

THE DYNAMICS OF READING HABITS IN ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Submission Track:

||Submitted: 30th May, 2025||Reviewed: 24th June, 2025||Published : 26th July, 2025

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Abstract

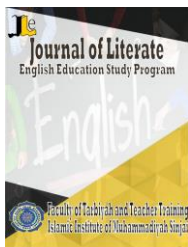
This study explores the reading habits of fourth-semester students in the English Education Program at Nurul Huda University through a sociological perspective. It aims to describe students' reading behaviors and examine the influence of social factors such as peer dynamics, family support, and digital media exposure. Descriptive method is used for this study, data were collected through classroom observation and a bilingual Likert-scale questionnaire. The findings indicate that although students acknowledge the value of reading, their practices are often inconsistent, hindered by academic workload, the pervasive influence of social media, and a limited reading culture in their immediate environment. A strong preference for visual and digital content over academic texts was also observed, raising concerns about the development of critical reading skills. The study concludes that reading habits are not solely driven by individual motivation but are significantly shaped by sociocultural contexts. Therefore, educational institutions should cultivate a literacy-friendly environment that addresses these social dimensions to support the development of effective and sustained reading practices, particularly for future educators.

Keywords: analysis; dynamics; education; reading habits; sociological

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dinamika kebiasaan membaca di kalangan mahasiswa semester empat Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Nurul Huda melalui pendekatan sosiologis. Penelitian ini menggambarkan perilaku membaca mahasiswa serta mengeksplorasi bagaimana faktor sosial—seperti pengaruh teman sebaya, dukungan keluarga, dan media digital—mempengaruhi keterlibatan mereka dengan teks. Metode deskriptif digunakan dengan teknik observasi dan kuesioner skala Likert. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun mahasiswa memahami pentingnya membaca, kebiasaan mereka cenderung tidak konsisten akibat beban akademik, gangguan dari media sosial, dan minimnya budaya membaca di lingkungan sekitar. Preferensi terhadap konten digital visual dibandingkan bacaan akademik juga ditemukan, yang dapat berdampak pada penurunan kemampuan membaca kritis. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kebiasaan membaca mahasiswa tidak hanya dipengaruhi oleh motivasi pribadi, tetapi juga oleh lingkungan sosial yang lebih luas. Oleh karena itu, institusi pendidikan didorong untuk menciptakan lingkungan literasi yang mendukung dan mempertimbangkan dimensi sosiologis ini, terutama untuk membantu calon pendidik mengembangkan kebiasaan membaca yang kuat dan konsisten.

Kata Kunci: analisis; dinamika; pendidikan; kebiasaan membaca; sosiologi



1. Introduction

The continuous advancement of digital technology has substantially influenced multiple dimensions of education, particularly in shaping the reading habits of university students (Aditya & Suranto, 2024). As a core academic activity, reading is essential for knowledge acquisition, critical thinking development, and language proficiency enhancement (Abid et al., 2023). Despite its recognized importance, numerous studies have reported a noticeable decline in students' reading consistency and frequency across different educational contexts, including in developing countries like Indonesia. The increasing accessibility of digital devices and the internet has significantly altered traditional reading habits (Spjeldnæs & Karlsen, 2024).

Reading behavior is widely acknowledged as a key indicator of academic engagement and cognitive development (Oktay, 2019). In higher education, students are expected to engage deeply with a variety of reading materials, including textbooks, academic journals, and scholarly articles (Aprianto, 2025). This expectation is particularly pronounced for students in English Education programs, for whom intensive and extensive reading in English serves not only as a cornerstone of academic achievement but also as essential preparation for their future roles as language educators. However, despite the critical role of reading, emerging evidence suggests a noticeable shift in students' reading patterns. This shift is driven by a complex interplay of internal factors—such as motivation and self-regulation—and external influences, including academic workload, technological distractions, and sociocultural environments that may not fully support sustained engagement with texts (Akarsu & Daryemez, 2014).

