

A PERSPECTIVE STUDY IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA BOOMING; HOW STUDENTS DISTINGUISHING FACTS AND MISINFORMATION?

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Abstract: *Reading culture in many literatures has proven to be a key to success. In the new landscape of information booming catalysed by the progress of internet of things, the paradigm and mechanics of reading have also entering the new level. The purpose this study is to investigate the cultural change of reading and its patterns. Another aspect that is also taken into our focus of study is the students' attitude on how do they accept information and distinguish between facts and misinformation. 175 respondents among semester 1 students from Politeknik Tun Syed Nasir Ismail become the subjects of this research. Mix methodology of combining quantitative and qualitative approach have been used to sought data. Data is further analysed using statistical software to come to the findings of research. Results suggest students' behaviour and attitude and level of acceptance of information are vary among students. Significant finding between high and low achievers has shown a distinctive attitude and strategies towards distinguishing facts and misinformation.*

Keywords: *Reading, digital society, fake news, information.*

Introduction

Reading in many cultures is a pretext of knowledge society. Reading which is the basic mechanism for acquiring information and establishing one's belief has abundance of positive values. But, to generalize reading as determinant factor for every success is not scientific enough. Living in a fast-paced society with the emergence of internet of things, makes the nature of reading should have re-visit. How could we define 'reading' in today's culture where vast information is channeled through internet and like it or not the accumulation of information becomes so perplexed.

Becoming a lifetime reader is predicated on developing a love of reading (Sanacore, 2002). Benefits of reading have been reported to give positive effects in many areas as such: reading attainment and writing ability (OECD, 2000) for reading that is done both in school and out of school (Krashen, 1993; Anderson et al, 1988; but also see Taylor et al., 1990); text comprehension and grammar (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Cox & Guthrie, 2001), even

after a variety of health, wealth and school factors were statistically controlled for (Elley, 1994); breadth of vocabulary (Angelos & McGriff, 2002), even after other relevant abilities such as IQ or text-decoding skills are controlled for (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998); positive reading attitudes (Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999), which are linked to achievement in reading (McKenna & Kear, 1990); greater self-confidence as a reader (Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999); And pleasure reading in later life (Aarnoutse & van Leeuwe, 1998).

At the most basic level, reading is the recognition of words, from simple recognition of the individual letters and how these letters form a particular word to what each word means not just on an individual level, but as part of a text (Tennant, 2013).

Problem Statement

In these recent years, where most of our lifestyles have changed so rapidly and turning to internet-based information, the way we perceive things also could have change together. People have problems in screening information and would not be able to distinguish facts and the vast information that might not be true at all. In academic works, this require criticism in order to get to the core of facts or in some issues we could only have throw away the information that might not be true or misleading. Ways and strategies how people accept and reject information may become too important for internet, media and technology to benefit the human progression.

Literature Review

Reading through Internet

The evolution of the digital society is most evident among the students. Students entering higher education now or those who were born between 1982 and the early 2000s, are members known as the 'Net Generation' (Gianci, 2011). Christina & Rumbold (2006) reported reading more on computers and other electronic devices than in print form for the first time, confirming the central role of technology in young people's literacy lives. Almost all (97%) children said they had access to electronic devices such as computers, tablets, phones and e-readers, and almost all (97%) had access to the internet at home. The same study also found children were more likely to say that they read on screen than on paper outside school. 68.7% reported reading on a computer, phone or tablet, compared to 61.8% reading in print (e.g. a book, magazine or newspaper). Children were more likely to say that they preferred to read on screen than on paper. More than half (52.4%) said that they would rather read using electronic devices, compared to just under a third (32%) who said they would rather read in print.

Research by Scholastic US in 2012 also indicated children and young people's increasing preference for reading on screen. While children and young people feel positive about reading on screen and do so regularly, concern about the potential negative impact of screen reading has been raised by studies indicating that some aspects of reading, such as comprehension and recall, may be worse on screen than on paper. For example:

A 2005 Swedish study found that students learned better when reading from paper, with researchers concluding "...the e-book presence hinders recall of assimilated information whilst the presence of the paper support tends to facilitate it." A trial of Norwegian students in early 2013 found that those who read texts on computers performed less well on a comprehension test than those who read them on paper, leading the researcher to speculate: "The ease with

which you can find ...your progress in the text [on paper], might be some way of making it less taxing cognitively, so you have more free capacity for comprehension."

On the other hand, Knight (1997) who observed that people do not like to read from computer screens. They preferred to read from printed documents or even print those out from dot matrix printers. Most of them also agreed that reading through printed versions were more comfortable and easier to comprehend the content.

