

# Exploring the Influence of Reading Habits on Academic Performance in English: A Case Study of Higher Secondary Students in Wangdue Phodrang, Bhutan

Pema Lhaden<sup>1</sup>; Teacher  
Phetakha Primary School,  
Ministry of Education Skills and Development

Tshering Wangchuk<sup>2</sup>; Teacher  
Dechencholing Higher Secondary School,  
Ministry of Education Skills and Development

**Abstract:-** Students' academic performance in English is closely influenced by their ability to read. This study investigated the impacts of students' reading habits on their academic performance in English in one of the higher secondary schools in Wangdue Phodrang Dzongkhag (district). The study adopted a qualitative case study approach. The population of the study consisted of 12 students from Class 9 and 10 and 2 teachers teaching them English. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. The data collection tools included a semi-structured interview and document analysis. The data collected were analysed using thematic analysis propounded by Braun and Clarke (2018). The finding showed that reading impacted students' academic performance in English. Further, the study showed that teachers play a vital role in the development of students reading habits through the use of various strategies and methods. However, the study highlighted that students spend less time on reading owing to various challenges such as inability to understand the word, inability to comprehend the text, time constraint, lack of guidance, poor conducive environment, limited resources, and limited library time. The study recommends parents, teachers, and schools strive to enhance the reading habits of all students.

**Keywords:-** Reading, Reading Habits, Academic Performance, Impacts, Challenges.

## I. INTRODUCTION

English seems to have taken root in Bhutan during the era of the Third Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck (1952-1972) with the introduction of formal school-based education in the late 1950s (CAPSD, 2015). Curriculum was borrowed which included the physical textbooks of those Indian English Medium schools in India. It also included the recruitment of expatriates, largely Indians, to teach in Hindi and then later in English. English was then, not only important as a medium of instruction, but was also considered as an advantageous language in elevating Bhutan's profile in many international communities and organizations. The need resulted in the requirement of the natives to be competent in English-which resulted in the

decision to use English as the language for many of the subjects taught in the schools (CAPSD, 2015; Thinley, 2016). English was incorporated as the medium of instruction in the late 1960s during the First Five Year Plan. All the subjects in the school except Dzongkha were taught in English irrespective of different grades (New Focus Multimedia, 2016).

The English curriculum in the Bhutanese Education system comprises four different strands such as reading, writing, listening and speaking (REC, 2008). It is through reading that students can study and reflect on the cultural values of Bhutan and the world, fundamental values, skills, and wisdom. In addition, Pobi (2016) states that reading promotes knowledge acquisition, stress reduction, vocabulary advancement, memory enhancement, and focus in students. Moreover, His Majesty, the Fifth Druk Gyalpo profoundly said, "You must read about everything around you – not just subjects that interest you. You must learn about current events, history, science, culture and people around the world- the pursuit of knowledge must be lifelong" (The Bhutanese 2014, para. 4). Embracing this concept, His Majesty declared 2015 as the national reading Year. The pursuit of knowledge can be made lifelong if only we read. Having good reading habits result in a good performance in English, this further adds good performances in other subjects too. The reading habits and English performances have correlations (Cimmiyotti, 2013). Keeping in view the importance of reading habits, this study explored the impact of students' reading habits on their academic performance in English.

### A. Statement of the Problem

Poor reading habit hinders students' ability to perform better in English as well as in other subjects. According to the findings of NEA (2013), The top 50 performers who had an average score of 66.28 in English had an average score of 86.62 in Mathematics. In the same way, the top 50 performers who had an average score of 50.86 in Mathematics had an average score of 65.5 in English. This showed that those who were good in English were also good in Mathematics but not vice versa (p. 81). This indicates that students performing well in English perform better in other subjects. The good performance in English results due to

good reading habit. Moreover, the PISA D score of 2017 confirms, Bhutanese students achieved an average solution rate of 45.34 % in reading literacy assessment. Although it was higher than the PISA- D average solution rate, it was found that poor reading literacy affected students' performance in other core areas of PISA-D test since they were unable to understand the language and comprehend the questions (BCSEA, 2019). Therefore, in order to understand the language better, there is a need to develop reading habit. While, a good reading habit has not only great role in achieving students' higher academic achievement but also accumulating related skills in life. Without reading skills, students will struggle to grow academically (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). They must possess skills as well as will power to develop into effective readers. Reading is the foundation to all academic subjects and it influences the student's ability to write.

### B. Aims and Objective of the Study

The study aims to explore teachers' and students' perceptions on students' reading habits and its impacts on their academic performances in English. It will try exploring the supports teachers provided to develop and promote students' reading habit. Similarly, it intends to identify challenges and factors affecting in students' reading habit.

### C. Research Question

#### ➤ Primary

What are students' and teachers' perceptions on students' reading habits and its impacts on students' academic performance in English?

#### ➤ Sub-Research Question

- What are students' and teachers' perceptions on students' reading habits?
- What impacts does reading habits have on students' academic performance in English?
- What are the roles teachers' plays in the development of students' reading habits?
- What are the challenges to students' reading habits?
- What are the factors affecting students reading habits?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### ➤ Reading as a Habit and its Importance

Individual reads for various reasons such as joy, recreation, awareness, relaxation, information gathering, and intellectual development. Reading is considered a habit if it is continuously used in the daily lives of a person. Reading is also measured in terms of the number of materials read and the number of periods spent on it (Wagner, 2002). Additionally, they affirm that reading habits are the volume and the extent to which materials are read, and the total number of hours spent studying and reflecting on certain concepts students read different genres, according to (Diwan, 2020).