As argued by Schwabe et al (2023) the digital age has introduced new forms of media—including e-books, online articles, and multimedia platforms—that have significantly expanded access to information and reshaped students' engagement with reading materials. While these tools offer convenience and flexibility, they also pose significant challenges. Recent studies have shown that many students demonstrate shorter attention spans, shallow comprehension, and a strong preference for short-form digital content such as social media posts and videos over traditional academic texts (Kraus et al., 2021). These tendencies contribute to a decline in sustained and critical reading practices (Gordon, 2023).

Observations conducted at Nurul Huda University found that many students experience academic pressure, limiting their motivation and time for reading outside the classroom. Moreover, the omnipresence of digital entertainment platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube serves as a significant distraction from academic reading. These patterns are consistent with findings by Kargapolova et al (2022), who noted that although students recognize the importance of reading, they often reduce their reading time due to competing academic demands and digital distractions.

Pratiwi & Priyana (2022) found that students in urban areas—where access to reading resources is better—tend to engage more in reading activities than their counterparts in rural regions. Nonetheless, traditional print literature remains relevant, even amidst the rise of digital reading, suggesting that reading habits are not vanishing but rather evolving with technological and social changes (Mangen & van der Weel, 2016).

In the Indonesian context, particularly among students of the English Education Program at Nurul Huda University, similar patterns of change in reading behavior are evident in the current digital context. While access to digital resources has increased, many students still face challenges in sustaining regular reading habits—challenges shaped not only by personal motivation but also by broader institutional, cultural, and environmental influences (Chang, Wang, Liu, Feng, & Zhang, 2023). This highlights the need to analyze reading behavior through a sociological perspective—one that considers the broader social structures influencing student engagement with texts ((Hidayat & Setiawan, 2020).

A decline in reading engagement may negatively impact students' academic performance by limiting their ability to comprehend complex texts, engage in critical thinking, and complete coursework effectively. In the long term, this deficiency can undermine the development of pedagogical competence and reduce the overall quality of future educators (Salihu & Ramadneh, 2015). Strong reading habits are vital for developing critical thinking, pedagogical competence, and effective language use (Ahmad, Tariq, & Sial, 2021). As future English teachers, students must not only possess strong reading skills but also be capable of fostering a culture of literacy in their classrooms. Without personal experience in consistent reading, meeting these expectations becomes more difficult.

Despite a general decrease in time spent reading, studies such as that by Retelsdorf et al (2024), indicate that students still hold a positive attitude toward reading, particularly classic literature. This suggests a transformation rather than a disappearance of reading habits. In response, educational institutions are encouraged to adopt supportive strategies—such as developing digital libraries, implementing literacy programs, and creating structured reading initiatives—to sustain students' engagement with texts (Onunka et al., 2023).

Based on the explanations above, this study investigates the dynamics of reading habits of fourth-semester English Education students at Nurul Huda University. Using a sociological perspective, this research seeks to identify the influencing factors of students' reading behavior and explore strategic efforts to foster a stronger reading culture within higher education.

2. Method

2.1 Data Collection

The data in this study were collected using two main techniques, namely observation and questionnaire. The observation was conducted directly toward fourth-semester students of the English Education Program to identify their reading habits, including their experiences, motivations, interests, and challenges when engaging with English texts. Additionally, a questionnaire was used as the primary instrument, consisting of 20 closed-ended statements presented bilingually (English–Indonesian) and measured using a five-point Likert scale (Always, Often, Sometimes, Seldom, Never). The questionnaire explored various aspects of students' reading habits such as frequency, types of reading materials, motivation, academic and non-academic reading time, social influences, the impact of social media, and reading strategies. The results from the questionnaire were used to support and complement the observational findings.