Malaysian students' attitude towards reading

The habit of reading does not appear to be a prominent feature in the lives of most Malaysians. Shahriza and Amelia (2016) suggested that Malaysian student read for academic purposes only, and not for general knowledge. They, however, proposed that the trend may have shifted to a digital reading habit as the finding on types of reading material are highly ranked by students by 70%. Zainal (2011) reported that even though majority of Malaysia are equipped with literacy skills, the reading habits are still at an unsatisfactory level. Many students perceived that reading is a waste of time and they only read for purpose of passing examinations. This was supported by the research earlier done by Pandian (2000) which came out with two major concerns. According to him, 20% of Malaysian read regularly and the rest are "reluctant readers". He suggested that if the phenomenon is left unattended, the Malaysia's future would eventually be directed by reluctant readers' who are a way behind from knowledge, intelligence and maturity. However, the coming of digital media may explain the difference in reading habits among Malaysians. Furthermore, a study on Malaysian students by Asmar and Zaliffah (2014) in their item about printed reading materials shows majority of their respondents read printed publications such as newspapers, books or magazines almost every day (46.6%), followed by 3-5 times a week (32.0%), less than 3-5 times a week (16.5%), and whenever necessary or when the materials are available (4.9%). However, their another finding shows majority of the respondents (69.2%) read digital-based materials for leisure rather than research (18.1%) and study (12.7%). In seeking the respondents' biggest impact of digital emergence, this study revealed that 62.2% agreed that their reading habits have changed and their interest in reading have developed due to the emergence of digital materials such as online newspapers, e-book and e-magazines.

Students' strategies in coping with overload information

One of the challenges of the information age learning environment is providing students with the ability to process and use information effectively. Advances in the application of information technology have allowed access to a vast number of resources which can result in confusion and uncertainty for users (Kuhlthau, 2004). Proficiency in information seeking has become more important as a result of this increase in technology. "The ability to critically seek, evaluate and use information and tools from information seeking is a competence that is given increasing importance in contemporary western society (Limberg & Sundin, 2006).

Furthermore, comprehensibility may be an important mediator in the relationship between demographic and cultural factors and the acceptance of fake news. For instance, some authors have proposed the persuasiveness or perceptions of comprehensibility of messages may be affected by culture and in turn this affects the adoption of e-WOM (Laroche, Toffoli, Zhang, & Pons, 2001). Similarly, in a so-called post-truth world, the comprehensibility of messages may mediate how gullible people of different genders, ages, and educational backgrounds are in being prone to adopt fake news.

Throughout our lives we are bundled with information from all directions – newspapers, television, magazines, textbooks, just to name a few. Often, they are perceived as a fact or other views of the same subjects. Moreover, throughout our education, we take classes in different subjects and we are required to memorize, learn, and be able to use declarative information or propositions (statements about things) within that subject area productively for thinking and problem solving. The ability to take in and remember information is very important but equally important is the ability to evaluate the ‘quality’ of that information. Rauch (1993) argues with students’ ability to weigh information in terms of accuracy or distinguishing between facts and opinion and how students regard it as accepted knowledge. While, Mitchell (2013) in his research claims people is quite willing to categorize statements into facts and beliefs but the criteria they use to do so seem to vary as a function of a number of different variables. Domain content is one such variable. The ability to distinguish fact from misinformation such as obsolete theories and the growing worry on fake news is now become the priority our educational system. The ability to accurately evaluate information is particularly important given the emphasis of our educational system on teaching students to be thinkers and not misguided by abundance of misinformation.

Factual Vs Non factual

In a 2018 Pew Research Center study, U.S. adults had difficulty telling the difference between fact and opinion, with just 26% of those surveyed able to correctly classify a full list of five factual statements and 35% of adults able to correctly classify five opinions. According to Pew, “The politically aware, digitally savvy, and those more trusting of the news media fare better.” It makes sense. Domonoske (2016) review on a study according to Stanford University of 7,804 students from middle school through college. By which some 82% of middle-schoolers couldn’t distinguish between an ad labeled “sponsored content” and a real news story on a website, The study is the biggest so far on how teens evaluate information they find online. Many students judged the credibility of newsy tweets based on how much detail they contained or whether a large photo was attached, rather than on the source. In the same study, it is found that Most middle school students can’t tell native ads from articles; Most high school students accept photographs as presented, without verifying them; Many high school students couldn’t tell a real and fake news source apart on Facebook; Most college students didn’t suspect potential bias in a tweet from an activist group and most Stanford students couldn’t identify the difference between a mainstream and fringe source.