It is undeniably important for students to inculcate and instil reading habits from primary level onwards. Reading habit is an important activity that leaves a progressive impact on all ages of people (Kurtus, 2002). The success of a person depends on how effectively he has inculcated the reading habit. Particularly, the success of the students' educational journey largely depends on the reading skill and habits they possess (Pobi, 2016). Reading habit benefits in empowering students and enriching their knowledge and wisdom (Ameyaw, 2018). Dorji (2020) stated that reading is linked to individual and intellectual development that leads to life success. Reading also assists pupils in comprehending and appreciating their own cultural heritage as well as other values (Zangmo, 2016).

### ➤ Reading Habits and Academic Performances

Academic performance measures how successful students are and it refers to the attainment of one's scholastic goals (Balan et al., 2019). Acheaw and Larson (2014) add that the reading habit of student determines their academic achievements. Reading habits and academic performances are interrelated and are dependent on each other. The academic success of the students depends on their reading habits besides other factors. \

In addition, Akabuike and Asika (2012) stated that inefficiency in reading remains a common educational problem often resulting in mass examination failures and never-ending rows against the fallen standard of education in general and of the English language in particular. A study by Acheaw (2014) concluded that those students with good reading habits are able to understand and comprehend the questions easily and are expressive as opposed to those students who do not have a good reading habit or those who do no reading at all. Additionally, the study also confirms that more than 50 % of students agreed 'yes' for whether good reading habits had a relationship with academic performances. This shows the relationship between reading habits and the academic performance of the students (Acheaw, 2014).

### ➤ Impacts of Reading Habits on Academic Performance in English

Reading plays a crucial role in the academic life of students in acquiring intellectual development and various other life skills. Students with poor reading habits have a higher risk of engaging in unacceptable social practices, criminal behaviour, absenteeism, violence at school, disruptive behaviour, and examination malpractices (Rubin, 2002). Similarly, according to Wangchuk and Zangmo (2021), reading influences in readers' attitudes, thoughts, and behaviours to change for the better. On the other hand, students who have good reading habits grow intellectually and academically. Students who lack good reading habits usually perform poorly in their academic English. A study by Whitten et al., (2016) confirmed that students who chose to read perform better in English, mathematics, science, and history which helps them in getting good grades. Similarly, Balan et al., (2019) confirmed that lack of reading habits results in very poor grades.

The study carried by Lukhele (2019) explored the relationship between attitudes to reading, reading ability, vocabulary, and academic performance of students. It was found that reading had a positive contribution to their proficiency levels in English. Similarly, Annamalai and Muniandy (2013) concluded that reading extensively not only has a positive effect on reading ability but also a positive effect on academic performance. Their study explored that the reading habits of school children in Nigeria are rather poor and this affects to a great extent the academic performance of school children. Poor reading habits are believed to be one of the causes of poor performance in English for secondary students in Nigerian schools today. Furthermore, Horbec (2012) showed that there is a strong relationship between reading habits and academic achievement in English.

#### ➤ *Teachers' Role in the Development of Students' Reading Habits*

Teachers have a significant influence on students' reading habits. Students are eventually inspired to read when teachers have a positive attitude about reading and reading habits (Manohar, 2016). Similarly, Dorji (2020) added that teachers must make concerted efforts to motivate their students to read using innovative methods. Further, teacher's rewards and feedback to students' reading can help them improve their reading skills by motivating them to have a good attitude toward reading (Akabuike & Asika, 2012). Moreover, teachers should be "reading role models," engaging in reading on a regular basis and sharing what they read with their students to encourage them to develop a love for reading (Yamoah, 2015).

#### ➤ *Factors Affecting Students' Reading Habits*

The reading habits of a student are largely affected by various factors. Hassan et al., (2012) studied 600 students in 10 secondary schools in Nigeria to find out the factors that influenced students' reading habits. The study found that the home conditions of the students affected their reading habits. However, there were other factors such as lack of library and skilled librarians, lack of reading materials, and lack of encouragement from teachers that affected students' reading.

Yaykiran (2016) emphasized that family support plays a very important role in supporting students to read more and it helps in encouraging students compared to the ones who do not have family support. The home and school environments of students, their study habits, availability of reading resources, and their associations with those authentic materials are the factors that affect the students' academic achievement (Mugambi, 2015). Furthermore, according to Wangchuk et al. (2020), educators should develop surroundings that not only encourage students to read, but also help them improve their academic performance and achievements.

Furthermore, lack of reading materials or distractions in the home environment makes it difficult for students to concentrate on reading (Acheaw, 2004; Ameyaw & Anto, 2018). The other factors responsible for the poor reading habits of the students include their family background, ill-structured textbook, the attitude of teachers, and their teaching methods (Anyaegebu & Aghauche, 2016).

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### ➤ *Research Approach*

The study used a qualitative research approach- as it was appropriate and is the most preferred method for the constructivism paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Keeping in mind the perspectives of the participants, the researcher worked on exploring the impacts of reading habits on students' academic performance in English as the main focus on participants' experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A deeper understanding of the central phenomena was derived after the data analysis and the interpretations.

#### ➤ *Research Design*

Research design is a logistic or master plan of research that throws light on how the study will be conducted (Creswell et al., 2018). A case study was adopted to gain in-depth knowledge on the teachers' and students' perceptions on the particular subject of research. According to Yin (2009), case studies aid in the discovery of in-depth information of a scenario in a natural context by combining the perspectives of all participants. This study is a case of one higher secondary school in Wangdue Phodrang Dzongkhag exploring teachers' and students' perceptions on the impacts of reading habits on the students' academic performance in English.

