



Investigating Students Reading Habit and Preferences

(A Case Study in English Education Undergraduate Students of University Bina Bangsa Getsempena)

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Abstract. This study examines the reading habits and reading preferences of students in the English Language Education program at Bina Bangsa Getsempena University. Reading habits and reading preferences play an important role in developing students' academic literacy and supporting their academic success. This study aims to describe students' reading habits and identify the reading materials they prefer. The research design used is a descriptive qualitative case study. The study participants consisted of 103 undergraduate students. Data were collected via a questionnaire and analyzed descriptively by presenting frequencies and percentages. The findings indicate that most students have fairly consistent reading habits, typically reading for 30–60 minutes, two to three times a week, primarily during their free time or for academic purposes. The results also show that students prefer digital reading materials over print materials. Fiction and fantasy, romance, and adventure are the most preferred genres, while scientific articles, textbooks, and educational books remain the primary academic reading materials. These findings suggest that students' reading preferences are influenced by personal interests and academic needs. This study concludes that universities should encourage balanced reading habits by providing engaging academic and non-academic reading resources.

Keywords: Academic Literacy; English Education Students; Reading Habits; Reading Preferences; Undergraduate Students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is widely recognized as one of the most essential language skills in higher education because it enables students to acquire knowledge, develop critical thinking, and improve academic achievement (Sufa & Maisyarah, 2026). Through reading, students not only obtain information but also interpret, analyze, and evaluate ideas presented in written texts. As emphasized by Dalman (2017), reading is considered the heart of education because it broadens knowledge, strengthens intellectual abilities, and supports lifelong learning. Consequently, developing positive reading habits has become an important objective in higher education, particularly for students who are expected to engage with various academic sources throughout their studies.

In the context of English Language Education, reading plays a more significant role because students are required to understand both academic and non-academic texts in English. Academic reading competence supports students in completing coursework, conducting research, and developing language proficiency. According to Syahputra and Verawaty (2024), academic reading requires readers not only to obtain information but also to comprehend, analyze, and retain knowledge from various scholarly sources. Therefore, consistent reading habits are fundamental for improving students' academic performance and professional competence.

Despite the importance of reading, literacy remains a major educational challenge in Indonesia. The results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 indicate that Indonesia continues to perform below the international average in reading literacy, ranking 71st among 81 participating countries. These findings suggest that many Indonesian students still experience difficulties in comprehending written texts and applying information critically. Previous studies have identified several factors contributing to this condition, including limited reading motivation, inadequate access to attractive reading materials, insufficient family support, and the increasing influence of digital technology that often distracts students from sustained reading activities (Wulandari et al., 2021; Setiyoningsih et al, 2022).

Reading habits are closely related to students' reading preferences because the types of materials students choose influence both the frequency and quality of their reading activities. Reading preferences are shaped by various internal and external factors, such as personal interests, academic demands, social environment, and accessibility of reading resources (Meisy & Sinarman, 2024). In the digital era, students increasingly access electronic books, online articles, websites, and social media as their primary reading sources. While digital resources provide convenience and flexibility, they also change students' reading patterns and preferences compared with traditional printed materials.

Several previous studies have investigated students' reading habits and preferences. Astuti and Sudirman (2024) found that many pre-service English teachers preferred reading fiction rather than academic materials, although their reading habits were relatively consistent. Nurfaizah et al. (2022) reported that English education students relied heavily on digital platforms for both academic and recreational reading, indicating that technology has become an integral part of students' literacy practices. Similarly, Setiyoningsih et al. (2022) revealed that university students preferred reading digital fiction through smartphones during online learning, while Tiotor et al. (2023) found that students generally read only to fulfill academic requirements instead of developing reading as a personal habit. Anzka (2023) further reported that although English Education students demonstrated relatively high reading habits, their reading preferences remained limited and required further investigation.

Although previous studies have contributed valuable insights into students' reading behavior, several research gaps remain. Most existing studies focus on either reading habits or reading preferences separately, examine only English reading activities or digital reading behavior, or are conducted in different institutional contexts. Few studies comprehensively investigate both reading habits and reading preferences among undergraduate students in

English Language Education, particularly in the context of Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena. Furthermore, limited evidence is available regarding how students balance academic and non-academic reading materials in the current digital learning environment.

Considering these gaps, investigating students' reading habits and preferences is important to provide a clearer understanding of their literacy practices. Such information can assist lecturers, curriculum developers, and university administrators in designing effective literacy programs, enriching reading resources, and encouraging balanced reading activities that support both academic achievement and personal development.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the reading habits and reading preferences of undergraduate students in the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena. Specifically, this study seeks to describe students' reading habits and identify the types of reading materials they prefer. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of literacy strategies that promote sustainable reading habits among university students and support the improvement of academic literacy in higher education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading is recognized as an essential cognitive and linguistic activity that enables learners to construct meaning, acquire knowledge, and develop critical thinking skills. Rather than merely recognizing written symbols, reading involves understanding, interpreting, and evaluating information through the interaction between the reader's prior knowledge and the written text (Dalman, 2014; Kendeou et al., 2020). In English language learning, reading also contributes to vocabulary development, language acquisition, and academic achievement because students are required to comprehend various academic and non-academic texts throughout their studies.