2.2 Data Analysis

While the sample size is relatively small, the study aims to provide in-depth insights rather than statistical generalizations. Data analyzed by using Miles and Huberman's interactive model (2020), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data reduction phase, all responses from the bilingual Likert-scale questionnaire (22 participants) were reviewed and categorized thematically into seven indicators: reading frequency, types of reading materials, academic-driven reading, intrinsic motivation, social influences, media & technology influence, and reading strategies. Each indicator was composed of 2–3 questionnaire items. Quantitative responses were processed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS, resulting in the percentage distributions of each Likert-scale response per item. For instance, descriptive analysis showed that 50% of students reported always feeling intrinsically motivated to read, while only 9.09% always read English texts regularly—highlighting a gap between motivation and practice. In the data display phase, the reduced data were presented through thematic tables and frequency bar charts to visualize trends across indicators. The display allowed clearer interpretation of how social, academic, and technological factors influence students' reading behaviors.

Finally, in the conclusion and verification stage, findings from the statistical summaries were cross-referenced with field observations. Observational data provided contextual depth—for example, students were often seen engaging with English on digital platforms but rarely with printed academic materials.



3. Results and Discussion

The present study investigates the dynamics of English reading habits among fourth-semester students in the English Education Program at Nurul Huda University, with particular attention to the sociocultural factors that shape these habits. Drawing from qualitative data collected through observation and structured questionnaires, this section aims to unpack not only how students read, but also why and under what influences they develop certain reading patterns. Rather than treating reading as an isolated academic skill, the analysis adopts a sociological lens to understand it as a socially embedded practice—one that is deeply influenced by peer relationships, family expectations, digital environments, and institutional norms.

3.1. Result of the Observation

The observation was conducted over a period of two weeks during scheduled classroom activities and informal student gatherings at Nurul Huda University. The researcher observed fourth-semester students of the English Education Program in natural settings—both during lectures and in informal situations such as before class, break times, and post-class periods. The aim is to identify the habits in their reading engagement, material preferences, and surrounding academic environment. Field notes were taken to capture spontaneous habits and environmental cues that extended beyond the scope of structured questionnaire responses.

Based on data collected, the writer found several findings for the students' reading habits. The data displayed on the Table 1.

No	Description	Documentation	Time/Periods
1.	Reading books for preparing presentation		Informal Situations-Post Class
2.	Reading books for understanding and answering the question		During Lectures




3. Reading books and articles for preparing presentation		During lectures
4. Reading books and e-sources for preparing the presentation		Informal Situation-Break time
5. Reading books and e-sources for preparing the presentation		Informal Situation-Break time
6. Reading e-journal for understanding and answering the question.		During lectures

Tabel 1 Students' Reading Habits

The data in Table 1 shows that most reading activities among students were conducted under lecturer supervision. The materials accessed include English textbooks, comprehension tasks, and group presentation sources—implying that students' reading habits are primarily extrinsically driven. This pattern aligns with findings from Ekoç and Etuş (2017) and is further supported by Ding (2020), who observed that the proliferation of digital media environments limits students' choices and reinforces extrinsic reading behaviors .

Conversely, as indicated in Table 2, students showed a noticeable disengagement from academic reading during informal settings, instead choosing entertainment through platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. This tendency reflects the rise of social media distractions and is mirrored in the findings of Zare et al. (2023), who found that while early reading experiences foster pleasure

reading, contemporary media consumption often disrupts sustained focus. The juxtaposition of these behaviors indicates that students' reading engagement remains externally motivated and situationally dependent, rather than an internalized academic routine.

No	Description	Documentation	Time/Periods
1.	No evidence of accessing e-books or academic articles during leisure periods		Informal Situations- Pre Class
2.	Scrolling through social media timelines during free moments		Informal Situation- Break time
3.	Some students are scrolling through Tiktok and Instagram shortly after college ended, even while still sitting in the classroom		Informal Situations Post Lecturer

Tabel 2 Students' Reading Habits During Informal Setting

The data in Table 2 shows that during informal settings, such as break time and pre/post-class moments, most students did not engage in academic reading activities. Instead, they were frequently observed using their mobile phones for entertainment, particularly scrolling through TikTok, Instagram, or YouTube. This behavior reflects a shift toward digital consumption and aligns with Ding (2020) who noted that students increasingly favor short-form digital content over sustained academic reading, thereby reducing their attention span and reading depth.