#### ➤ *Sampling And Sample Size*

Purposive sampling was used to gather data from students and teachers. The goal of using a purposive sample was to collect data from participants that may be considered to be generalizable. Purposive sampling is a manner through which the sample for the study were chosen that will satisfy the researcher's needs to undertake the study (Mertens, 2010). The researcher aimed to pick the sample that exhibits variation on the event under study. The participants were 6 students from Class IX and 6 students from Class X and 2 English teachers. Varied readers, grades, and gender were considered while choosing the interview participants.

#### ➤ *Data Collection Tools*

The tools used to gather data in this study were semi-structured interviews with students and teachers and document analysis of students' academic transcripts, reading records, library records, and reading portfolios. Where two semi-structured interviews were carried out in order to collect different data from teachers and students. The semi-structured interview helped in gathering in-depth information from the participants on the central phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2013).

The participants were given the opportunity to elaborate or provide more relevant information. A set of guiding questions were used so that the same areas were covered with each participant. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 students from classes IX and X, and two English teachers. The researcher interviewed the participants by focusing on their perception of students' reading habits and its impacts of students' academic performances in English, and the challenges and factors that affect students reading habits'

#### ➤ Document Analysis

Another data collection tool that is prominently used in the qualitative case study method is the document. Documents are valuable sources of information in qualitative research; a piece of written evidence that saves a researcher the time and expense of transcribing (Creswell, 2014). Documents such as student participants' academic transcripts, reading records, book review records, library records, and any other relevant documents were analysed.

#### ➤ Data Analysis

The researcher adopted thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is the most frequent approach for analysing qualitative data, with the purpose of identifying relevant themes, or patterns in the data and using those themes to address the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data analysis process began with the organization and preparation of audio recorded and document analysis reports for analysis. All the interview recordings were transcribed; the data were verified by reading through the transcripts while listening to the recordings. After the verification, the data were analysed inductively as the meanings emerged with the researchers' interpretation and analysis.

The data gathered from the semi-structured interview and the document analysis was prepared for analysis. It was then followed by transcribing, sorting, and arranging the data depending on the source of information gathered. The data were read so that the researchers became familiar with them. This step was followed by coding the data of Braun and Clarke (2006). The text segments were identified from the descriptive codes and it was then assigned with code that describes the meaning of the text accurately. Then it was reviewed followed by grouping similar codes and generating themes. The themes generated are the reflection and description of a logical and meaningful pattern in the data (Creswell, 2012). The researcher developed a thematic map by the end of this stage. The last process involved crosschecking the themes with the data where the irrelevant ones were deleted or relocated to another theme if relevant. In order to enhance the accuracy of the data collected through this research, the researcher included data triangulation and member checking.

## IV. RESULTS

### ➤ Students' and Teachers' Perception on Reading Habits

The analysis of the data showed that all students have reading habits and they read a variety of books. For example, S6 and S11 said respectively:

- *I Usually Read Folktales and Poetry.*
- *I read Non-Fiction and Even Animated Books.*

The individual reading record of the participants revealed that they have read an average of 12 to 13 books in 2020. Additionally, the library book issue record showed that the participants were issued with an average of 6 to 8 books during 12 library periods during the first term of the academic session in 2021. Thus, it is evident that students read books. However, both the teacher participants expressed that students generally have poor reading habits. They identified different factors that have led to the decline in the reading habit of the students. These factors include time management, students' poor choice of books, and use of gadgets. One teacher respondent pointed out that only a few students have good reading habits. More than half of the student participants responded that they spend more than 30 minutes in a day on reading while the remaining students spend less than 30 minutes a day on reading. Similarly, the teacher respondents opined that students spend less time reading compared to other leisure activities. Moreover, the school library period further showed that students are allotted one period a week to visit and read in the school library.

Upon asking the participants who inspired them to read, the data revealed that, out of 12 participants, three of them were inspired by their teachers, for example, S4 said: My pre-primary teacher, Madam Dema (name changed) inspired me to read books. Two each by their parents and friends respectively, one by their siblings and another one by the way writers write. Five of the respondents stated that it was their own interest that triggered and inspired them to read. For example, S6 said: The habit of reading sprung up when I first went to the library. I got fascinated by reading since then. Further, the data from the teacher participants revealed that teachers and parents play an important role in the development of reading habits in students besides students' own interests.

Students read a wide variety of reading materials. Out of 12 participants, five of the participants shared that they read fiction, three read non-fiction, 2 read comic books, and the rest read other varieties of books that include folktales, poetry, romantic comedy, historical books, grammar books, love stories, and animated books. Additionally, two of the participants shared that they also read thin books (pages ranging from 50 to 100) as they view that reading thin books is easier to complete. The library records also show that students, in general, prefer reading fiction and nonfiction. Apart from the materials mentioned above, the teacher respondents expressed that students even read e-books, online books, and materials that are easily accessible to them.



Upon inquiry on the reasons for reading a variety of materials, the student respondents shared various reasons for their genre of interest. S2, S7, and S9 expressed that reading nonfiction helps them prepare for life as they find them very helpful in equipping them with the knowledge and skills to tackle any situation in life. Other participants choose animated books that transport them take to another world (S11 and S5). Two other participants shared that they read comic books as the drawing and illustrations appeal and attract them to read. On the other hand, S4 and S8 expressed that they read novels as they contain a variety of stories. There were two participants, S3 and S7, who believe that reading historical books would benefit them in the long run as they would be able to explore that particular topic and take up research on the specific historical events. Other participants chose books that are mysterious, heart-warming, realistic, and interesting. A few participants also reasoned that they read non-fiction and historical books as they help them be more imaginative and critical. The teacher participants added that students have their own choice of books and reasons.