Reading habit refers to an individual's regular and consistent engagement in reading activities over time. It reflects not only how frequently students read but also the duration, purpose, and consistency of their reading behavior. Good reading habits are characterized by regular reading frequency, sufficient reading duration, diverse reading materials, and meaningful engagement with texts (Khairuddin, 2013; Andaresa et al., 2024). Students with positive reading habits tend to possess stronger comprehension skills, broader vocabulary, and higher academic performance than those who read only when required. Reading preference refers to the types of reading materials that individuals choose based on their interests, motivations, and academic needs. According to Ersözülü and Öztürk (2018), reading preferences are influenced by intrinsic factors such as personal interest and curiosity as well as extrinsic

factors including academic requirements, social environment, and accessibility of reading materials. In higher education, students commonly select both academic materials, such as textbooks and journal articles, and non-academic materials, including novels, comics, blogs, online news, and digital content. The rapid development of digital technology has also shifted students' preferences from printed materials toward electronic resources because of their accessibility and convenience.

Several previous studies have examined students' reading habits and preferences from different perspectives. Setiyoningsih et al. (2022) reported that university students preferred reading digital fiction through smartphones and online platforms while maintaining relatively consistent reading habits during remote learning. Nurfaizah et al. (2022) found that English education students frequently utilized digital media for both academic and recreational reading, indicating the growing influence of technology on literacy practices. Astuti and Sudirman (2024) revealed that although many pre-service English teachers had developed reading habits, they tended to prefer fiction rather than academic texts, with reading choices influenced by personal interests, academic workload, and digital accessibility. Meanwhile, Tambunan and Harputra (2023) focused primarily on reading strategies employed by English education students, whereas Tiotor et al. (2023) observed that many students read mainly to fulfill academic requirements rather than for personal enjoyment. Furthermore, Anzka (2023) reported that although English education students demonstrated relatively high reading habits, their reading preferences remained limited and required further investigation.

The previous studies demonstrate that reading habits and reading preferences are closely interconnected and are influenced by both academic demands and personal interests. However, most studies have investigated these variables separately or have focused on specific aspects such as digital reading behavior, reading strategies, or English reading activities. Limited research has comprehensively examined both reading habits and reading preferences among undergraduate students in English Language Education within the context of Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena. Therefore, this study adopts the concepts of reading habits and reading preferences as the main theoretical framework to describe students' reading behavior and identify the types of reading materials they prefer in supporting their academic literacy.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative case study design to investigate the reading habits and reading preferences of undergraduate students in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena. A case study design was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon within its real-life context while providing a comprehensive description of participants' experiences (Maisyarah & Sufa, 2026).

The participants consisted of 103 active undergraduate students enrolled in the English Education Study Program, ranging from the second to the eighth semester. Participants were selected using purposive sampling because they met the criteria relevant to the objectives of the study, namely being active students who regularly participated in academic activities during the data collection period.

Data were collected using a structured multiple-choice questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of 23 items divided into three sections: respondents' demographic information (6 items), reading habits (9 items), and reading preferences (8 items). Prior to data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed by lecturers in the English Education Study Program to ensure its content validity and clarity. The validation results indicated that the instrument was appropriate for measuring the intended variables and suitable for use in this study.

The questionnaire link was distributed to participants through their respective class coordinators. Before completing the questionnaire, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation. The researcher monitored the data collection process to ensure that all responses were completed appropriately.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive analysis. Responses from the questionnaire were first organized and coded according to each indicator. The findings were then presented using frequencies and percentages to describe students' reading habits and reading preferences. Finally, the results were interpreted descriptively by relating the identified patterns to the objectives of the study and relevant literature.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena, Banda Aceh. Data were collected from 103 undergraduate students during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year using a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. The questionnaire gathered information regarding students'

demographic characteristics, reading habits, and reading preferences. The collected data were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages to identify patterns in students' reading behavior.

The findings are organized into two main sections. The first section discusses students' reading habits, while the second section presents students' reading preferences. Each finding is interpreted by comparing it with previous studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' reading behavior.

Students' Reading Habits

Reading Frequency

Reading frequency reflects how regularly students engage in reading activities. Table 1 presents the distribution of students' reading frequency.

Table 1. Students' Reading Frequency.

Reading Frequency	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Rarely/Never	14	13.6
1–3 times per week	40	38.8
4–6 times per week	27	26.2
Every day	22	21.4
Total	103	100

Source: Research Data (2026).

As shown in Table 1, the largest proportion of respondents (38.8%) reported reading one to three times per week. Meanwhile, 26.2% read four to six times per week, and 21.4% reported reading every day. Only 13.6% stated that they rarely or never read. These findings indicate that reading has become a relatively regular activity for most students, although daily reading has not yet become a consistent habit.