Peer interactions within these informal contexts rarely fostered a literacy-supportive environment. Conversations were often centered on non-academic topics, and reading-related discussions were minimal. This mirrors the findings of Barber and Klauda (2020), who argue that social environments play a crucial role in shaping students' reading motivation, and the absence of peer-based encouragement can contribute to diminished engagement. Although a few students were observed bringing English-language materials such as novels or grammar books, these resources were rarely utilized during unstructured times.

While institutional support—such as the English Club and English Debate Club—was available, participation was low and inconsistent. This underutilization of existing resources highlights a missed opportunity to promote autonomous reading habits. According to Onunka et al. (2023), well-structured institutional programs, including reading groups and literacy campaigns, can significantly enhance reading engagement when actively integrated into campus culture.

Furthermore, the lack of visible literacy stimuli in classroom environments, such as curated book displays or motivational reading posters, contributed to an uninspiring reading culture. In line with Salihu and Ramadneh (2015), the presence of supportive institutional cues is vital in fostering an academic atmosphere conducive to reading. Thus, reading among the observed students appears not yet habitual or self-driven, but rather shaped by external academic demands and a sociocultural environment that inadequately supports autonomous reading practices.

These findings emphasize the need for deliberate curricular and extracurricular interventions that target both personal motivation and sociocultural reinforcement. Without addressing the structural barriers to reading, efforts to cultivate sustained and meaningful engagement with texts may remain ineffective.

3.2. Result of the Questionnaire

To complement the observational data and further explore the underlying dimensions of students' reading habits, a structured questionnaire was administered. The instrument consisted of 20 closed-ended statements, presented bilingually (English–Indonesian), and measured using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from Always to Never). The questionnaire was designed to capture diverse aspects of reading behavior, including reading frequency, types of materials, academic motivations, intrinsic interest, social influences, digital media exposure, and strategic reading practices. Responses were collected from 22 participants and analyzed using descriptive qualitative methods supported by statistical summaries generated through SPSS. Percentages for each response category were calculated to identify patterns and tendencies across different reading dimensions.

Following Miles and Huberman's interactive model of qualitative data analysis—which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing—the questionnaire responses were thematically categorized into seven core indicators: reading frequency, types of reading materials, academic-driven reading, intrinsic motivation, social influences, media and technology influence, and reading strategies. Each indicator was composed of 2 to 3 questionnaire items that were thematically aligned based on content and intent. These indicators did not emerge arbitrarily; rather, they were derived from a systematic triangulation of observational data, participant responses, and the broader sociocultural context. This integrative approach allowed the study to examine reading not merely as a functional academic task but as a socially constructed behavior, shaped by interactions among personal agency, institutional structures, and digital media environments.

a) Reading Habits Frequency

The analysis of the Reading Frequency indicator (items 1 to 3) reveals that 39.39% of the respondents sometimes read English texts in their daily routines, followed by 28.79% who often do so. Meanwhile, 19.70% reported that they rarely engage in such reading, 9.09% claimed to always read English materials, and 1.52% admitted they never read them. These findings suggest that while incidental reading occurs among the majority, a consistent and structured reading habit remains underdeveloped. This aligns with prior research Bains (2021) highlighting the intermittent nature of reading engagement among university students, especially in environments dominated by digital distractions.