#### ➤ *General Impacts of Reading on Students*

The data revealed that reading benefits students in various ways. Out of 12 participants, five of them consider reading to be very important as it opens them to the world they have never been to and it is through reading they become aware of the situation around them. For instance, S2 said:

Reading helps us know many things, such as, recently I read a book about a North Korean girl who fights for her rights and through that reading, I became aware of the situation in North Korea.

They expressed that besides becoming aware of the situation, having a good reading habit helps them express their thoughts meaningfully. S6, S11, and S12 expressed that reading helps them become critical as they can deal with difficult questions and situations. Talking about this

issue, S4 and S10 added that reading develops creativity. A few other participants viewed that reading engages them meaningfully. It is interesting to know that students can even provide help by being good readers and at times being proud of their knowledge gained through reading. For instance, S5 states that he helps his friend with difficult words and phrases. These finding further supports the idea expressed by T1 who believe good reading habit is a basic pillar for success for the students in order for them to progress in life. The participant quoted Margaret Fuller 'Today a reader, tomorrow a leader'. A good reader can become a good leader in the future. Furthermore, T2 expressed that reading enhances students' imagination and helps them understand the texts easily. The data showed that reading not only benefits students personally, it also helps them academically.

#### ➤ *Academic Impacts of Reading on Students*

Pertaining to teachers' and students' views on the impacts of reading habits on students' academic performance in English, the data revealed that reading impacts students' academic performance. The majority of the student participants pointed out that reading enhances their language in many ways. It helps them in fluency, vocabulary enrichment, and spelling improvement. T2 also agreed that reading helps students enhance their vocabulary. A common view among S1, S2, S4, S8, S10, S11, S12, T1, and T2 was that reading habit helps students to develop other strands of language such as writing and reading which further enables them to comprehend the text and make text to life connections. Further, a few student participants maintained a reading portfolio and it was evident that reading helps students write and express their thoughts. For instance, S3 read the book 'The Lost Paradise' by Vikal Bansal and reviewed the book. The student has used correct grammar, punctuation, and organization. For example, in the sentence '*The lost Paradise is a very heart touching love story*', the student has used correct sentence structure and idea (See Figure 1).

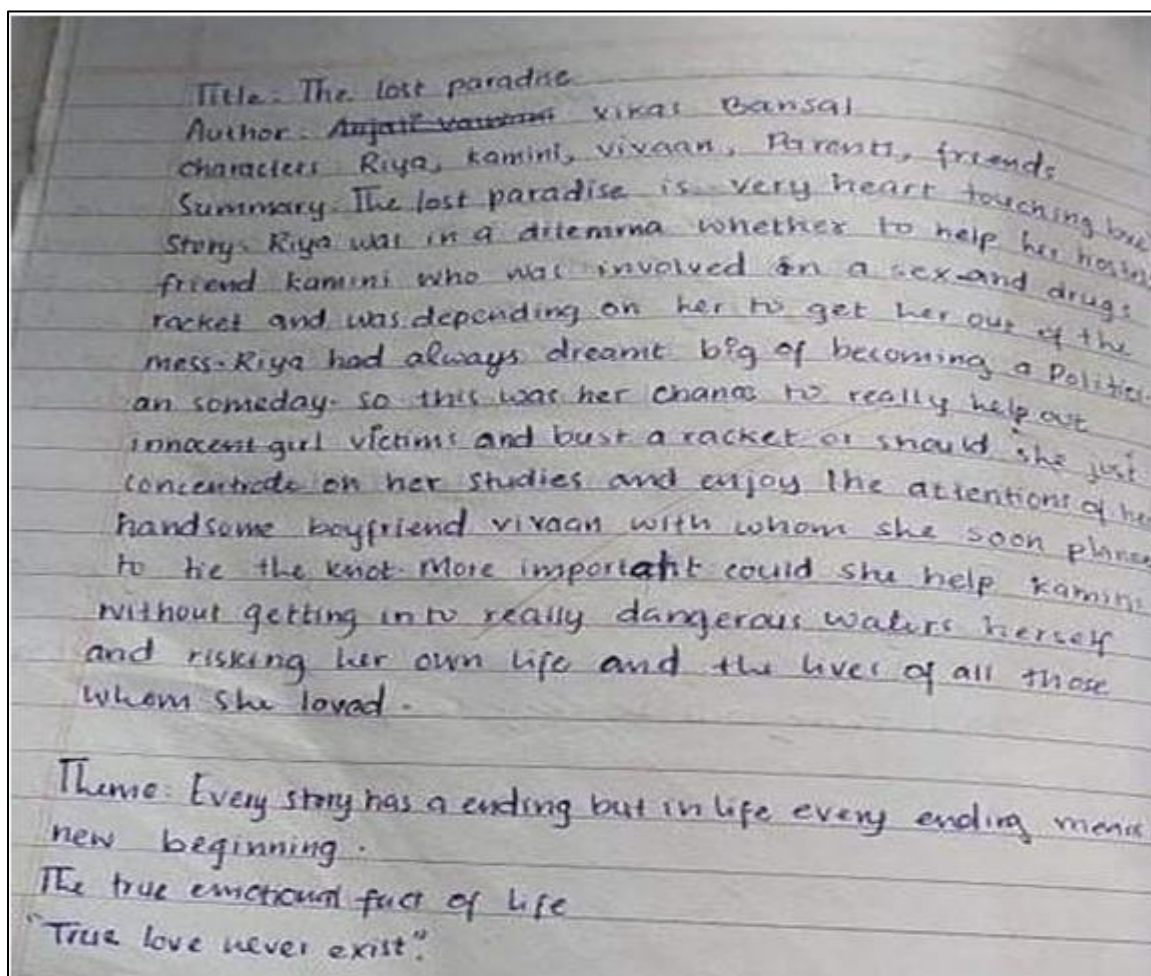


Fig 1 Student's Reading Portfolio Sample

Moreover, S7 and S10 responded that reading impacts scores in examination and performances in English year after year. Talking about this issue, S4 said:

*In class six I scored only 42 in English. After I started reading, my English score increased to 59 in class seven, and thereafter my academic performance in English has been improving year after year.*

This indicates that reading habit has positive impacts on students' academic performance in English as they find it easy to comprehend the questions in the examination and perform better. Better academic performances as a result of reading are evident in Table 1 below. According to the student participant's progress report for the first academic term 2021, the average class performance in English was 46.30% and the student participants' average performance in English was 62.09% which supports that reading habit has a significant impact on students' academic performance in English.

