations and CGPA

	<i>RP</i>	<i>RH</i>	<i>RC</i>	<i>CGPA</i>
Reading Practices (RPs)				
Reading Habits (RHs)	.685**			
Reading co-operations (RCs)	.333**	.365**		
CGPA	.698**	.884**	.647**	
N	197	197	197	197

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As indicated in Table 14 above, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed among reading practices, reading habits, reading co-operations, and CGPA, and the correlational analyses showed that all variables were positively correlated. The Pearson correlation between reading practices and reading habits was $r = .685$, $p < .01$, and the bi-variate correlation between reading practices and reading co-operations was $r = .333$, $p < .01$, while the Pearson correlation between reading habits and reading co-operations was $r = .365$, $p < .01$. The bi-variate correlation between reading practices and CGPA was $r = .698$, reading habits and CGPA was $r = .884$ and reading cooperation and CGPA was $r = .647$. Thus, reading practices, habits, and collaborations had statistically significant, positive correlations with one another and with CGPA.

Discussion

This study examined the relationship between reading habits, experiences, and collaborations and academic achievement. The findings showed that reading experiences, habits, and collaborations were positively related to academic achievement. This finding was corroborated by Onel and Durdukoca (2021), who found that the more students read, the better they achieved in their biology course and earned 70% or higher. Another study by Mo

(2021) also found that most students (95% of respondents) achieved 70% or higher on comprehension questions when they read optimally.

According to Schmidtke et al. (2024, p.1), who reviewed more than 11 articles on reading experiences, they identified similar findings. The summary of the research findings showed that reading experiences “critically shape the development of reading outcomes and various component skills of reading”. Similarly, other researchers also attested that intensive reading experiences at home and in schools improve academic achievement, and reading habits contribute significantly to better academic achievement. (Bashir & Matto, 2012; Enekwechi & Ezeanya, 2021; Owusu-Acheaw, 2014) In line with this, Rikin et al. (2015) also reported that “...caregiver reading frequency correlates positively with emergent literacy, academic, and social skills in children” (p. 656).

Among other factors assumed to affect academic achievement, gender is one many researchers have studied. In this study, male and female students showed no statistically significant differences in reading habits, experiences, or collaborations, likely because both groups face barriers to accessing reading materials. Most studies, however, reported that female students have better reading habits and experiences of reading for pleasure than male students (Chen, 2008; Merga, 2014; Uusen & Mürsepp, 2012).

In this study, we found a statistically significant difference in reading habits and experiences but not in reading collaborations, supporting other findings that students differed in their reading experiences and habits. (Arslanoğlu & Mor, 2018; Yılmaz, 2010). These differences may stem from several factors, including the nature of the departments, family background, and elementary and high school reading habits and practices.

Religion is another source of difference that plays a significant role in shaping people's reading habits and practices. To understand and interpret their faith, believers read scriptures. While reading scriptures, followers shape their cognitive, affective, and behavioral abilities. They are assumed to be responsible and ethical believers, which may lead to hard work and better academic achievement. In line with this, Glanville et al. (2008) found that religious attendance predicts higher academic achievement. They also reported that students engaged in religious practices score higher than students who are not involved in religious practices. Among the subjects in this study, religion differed in students' reading habits and practices, but reading collaborations did not, as confirmed by other studies such as Moguel (2019). These findings require further qualitative study to understand the causes of differences in reading habits and practices resulting from students' religious traditions.

Year of study did not display a statistically significant difference. In other words, first- and third-year students in this study had similar reading habits, experiences, and collaboration skills, which contrasts with the findings of Bosede and Helen (2018). They reported that first-year students read more than fourth-year students, despite similar views on enjoying reading. As students progress through the years, their reading habits and experiences are assumed to decrease because their grades are sufficient to graduate. In contrast, first-year students are expected to study longer than third-year students to earn better grades, join their chosen department, and graduate with high grades. The present study, however, shows that first- and third-year students have similar reading habits, experiences, and collaboration, which requires further meaning-based study to understand why these differences exist.

Conclusions and Implications

The following conclusions were drawn from the analyses and interpretations of the data. Department was a source of differences in reading practices and habits, but not in co-operations. Students from different departments did not have similar reading practices. For instance, reading practices differed significantly between Economics and Management, and between Management and Civil Engineering students. The students from different departments did not have similar reading habits. For instance, reading habits differed significantly between the Department of Pre-engineering and Management, Economics and Management, Management and Accounting, and Management and Civil Engineering. Students from different departments showed similar reading co-operations. In other words, being from different departments did not significantly affect their style of reading co-operations.

Similarly, religion differed in reading practices and habits but not in co-operations. The students from different religions did not have similar reading practices. For example, students' reading practices differed significantly between Muslim and Catholic, Protestant and Catholic, and Orthodox and Catholic. Students from different religions did not have similar reading habits. For instance, students' reading practices differed significantly between Muslim and Catholic, Protestant and Catholic, and Orthodox and Catholic. However, the students from different religions did not vary in their style of reading co-operations.

Regarding gender, students did not differ significantly in reading practices, reading habits, or reading co-operations. Gender did not differ for students' reading practices, reading habits, and reading co-operations.

First-year and third-year students did not differ significantly in reading practices. This held for first-year and third-year students' reading habits and reading co-operations.

Reading habits, reading practices, and reading co-operations showed positive relationships, with varying strengths. The relationship between reading habits and practices was strong, between reading habits and reading co-operations was moderately strong, and between reading practices and reading co-operations was slightly positive. In terms of prediction, reading practices predicted students' reading habits. Similarly, reading practices predicted students' reading co-operations.

Based on the above conclusions, the researchers put forward the following suggestions:

The findings revealed that reading practices, reading habits, and reading co-operations correlated positively, strongly, and significantly with CGPA. Most scholars strongly argue that effective reading habits are central to self-education and lifelong learning. For students to succeed academically, the amount and intensity of their reading are crucial; therefore, students should develop effective reading habits, reading practices, and reading collaboration skills.

Students from different departments did not have similar reading habits and practices. To narrow these discrepancies, departments should engage learners in reading by offering varied reading assignments, training, and presentations to improve learners' reading ability. At the institutional level, the university should involve learners in reading clubs, mixing students of different abilities to exchange experiences and instill a love of reading in students' daily reading practices.

Reading habits, reading practices, and reading co-operations showed positive relationships to one another. In particular, for reading collaborations, both English and other course content instructors should encourage group reading among students rather than focusing only on individual reading. Group reading can help learners develop better perspectives on a topic, since each individual brings new insights to the discussion after their personal reading. People are different in terms of their reading style, background knowledge, reading experiences, reading values, and application of reading strategies; hence, when they come together in groups to share what they have read, each group member will benefit, and as a group, students will have a better understanding of the material since they shape their level of understanding based on the group's reflection, evaluation, synthesis, and analysis. Besides, students' discussion skills will be promoted, which is a by-product of shared reading. Thus, the University should encourage reading collaborations.

Limitations of the Study

It would have been interesting to include students from other universities, especially private universities, to provide a more complete picture of Ethiopian higher-learning students. However, time and budget constraints did not allow the study to be extended further. In addition, the study did not examine the cause-and-effect relationships among reading habits, experiences, collaborations, and academic achievement. Further, the topic could have been better understood if the study had used a qualitative method to understand the personal factors deeply that lead to the success or failure of effective reading habits, experiences, collaborations and better academic achievement, and if it had applied a longitudinal study to understand the changes that students would undergo through time.

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