The questionnaire also examined the number of days students usually allocate for reading each week. Most respondents (35.9%) reported reading on one to three days per week, followed by 25.2% who read on four to six days per week and 21.4% who read every day. Only 17.5% indicated that they did not have a regular reading schedule. This pattern suggests that students generally demonstrate moderate consistency in their reading routines.

Furthermore, students were asked whether they read outside their academic assignments. The findings reveal that 40.8% occasionally read outside coursework, 33.0% read several times a week, and 20.4% read every day. Only 5.8% reported never reading outside academic requirements. These findings suggest that students still engage in voluntary reading despite academic responsibilities, although the frequency varies among individuals.

The results are consistent with previous studies conducted by Pardede (2023), who found that university students generally demonstrate moderate reading habits rather than intensive daily reading. Likewise, Nurfaizah et al. (2022) reported that reading frequency among English Education students is influenced by academic workload and the accessibility of digital reading materials. These findings indicate that although students recognize the importance of reading, many still read primarily when required for academic purposes.

Reading Duration

Reading duration represents the amount of time students spend reading during each reading session and throughout the week. The distribution of students' reading duration is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' Reading Duration.

Reading Duration	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Less than 30 minutes	28	27.2
30–60 minutes	39	37.9
1–2 hours	22	21.4
More than 2 hours	14	13.6
Total	103	100

Source: Research Data (2026).

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents (37.9%) spent between 30 and 60 minutes reading in one session. Meanwhile, 27.2% read for less than 30 minutes, whereas 21.4% spent one to two hours reading. Only 13.6% reported reading for more than two hours in a single session.

Regarding total reading time per week, most respondents (39.8%) spent between one and four hours reading, followed by 23.3% who spent less than one hour and 21.4% who read between five and ten hours each week. Only 15.5% reported reading for more than ten hours weekly.

Students' reading concentration was also investigated. The findings indicate that 40.8% of respondents could maintain concentration for 15–30 minutes, while 28.2% remained focused for 30–60 minutes. Only 17.5% were able to sustain concentration for more than one hour.

Overall, these findings indicate that students have developed moderate reading endurance rather than intensive reading practices. Similar findings were reported by Putra et al. (2023), who observed that university students generally preferred shorter but more frequent reading sessions, particularly when accessing digital reading materials. The widespread use of smartphones and online resources may encourage shorter reading sessions while reducing sustained attention during longer academic reading activities.

Discussion of Students' Reading Habits

Overall, the findings demonstrate that undergraduate students in the English Education Study Program have relatively positive reading habits. Most students read between one and three times per week and typically spend 30–60 minutes on each reading session. Although reading has become a regular activity for many respondents, it has not yet developed into a daily habit for the majority of students. The findings further suggest that students' reading behavior is strongly influenced by academic requirements, while voluntary reading outside coursework occurs only occasionally. This pattern supports previous studies indicating that university students tend to balance academic obligations with personal interests when allocating time for reading. Consequently, universities should encourage more sustainable reading habits by providing engaging academic resources, promoting campus literacy programs, and increasing students' access to both printed and digital reading materials.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study investigated the reading habits and reading preferences of undergraduate students in the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena. The findings indicate that the students generally demonstrate moderately positive reading habits, as reflected by their regular reading frequency and moderate reading duration. However, reading has not yet become a consistent daily routine for most students, particularly with regard to maintaining a structured reading schedule. These findings suggest that although students recognize the importance of reading, their engagement remains largely influenced by situational and academic demands.

Regarding reading preferences, the study found that students tend to favor digital reading materials over printed resources. Fiction and fantasy, romance, and adventure emerged as the most preferred genres, while scientific articles, textbooks, and educational books remained the primary academic reading materials. Students also frequently accessed reading materials through social media and other digital platforms because of their convenience and accessibility. These findings indicate that students' reading preferences are shaped by both personal interests and academic requirements.

Overall, the study concludes that English Education students have developed relatively positive reading habits; however, greater efforts are needed to strengthen reading as a sustainable lifelong habit rather than an activity driven mainly by coursework. Therefore, universities are encouraged to provide more engaging academic and non-academic reading

resources, strengthen campus literacy programs, and promote regular reading activities that foster both academic literacy and personal development.

This study has several limitations. First, it was conducted only among students of the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other higher education contexts. Second, the study relied solely on questionnaire data, which may not fully capture students' actual reading behaviors and experiences. Future studies are recommended to involve participants from different universities and academic disciplines, employ mixed-methods or qualitative approaches through interviews or observations, and further examine the relationship between reading habits, reading preferences, and students' academic achievement in the digital era.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena, particularly the English Language Education Study Program, for providing the opportunity and support to conduct this research. The author also extends appreciation to all undergraduate students of the English Language Education Study Program who voluntarily participated as respondents and contributed valuable data to this study.

The author is deeply grateful to the research supervisors and lecturers for their guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous encouragement throughout the research process. Their valuable suggestions significantly contributed to the completion of this study.

This article is derived from the author's undergraduate thesis entitled "Investigating Students' Reading Habits and Preferences: A Case Study in English Education Undergraduate Students of University Bina Bangsa Getsempena." The author also appreciates everyone who provided support, assistance, and encouragement during the completion of this research.

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