Table 1 Students' Academic Performance in English during Mid-Term Examination (2021)

Participants	Class Average (mean)	Students performance
Participant 1	40.4	82.2
Participant 2	40.4	47.8
Participant 3	45.12	40
Participant 4	47.7	82.2
Participant 5	51	56
Participant 6	45.11	72
Participant 7	44.88	51.8
Participant 8	44.88	66.6
Participant 9	51.56	75.4
Participant 10	54.8	77.6
Participant 11	44.9	44.88
Participant 12	44.9	48.6
	46.30	62.09

The teacher participants expressed that good readers are academically sound as they understand the texts in the English curriculum easily. Taken together, these data suggest that there is a direct relationship between reading habits and academic performance in English.

➤ *Important Role of a Teacher in the Development of Students Reading Habits*

As evident from the findings, the teacher plays a very important role in the development of students' reading habits. The data from the students' interviews showed that students expect support from their teachers in terms of helping them develop their reading habits. Teachers' support starts from their encouragement, as expressed by S9, S1, S3, S8, S11, and S6. In this regard, S11 commented:

*Our teacher could encourage us to read books and make us enjoy reading more.*

Similarly, T1 and T2 shared the same view that teachers help students develop a reading habit by encouraging and motivating them to read books. Both the teacher participants expressed that they have encouraged and motivated students to read on the daily basis. Out of 12 student participants, six of them pointed out that the teacher can help them by providing time to read books in order for them to develop the reading habit particularly by sparing some time for reading before the start of the lesson.

Another way teachers could help improve students' reading is by conducting reading activities and programs in class and in the school as stated by more than half of the student participants. The teacher participants also expressed that students get motivated and inspired when they conduct activities on reading in the class and school. The activities include maintaining reading portfolios, conducting various competitions on reading, model reading, writing book reviews, monitoring students' reading, and bringing text-to-life connections. According to the documents, a few participants have already ventured into maintaining a reading portfolio and the remaining were due to be submitted in the second academic session. To this, T1 said:

*After the midterm, we have also planned to review books and maintain a reading portfolio. In addition, those students who maintained reading portfolios have been provided with the remarks by the teacher such as "include your likes and dislikes on characters", "add some elements of book review", "Good selection of book" and "Good one! However, take care of the little things." Furthermore, maintaining reading portfolios are considered useful and effective to different student participants.*

Additionally, 9 student participants suggested that their teacher could do a 'book talk' about the books they have read. The teachers could also share their views and experiences on reading those books which would help the students read more and enjoy reading. For example, S4 said: *They could talk about the books they have read and share interesting stories which would inspire us to read.* Both the teacher participants expressed that they sometimes do book talks on their favourite books and help inspire students to read.

The teachers also recommend students read good books. S5, S7, S8, S10, and S12 expressed that their teachers recommend interesting and relevant books and books related to curriculum subject matters. A few student participants mentioned that teachers should avoid criticizing them while reading rather they need to show appreciation to those who read books. For example, S3 said:

*They should give us enough reading materials and even model read for us instead of criticizing us while reading.*

*Teachers could show appreciation to those students who read books and acknowledge them as examples for other students. Except for a few, the majority of the participants agreed that teachers play a vital role in the development of reading habits in students.*

To this, T1 agreed to say that teachers play a very important role in motivating students to read and enjoy reading.

## V. CHALLENGES AND FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS READING HABITS

### ➤ *Challenges*

Students face challenges in developing a good reading habit. Among many challenges, 8 student participants expressed difficulty in understanding the meaning of difficult words. When they come across new words while reading they find it difficult to understand the concept as they do not know the meaning of the words. For example, S12 said:

*I find it so difficult to continue reading when I come across new words and it is one of the major challenges I face while reading.*

Similarly, T1 shared that students stumble when they come across difficult vocabulary and they find it difficult to pronounce the words. Another challenge student face is the standard of language (S5, S8, and S9). In this regard, the teacher participants also expressed that students find the standard of language very challenging and it could possibly be because English is our second language; students find it difficult to cope with the standard of English. The student's inability to understand the word meanings and comprehend the text makes them lose focus of their reading. Another challenge is the distractions that the students face at home and at school (S4, S7, and S10). For example, S10 said:

*I cannot focus on more than one thing when I get distracted. Sometimes I even forget the page and line I was reading. This finding is supported by the teacher participants. They feel that students lose focus in their reading when they are not attentive and when they are distracted which could possibly be because of the students' disinterest in reading as pointed out by T1:*

I think the kids will develop their reading habits at a very young age and once that interest is triggered, the kid will definitely move on with their reading habit in their last stages of life.