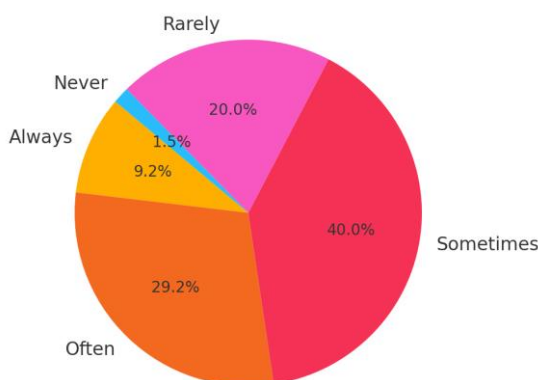


Chart 1 The Frequency of Reading Habits

b) Types of Reading Materials

Regarding the Types of Reading Materials indicator (items 4 to 6), 42.42% of respondents indicated frequent engagement with diverse English texts, such as academic readings, fiction, and online articles. Moreover, 27.27% sometimes accessed varied texts, while 21.21% consistently did so. Only 4.55% each reported rarely or never reading such materials. These data suggest a general openness toward diverse reading sources, although sustained interaction with different genres remains limited. Such tendencies reflect the influence of media diversity and digital literacy exposure, as emphasized in studies on modern reading behavior (Barber & Klauda, 2020).

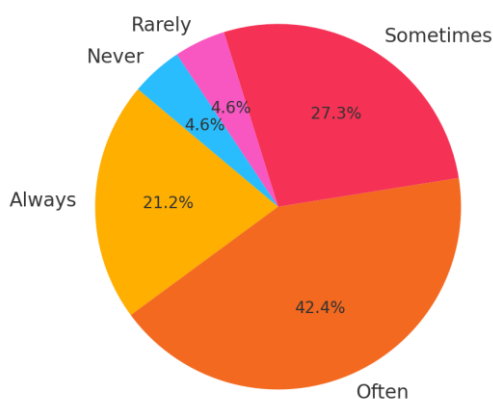


Chart 2 Frequency of the Type Reading Habits

c) Academic-Driven Reading

For the Academic-Driven Reading category (items 7 and 11), 31.82% of students reported always reading for academic purposes, equaled by those who indicated they sometimes do so. A slightly smaller portion (27.27%) often read due to academic requirements. Only a minority (6.82%) rarely read for class assignments, and 2.27% stated they never do. These results affirm that academic obligations are a strong extrinsic motivator, driving student reading behavior primarily for compliance rather than for personal or intellectual enrichment (Ekoç & Etuş, 2017).

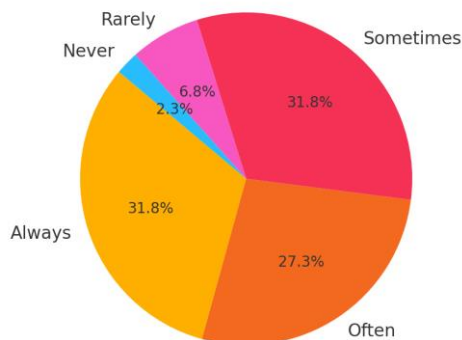


Chart 3 Frequency of the Academic-Driven Reading

d) Intrinsic Motivation

The Intrinsic Motivation indicator (items 8 to 10) yielded encouraging results, with 50% of respondents stating they always feel intrinsically motivated to read. An additional 28.79% often read due to personal interest or enjoyment, and 18.18% sometimes do. Only 3.03% claimed rare motivation, while none indicated a total absence of intrinsic drive. This finding underscores the centrality of autonomous motivation in fostering sustained and meaningful engagement with texts (Suárez-Fernández & Boto-García, 2019).

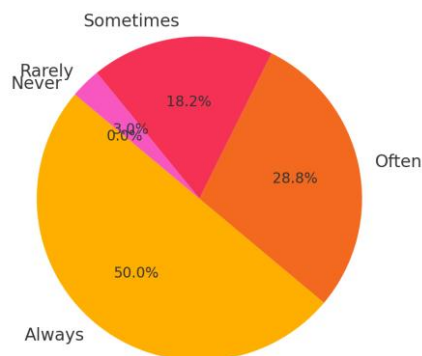


Chart 4 Frequency of the Intrinsic Motivation

e) Social Influences

In terms of Social Influences (items 12 to 14), 36.36% of students reported being sometimes influenced by social factors such as peers, instructors, and family. 24.24% stated they are often influenced, while 16.67% claimed consistent encouragement. Conversely, 12.12% reported minimal social impact, and 10.61% experienced no influence. These findings indicate that students' reading behaviors are shaped not only by individual preferences but also by broader social and environmental factors. This pattern aligns with sociological theories emphasizing the role of institutional and peer structures in shaping academic behaviors (Hidayat & Setiawan, 2020; Vygotsky in Mcleod, 2024).