Methodology

This research uses a mix method design; quantitative and qualitative approach that tap with three issues namely students reading behaviour, materials and attitude towards reading and strategies distinguishing facts and misinformation. Respondents were among students from two main departments in Politeknik Tun Syed Nasir Ismail from semester 1 students. 175 students have been used as respondents out population of 950 students. This complies Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Table of sampling ratio 175 : 950 i.e 175 sample out of 950 population size with 100 percent response rate. Questionnaire and open-post qualitative questions were used for this research. The nature of questions is close-ended answer option and some longer answers are required with reasons and justification. All the questions were handled and distributed randomly using Google form. Descriptive statistics and simple correlative statistics were used for analysis. All data were tested and run by using statistical software and percentage analysis. 13 questions with several demographic registers were sought but only relevant items were tabulated and displayed.

Findings & Discussion

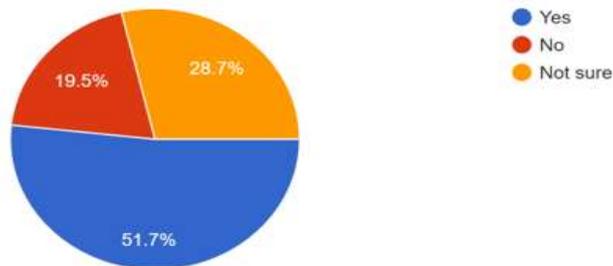


Figure 1: Students' perception of watching Youtube video similitude to reading

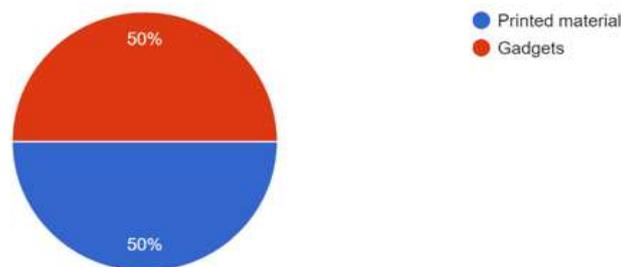


Figure 2: Students' reading preference

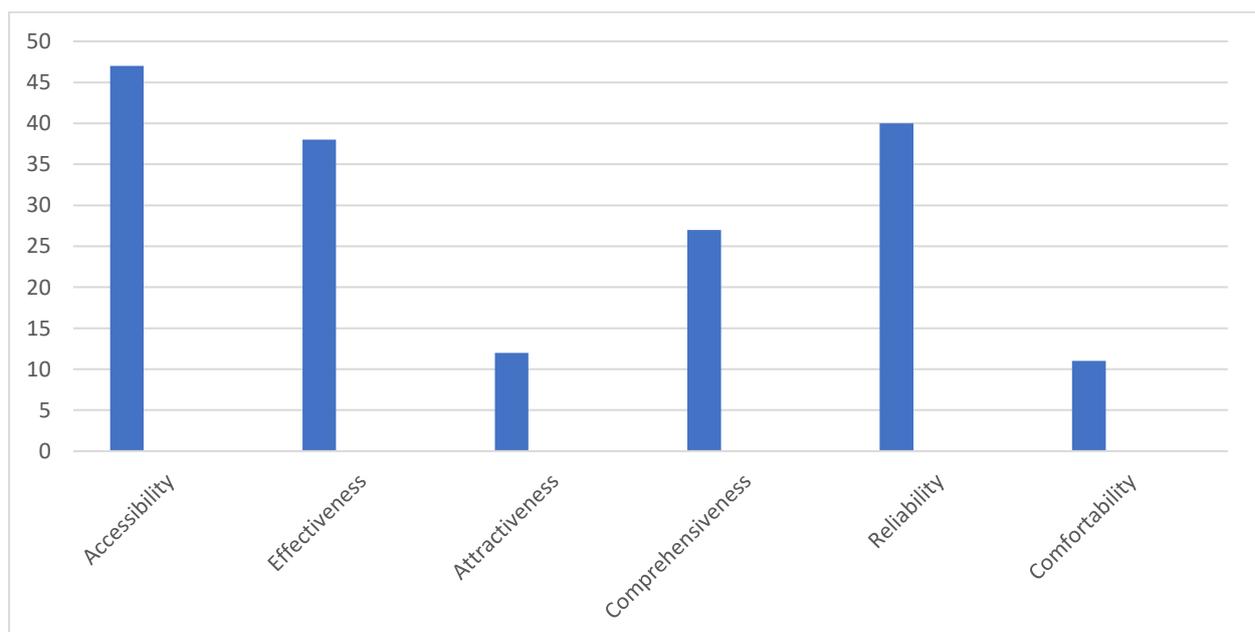


Figure 3: Students' determinants to reading mechanic preference

Table 1: Students' attitude and acceptance level (High Achievers)

1.1 Reading Attitude – CGPA 2.50 – 3.00

Gender	dislike	%	lack of interest	%	read substantially	%	read extensively	%
M			21	33.8	11	17.7		
F	1	1.61	20	32.2	6	9.67	3	4.83
Σ N (62)	1	1.61	41	66.0	17	27.3	3	4.83