### ➤ Factors Affecting Students' Reading Habit

The analysis of the data suggests that there are a number of factors affecting students' reading habits. One of the factors is time management for reading. Out of 12 students, seven of them expressed that they find it difficult to manage time for reading. In this regard, T1 also expressed that time plays a very crucial role in the development of reading habits in the students. He said:

*Time plays a critical role in reading. Students should manage their reading time from home works and other household works.*

Almost all the student participants pointed out that homework is another factor that affects their reading habits. The students are bogged down with assignments and homework after school hours. As a result, they do not get enough time to read books. On the contrary, two teacher participants stated that homework is not the only factor that affects students' reading habits. For instance, T2 said: Students' interest has deteriorated due to poor time management and choice of books. A few other student participants expressed that household chores affect their reading habits as they get less time to read. For example, S9 said:

*I don't get much time to read at home as I have to do many household chores. Having a conducive environment both in the school and at home for reading seems to be another factor affecting students' reading habits. Having a peaceful and quiet place to read is crucial for students' development of reading as expressed by S3, S6, S11, and T1.*

A teacher participant added that students lack proper guidance from home. Lack of guidance by parents and their limited knowledge about reading hamper students' reading habits. A few student participants agreed that they lack guidance at home and at times from school too (S6 and S10).

Television and electronic gadgets are other factors that affect students' reading habits. S4 finds it challenging to continue reading when she comes across her favorite soap operas and reality shows. These activities distract her for hours. Additionally, most of the students felt that gadgets if not used wisely are the causes of their poor reading habits. They shared that they visit different social media apps on their gadgets and squander away their time. This concern was shared by two teacher participants. They expressed that students spend a lot of their time on gadgets and it distracts them from reading.

Two student participants pointed out that limited resource hampers their reading habits. They do not get the book of their choice. One participant commented that poor choices of books do not motivate her to read. A teacher participant added that students' choice of books affects their reading habits. For example, T1 said:

*Challenges our students face while reading is the right book or materials they read. They try to imitate others and pick books of other's choice and end up not liking them. Furthermore, a few participants indicated that the limited library period in school is one factor that affects their*

*reading. According to the school librarian, each class gets one library period a week to read and students are issued their choice of a book once a week.*

However, T1 expressed that reading is not just confined to the library. He indicated that reading is not limited to the school library as many of the students believe. He believed that reading should be beyond the library room.

The data from the teacher and student participants reveal that students face various challenges such as difficulty in understanding and pronouncing the words which could possibly be because of English being a second language. Moreover, the students face distractions from siblings at home and friends in school while reading. In the summary, poor time management, homework from school, the environment they live in, poor guidance they receive for reading, poor choice of the book, and limited time for reading affect students' reading habits.

## VI. DISCUSSION

### ➤ Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of Reading Habit

The findings suggested varying perceptions of students' reading habits. While students described themselves to have good reading habits and they have read wide ranges of books in a year, teachers viewed that students generally have poor reading habits. Teachers pointed out that only a few students have good reading habits. This finding corroborates the report of PISA-D which revealed that Bhutanese students' average reading literacy of 45.34% is below the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCED) average though it is 4.08% higher than the averaged PISA-D solution rates (41.26%) of the eight countries which participated in the PISA-D in 2017 (PISA-D, 2019). This indicates that students generally have poor reading habits.

It is encouraging to note that more than half of the student participants spend more than 30 minutes on reading daily compared to other leisure activities. Correspondingly, Dorji (2020) found that almost half of his study respondents spent between 30 minutes to one hour daily on reading which accounts for between 3.5 to 7 hours of reading every week. On the other hand, there were a few participants who spent less than 30 minutes reading and spend more time in other leisure activities. The finding supports the responses made by respondents to the question, How do you feel about reading instead of playing? A study by Wangchuk et al. (2020) indicated a negative attitude towards the question as the respondents preferred playing to reading, probably because the former is physically, emotionally, and mentally more engaging than the latter. The findings of the study revealed that more than half of the student participants were inspired to read by various individuals. The individuals include their teacher, parents, friends, siblings, and the writers, and a few were inspired by their self-interest. In the same way, the finding of a survey on the reading habits of Turkish High School students by Kutay (2014) showed that students are mostly encouraged to read by their family members, teachers, and friends.



Conversely, Drukpa and Dhendup (2021) suggested that parents' educational background, parents' occupation, and students' age were not statistically significant factors affecting students' reading motivation. This indicates that encouragement plays a vital role irrespective of different educational and economic backgrounds. Thus, parents, teachers, and librarians must join hands to develop the reading habits of children from a young age. Once the reading habit is formed at an early age, it is likely to last for a long time (Loan, 2012). Additionally, those students with greater self-efficacy or higher self-esteem about themselves as readers typically are better readers (Drukpa & Dhendup, 2021). Students' self-interest also motivates their reading habits. With regard to the reading materials, students stated that they enjoy reading a variety of materials. The reading materials include fiction, non-fiction, comic books, and others such as folktales, poetry, romantic comedy, historical books, grammar books, love stories, and animated books. The reading materials further include easily accessible e-books and online books and materials. Similarly, the most preferred reading materials were novels, followed by magazines, newspapers, and the materials on websites (Kutey, 2014). Moreover, easy accessibility to reading materials encourages students to read. Making enough reading materials available to students could motivate and encourage them to read (Akabuike & Asika, 2012).

#### ➤ *Impacts of Reading Habits*

According to the study's findings, the majority of students prefer to read books and spend at least 30 minutes each day on reading. Good reading habits benefit the readers. Reading makes students aware of their surroundings and allows them to explore the world. This finding is supported by Kumara and Kumar (2019). In their study on the effects of reading habits on the academic success of students in Karnataka state universities, it was found that students' reading habits serve as a channel for obtaining real-world information. The Curriculum and Professional Support Division (2015) considers reading as "unlocking the vault of the wisdom of the race" (p. xxi).