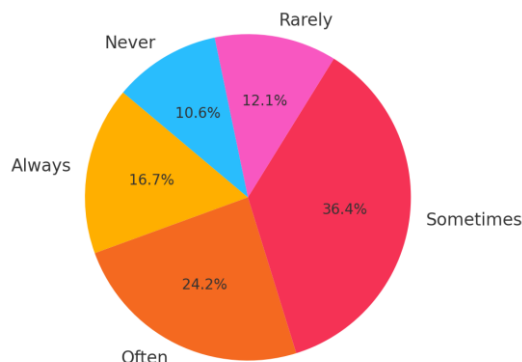


Chart 5 *Frequency of the Social Influences*

f) Media & Technology Influence

For the Media and Technology Influence indicator (items 15 to 17), 30.77% of respondents reported being always influenced by digital platforms, followed by 29.23% who are often influenced. A further 21.54% acknowledged occasional influence, while 10.77% and 7.69% reported rare or no influence, respectively. This trend reflects the increasing role of digital environments as both enablers and distractors in academic reading. While digital media can offer broader access to information, it can also hinder deep reading due to its fragmented and visually oriented nature (Ding, 2020b).

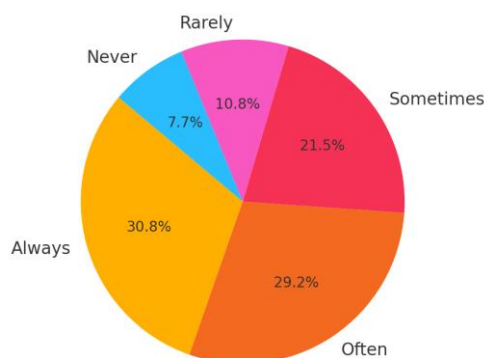


Chart 6 *Frequency of the Media & Technology Influence*

g) Reading Strategies

Regarding Reading Strategies (items 18 to 20), 36.36% of students sometimes apply methods such as summarizing, annotating, and rereading; 27.27% often use them; and 21.21% reported always doing so. A minority (12.12%) rarely employed such strategies, and 3.03% never did. This suggests that although awareness of strategic reading exists, the consistent implementation of these techniques requires reinforcement. According to Banditvilai (2020), strategic reading habits are crucial for enhancing comprehension and critical thinking, particularly in second-language learners.

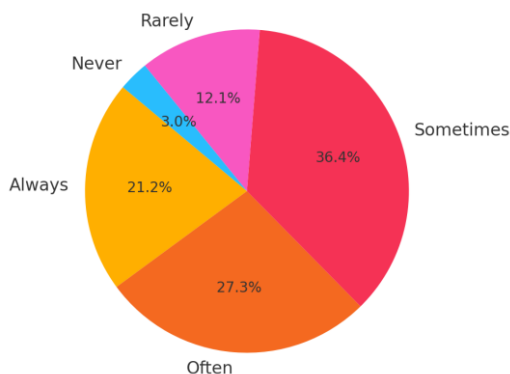


Chart 7 Frequency of the Reading Strategies

To provide a comparative overview of all indicators, the following bar chart summarizes the percentage distribution of each response category across the seven dimensions of reading habits.