1.2 Acceptance of information – CGPA 2.50 – 3.00

Gender	without further action	%	discuss with people	%	compare info.	%	follow widespread	%
M	1	1.61	8	12.9	19	30.6	3	4.83
F	1	1.61	5	8.06	23	37.1	2	3.22
Σ N (62)	2	3.22	13	20.9	42	67.7	5	8.05

1.3 Acceptance of information – CGPA 2.50 – 3.00

Gender	follow majority	%	using logic	%	research	%
M	4	6.45	13	20.9	9	14.5
F	2	3.22	18	29.0	16	25.8
Σ N (62)	6	9.67	31	49.9	25	40

Table 2: Students' attitude and acceptance level (Middle Achievers)

2.1 Reading Attitude – CGPA 2.00 – 2.50

Gender	dislike	%	lack of interest	%	read substantially	%	read extensively	%
M	3	4.00	14	18.6	16	21.3	3	4.00
F	3	4.00	17	22.6	14	18.6	5	6.66
Σ N (75)	6	8.00	31	41.2	30	39.9	8	10.6

2.2 Acceptance of information – CGPA 2.00 – 2.50

Gender	without further action	%	discuss with people	%	compare info.	%	follow widespread	%
M	3	4.00	11	14.6	22	29.3	1	1.33
F	3	4.00	7	9.33	27	36.0	1	1.33
Σ N (75)	6	8.00	18	23.9	49	65.3	2	2.66

2.3 Acceptance of information – CGPA 2.00 – 2.50

Gender	follow majority	%	using logic	%	research	%
M	10	13.3	6	8.00	17	22.6
F	15	20.0	8	10.6	19	25.3
Σ N (75)	25	33.3	14	18.6	36	47.9

Table 3: Students' attitude and acceptance level (Low Achievers)

3.1 Reading Attitude – CGPA 1.00 – 2.00

Gender	dislike	%	lack of interest	%	read substantially	%	read extensively	%
M			11	28.9	2	5.26		
F	3	7.89	9	23.6	10	26.3	3	7.89
Σ N (38)	3	7.89	20	52.5	12	31.5	3	7.89

3.2 Acceptance of information – CGPA 1.00 – 2.00

Gender	without further action	%	discuss with people	%	compare info.	%	follow widespread	%
M	2	5.26	4	10.5	8	21.1		
F	1	2.63	13	34.2	9	23.6	1	2.63
Σ N (38)	3	7.89	17	44.7	17	44.7	1	2.63

3.3 Acceptance of information – CGPA 1.00 – 2.00

Gender	follow majority	%	using logic	%	research	%
M	6	15.7	1	2.63	7	18.4
F	17	44.7	2	5.26	5	13.1
Σ N (38)	23	60.4	3	7.89	12	31.5

The results of this study suggest that majority students have lack interest of reading but have full awareness about its importance. In comparison, the second largest group identified themselves making substantial reading every week. This fact corresponded with how do they perceive reading. Data shows majority students perceived watching Youtube videos has the similitude of reading. In terms of mechanic of reading, students have balance interest of using physical book and gadget. The increasing interest of using gadgets for reading comes in light with the factors they consider in choosing reading mechanics. Three highest determinants in ranks were accessibility, effectiveness and reliability. No significant difference was found between high achievers and low achievers in their reading attitude thus, intellect is not a factor of reading habit. The result shows similarity with Zainal (2008) that reading among Malaysians was not in the satisfactory level. One distinctive area between high achievers and low achievers is spot on in their acceptance of information. Low achievers reported a significant number of those discussing with people to verify information. This significantly is not identified with the high achievers who identify themselves comparing information to verify truth. This supported

by another finding that shows 60% of low achievers normally follow the majority in accepting facts or information. The sheer contrast is identified with the high achievers and middle achievers who do research before accepting information even though substantial numbers are also vary in their answers. This has shown the same result suggested by Laroche et. al (2001) in which demographic factor is at interplay.

Conclusion

The aim of this research is to analyse whether sufficient evidences are available to examine attitude towards reading, which is the pre-text of students' attainment of new information and knowledge establishment. On the other hand, on students' strategies to cope with information and the way to accept such information as a fact or blind information which has to undergo rigorous examinations before accepting it to be true. The results of the research appeared to show that at this point, there are sufficient evidences that show a gap between high academic achievers and low academic achievers particularly on how do they strategize on screening information. Nevertheless, this cannot be concluded with any certainty due to limited research into its application in the context. The future research should look into the highlighted gaps in this research especially on the level of self-reliance of high academic achievers in information assessment and the low academic achievers on high-dependency attitude of help-seeking from other people and both groups association towards researching facts and following the majority viewpoint which could possibly give a new light to the research.

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