The findings of the study also revealed that having good reading habits not only helps students become critical and creative thinkers, but also enhances their imagination and helps them express meaningfully. This finding is consistent with previous studies. Literature found that reading is a process of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning, and problem-solving (Ahuja & Ahuja, 2013). In the same way, Chauhan and Lal (2012) reported that reading helps to shape the personality and develop the thinking methods of readers. Furthermore, Acheaw (2014) revealed that 62.5% of the respondents acknowledged the importance of reading and said reading helps them to express themselves better. Hence, reading habit helps students' broaden their thinking perspectives and skills.

According to the findings, students believe that if they develop good reading habits, they will be able to assist their friends in times of need by explaining difficult words and phrases and they feel proud about it. In a similar vein,

Diwan (2020) believes that a healthy reading habit would prepare students for a much more responsible and self-sufficient life. It encourages students to be self-directed learners as well as information sources for their peers. Wangchuk et al., (2020) say that students who have a strong reading habit would be able to contribute effectively to a knowledge-based society. Moreover, Akyay and Ogeyik(2009) concluded that students find reading resourceful in all aspects of life, particularly by referring to individuals' emotional satisfaction and fast reasoning. As a result, it is reasonable to believe that by reading one may be able to assist those who lack information and ideas.

Besides the general impacts reading habits have on the students, the study has revealed that reading habits impact students' academic performances in English. The finding revealed that reading enhances students' language through fluency, vocabulary enrichment, and spelling improvement which enables them to perform better in English. A study by Aliponga (2013) also stated that reading enabled the readers to learn new vocabulary, enabled them to concentrate on spelling, and aided them when they have trouble understanding the content. Similarly, Khongtim and Naga (2017) recommended that students should be encouraged to read books in order to acquire lessons from the book as well as to enhance their language abilities. As a result, good reading skills boost students' language and help them perform better in their exams.

The study also found that reading plays a significant role in developing others strands of language such as writing, speaking, and listening. The findings are supported by the literature. According to a study, the reading habits of Gedu College of Business freshmen has a considerable impact on students' speaking and writing abilities, academic achievements, and communication competence (Wangchuk et al., 2020) and the ability to comprehend the texts impacts the academic performance (Akabuike & Asika, 2012). Furthermore, the study found that keeping a reading portfolio enhances students' writing by assisting them in using proper language, punctuation, and structure. Maintaining a reading portfolio assists students in effectively expressing themselves and writing in English, resulting in improved academic achievement in the near future (Acheaw& Larson, 2004). Similarly, Acheaw (2014) concluded that students with good reading habits are able to understand and comprehend the questions in the exam easily and are expressive as opposed to those students who do not have good reading habits or those who did no reading at all.

Reading influences exam results and performance in English. Students who read can understand the texts in the English curriculum, thus they are academically sound. On the other hand, those students with poor reading habits struggle to advance academically (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). The finding of the study revealed that in the first academic term assessment, the average Class Nine and 10 students scored was 46.30 percent in their English examination while the Class 12 student participants' score in English was 62.09 percent on average. This could possibly indicate that students who read perform better in their examinations.

Further, Lukhele (2019) indicated that reading has a favourable influence on improving English proficiency levels. As a result, reading enhances learning, and learning further leads to the academic achievement of the students.

#### ➤ *Teachers' Role in the Development of Students' Reading Habits*

Teachers play a vital role in the development of students' reading habits. Firstly, the findings revealed that teachers' encouragement, appreciation, and acknowledgment of students' reading help in the development of their reading habits. Similarly, students read more when they are inspired and encouraged by their teachers to read. Further, Dorji (2020) recommended that through the use of innovative ways, tutors must make concerted efforts to motivate their students to read. He concluded that teachers undoubtedly play a pivotal role in motivating and inspiring the students to cultivate a habit of reading.

The findings also revealed that students get motivated and inspired when their teachers conduct activities in the class and in the school on reading. This is in line with the study by Ögeyik and Akyay (2009) that showed that students need to be motivated through reading activities which could become a habitual task for them. Moreover, awards and feedback can assist students in reading they can motivate students to adopt a positive attitude towards reading (Akabuike & Asika, 2012). Similar awards and feedbacks can be provided by the teacher on their students' reading portfolios. In doing so, teachers provide alternative opportunities for children to develop an interest in reading. This, in turn, may further contribute towards high academic achievement.

Teachers play an important role in the development of students reading habits by providing time for them to read. Wangchuk et al. (2020) also agreed that English language teachers should adopt in-class reading practice so that it not only influences students' academic learning but also promotes and sustains lifelong learning. Additionally, the finding revealed that teachers should give book talks on reading and recommend students with interesting and relevant books to read which would help motivate them to read and enjoy reading more. Struggling readers benefit by listening to what skilled readers think about reading (Diwan, 2020). Moreover, it was found that some tutors often dedicated a few minutes in class to talk about books they were reading and also encouraged the students to do the same (Dorji, 2020). Additionally, schools could institute a reading culture; strengthen teacher model reading; offer literary activities, and provide varieties of reading materials to enhance students' reading (OCED, 2019). Thus, the findings from this study suggested that teachers need to institute in-class reading programs that would assist students to acquire and sustain their reading habits.

#### ➤ *Challenges and Factors Affecting Students Reading Habits*

Students face a number of challenges in developing good reading habits. Difficulty and inability to understand the new words lead to comprehension breakdown. This finding agrees with Akabuike and Asika (2012), they found that students' inability to interpret words and meanings of texts discourages them from reading, which is even more essential in determining a student's academic performance. Moreover, the findings showed that students find reading challenging because English is their second language. It is stated that foreign language learners do not like to read in the foreign language due to problems such as a lack of fluency and vocabulary (Kumara, 2019). Similarly, reading a book written in a foreign language does not give pleasure to the learners due to a lack of language knowledge (Ogeyik & Akaya, 2009). Hence, students find it challenging when they come across difficult words and new vocabulary.