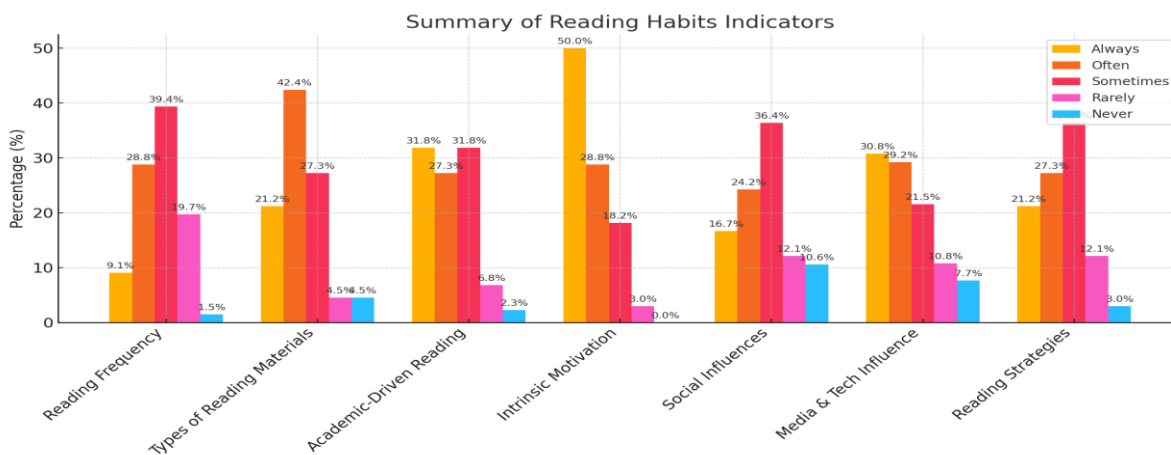


Chart 8 Summary of Reading Habits

Overall, the results illustrate that students' reading habits are shaped by a dynamic interplay of internal and external factors—including intrinsic motivation, academic obligations, digital media exposure, and varying levels of social support. The prevalence of intrinsic and academic-driven motivation indicates that students engage in reading primarily to meet internal learning goals and structured academic demands. However, peer and familial influences appear inconsistent, while the irregular use of reading strategies suggests a gap between awareness and sustained application.

These findings align with recent evidence on the decline of deep reading in the digital age: a 2023 study from the University of Valencia reported that print-reading comprehension remains notably higher than digital reading, underscoring the limitations of screen-based reading for deeper understanding (Altamura et al., 2023).

Additionally, observational reports highlight that college students increasingly prioritize phone usage over academic texts, prompting educators to adapt with shorter readings and structured reading supports.

From a sociological perspective, this supports the notion that reading is a socially constructed practice—reinforced by institutional cues and peer norms—not just an individual cognitive skill. Without deliberate curricular and environmental interventions, students risk remaining dependent on task-oriented reading, rather than developing intrinsic, sustained academic reading habits.

4. Conclusion

This Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the reading habits of fourth-semester English Education students at Universitas Nurul Huda are significantly influenced by a combination of academic demands, digital media exposure, and varying levels of social and institutional support. The findings reveal that students predominantly engage in reading activities when directed by academic requirements, such as completing assignments, preparing presentations, or responding to comprehension tasks. Outside of structured academic contexts, students tend to disengage from reading and instead gravitate towards digital entertainment, particularly through platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

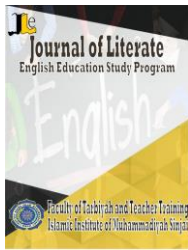
This indicates that while students possess basic reading skills, these skills have not yet developed into sustained, self-driven habits. The influence of peers and family members on students' reading motivation appears limited, and institutional efforts such as reading clubs or English-language activities are underutilized. Moreover, the use of reading strategies remains inconsistent, suggesting a need for more deliberate instructional support and reinforcement.

Viewed from a sociological perspective, these patterns emphasize that reading is not solely an individual cognitive process but a socially constructed behavior shaped by external environments and cultural norms. Therefore, to foster a genuine culture of reading, it is essential for institutions to implement targeted interventions that integrate reading habits into both curricular and extracurricular activities. Such efforts may include structured reading programs, visible literacy campaigns, peer-based reading communities, and the integration of reading strategy instruction into classroom practice. These interventions hold significant potential to transform reading from a task-based academic obligation into a meaningful and sustainable personal habit among students.

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