The findings implied that a variety of factors influence pupil' reading habits. One of the most important factors affecting students' reading habits is time constraints. Their quality time for reading is affected due to the amount of homework, domestic duties, watching television, and engagement in other electronic devices. A number of studies support this point. Dorji (2020) stated that their greatest reading issue is the lack of time since they are swamped with their assignments. Furthermore, students' reading is affected by excessive workloads at home and tasks at school (Ogeyik & Akaya, 2009). Students do not get sufficient time to read for pleasure. The activities usually performed at home by the majority of the students include doing their school home works, playing games with their friends, watching television, and doing other domestic works such as washing dishes, cleaning, cooking, fetching water, and washing clothes (Khongtim & Naga, 2017). Students' time spent on electronic gadgets and watching television might also lead to poor time management. Over time, advances in information technology and media have affected students' time reading books. They spend more time watching television, conversing online, and immersing themselves in social media activities (Dorji 2020). Wangchuck et al. (2011) also conducted a study on the influence of social media on college students. According to their findings, social media use is linked to poor reading and academic performance. Dorji(2020) believes those students' claims about "lack of time" as the primary obstacles to reading are untrue. It is suggested that students must limit their time spent on social media in order to devote more time to meaningful reading. As a result, it is reasonable to agree that students should limit their time spent on social media in order to devote more time to meaningful reading.

Another factor impacting students' reading habits is the lack of a conducive atmosphere for reading. Conducive ambiance both at school and home is critical for the development of students' reading habits. Reading requires not just stillness but also a calm and quiet environment (Loan, 2012). Further, the physical surroundings and weather had a negative impact on their reading and performance (Akabuike & Asika, 2012). Particularly, lack of a favourable home atmosphere is one of the barriers that discourage students from reading at home (Ameyaw & Anto, 2018). Wangchuk et al., (2020) further recommend teachers provide conditions that not only encourage students to read but also help them improve their academic performance and achievements. Additionally, because parents are the primary caregivers in a student's life and lack of care and guidance from parents impacts students' reading habits (Ameyaw & Anto, 2018).

According to the findings, students' reading habits are affected by their parents' lack of guidance and inadequate understanding of reading. To address this issue, OCED (2019) suggested that parents motivate their children at home by reading books, discussing political and social issues, watching movies, listening to music, and attending other cultural events. This will allow children to acquire informed opinions and improve their critical thinking skills. Anyaegbu and Aghauche, (2016) agreed that parents should give reading resources and encourage their children to read in a positive setting. Loan (2020) contended, however, that parents, schools, and librarians must work together to instil reading habits in children at an early age. When a child develops reading habits at a young age, it is likely to endure a lifetime. Students require inspiration to read from a variety of sources since the development of the drive to read maybe the most difficult obstacle to overcome (Dorji, 2020). Teachers need to excite and encourage students to study information sources other than their notebooks and handouts in order to expose them to diverse and larger perspectives on knowledge (Danie et al., 2017)

The findings also revealed that students' limited access to the school library is another factor that affects students' reading habits. Students regard the school library as their ideal reading location (Daniel et al., 2017) since they may discover a wide selection of books there (Diwan, 2020). The findings showed that reading should not be limited to the library. The school, therefore, could create a library schedule that allows students to visit the library for at least one and a half hours each day (Ameyaw & Anto, 2018), rather than existing one session in a week practice in the Bhutanese schools.

## VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted to find out the influence of reading habits on students' academic performance in English. The study findings showed that students have cultivated adequate reading habits as they spend more than 30 minutes a day reading. The study recognized the importance of reading and indicated that it helps students broaden their knowledge. Motivation plays a vital role in the development of reading habits in students. Generally, students' source of motivation includes their parents and teachers. Students read a variety of materials and for various reasons. Students read mostly read fiction and non-fiction. Reading benefits students in their knowledge acquisition, acquiring world views, and broadening their perspectives. The findings also suggest that reading influences students' speaking and writing. More importantly, reading impacts students' academic performance in English. school library and read any reading material that would enable them to develop good reading habits. It is also recommended that libraries should procure enough reading materials and make them available to the students. Moreover, parents should help their children by creating a calm reading environment at home and providing enough materials for them to read.

Second, students should be encouraged to borrow books from the library frequently in order to develop good reading habits. Currently, students have access to the school library only once a week. The school should create a library schedule that allows students to visit the library anytime and to be kept it open for students anytime. In addition, there ought to be a school policy that rewards students who are better readers.

The present study employed a case study. Future research could use different research designs and a variety of data collection tools in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' reading habits and their impact on students' academic performances in English. This study used interviews and document analysis only.

Teachers' role in the development of students' reading habits is pivotal. The use of effective strategies and motivation is very important for the development of students' reading habits. It is, therefore, crucial for educators to emphasize the importance of reading.

The study explored challenges and factors affecting students' reading habits. The major challenge was students' inability to understand new vocabulary which makes it difficult for them to comprehend the text. Further, the factors that affect students' reading habits include lack of time, lack of proper guidance, the unwise use of the electronic device, and limited resource.



### ➤ Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted only in one of the schools under Wangdue Phodrang Dzongkhag and the data was collected from a few participants. Therefore, the findings of this study may not represent the case for other schools in the country. The result of the study may not have significant impacts on the whole population. Further, there are very minimal relevant studies done in the Bhutanese context. Hence, the study had to mostly rely on the literature of other countries.

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