

Pleasure Reading and the Role of Libraries: A Review of the Literature

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Abstract - Pleasure reading soothes mental stress and dispels boredom from hectic pressure. A considerable number of studies have been conducted worldwide regarding pleasure reading. The purpose of this study is to conduct a state-of-art review of pleasure reading. This review also covers the role of libraries for promoting pleasure reading to set up the potential research directions for future studies. The analysis and findings suggest that pleasure reading possess positive effect on following aspects - academic achievement, meta-cognition, self-realization, achieving potential quality, career enhancement and so on. From the reviewed literature it is observed that libraries and library professionals with the help of researchers, practitioners, and policy makers can foster a shared culture to promote pleasure reading trend among the enthusiast readers community.

Keywords: Pleasure Reading, Leisure Reading, Recreational Reading, Role of Libraries in Pleasure Reading

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading for pleasure has been one of the core leisure time activities among people in every corner of the world. Pleasure possesses immense strength in fostering involvement and development of reading. Reading helps to enjoy intellectual and social pleasure and be an informant as well (Wilhelm & Smith, 2016). So, it is said that the book is people's best friend that never pushes them in trouble. Since academic reading exists for a short length of time in a person's life span unless they are involved in teaching or research, people must read throughout their life for personal fulfillment. The ability to read has long been recognized as essential to personal fulfillment and there is now growing acceptance of the premise that a country's social and economic progress depends in large measure on its people having access to the indispensable knowledge conveyed by the printed word (Bamberger, 1975).

Reading is the best possible way to explore the ocean of knowledge and to discover oneself fruitfully. It is a meaningful activity (Christie, 2012). Reading helps to capture more and more new words which certainly increases strengthens vocabulary base of a student (Nippold *et al.*, 2005). Those who have thirst for knowledge and are frequently engaged in reading and learning something new, they are possibly very much capable to comprehend text potentially. Reading (PR) improves theory of mind 'ToM' (Bergland, 2014). One can memorize many things through regular reading practice. Reading is a skill that allows a learner to cut a good figure and progress in diverse areas of

learning (Ahmed, 2015). Reading is such an exercise that develops the analytical ability and helps to analyze any matter critically. Billington (2015) revealed that "people who read as little as 30 minutes a week are 35 percent more likely to have greater life experience". As reading relates to brain or psychology, it makes people more humane, humble, gentle, generous, merciful, warmhearted, compassionate, considerate, tolerant and commiserative. It reshapes the human conscience.

There is a consensus that reading habit that develops at early childhood helps academic and professional success as well as personal development. Considering the benefits of reading numerous initiatives have been taken worldwide to improve pleasure reading habits among people and the development of public libraries is one of them. At present different academic libraries at university, are also developing the special separate collection in a specialized section to support their patrons' pleasure reading. However, despite all these efforts, the trend of pleasure reading is declining by alarming percent all over the world.

II. CONCEPT OF PLEASURE READING

Pleasure reading means 'reading for mental refreshment', 'reading for amusement', 'reading for relaxation', and 'reading for the removal of monotony'. Pleasure reading can be synonymized as 'reading for enjoyment' (Allan *et al.*, 2005), 'free reading' (Cobb, 2007), 'independent reading' (Cullinan, 2000), 'recreational reading' (Day & Bumford, 2002), 'leisure reading' (Greaney, 1980), 'engaged reading' (Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999), 'extensive reading' (Hitosugi & Day, 2004), 'voluntary reading' (Krashen, 2004), 'lucid reading' (Nell, 1988), 'reading for entertainment' (Sonnenschein *et al.*, 2000), 'self-selected reading' (Worthy *et al.*, 1998), and so on. It is often characterized as personal solitary experience conducted in privacy, yet even when readers read alone, the act of reading remains profoundly social. In the USA, such reading is often described as 'free reading', 'voluntary reading' or 'independent reading', capturing the reader's sense of agency and choice (Krashen, 2004).

Clark & Rumbold (2006) defined reading for pleasure (RFP) as, reading helps an individual to get mental satisfaction at the right time and the right place. Reading for pleasure can be described as an act of the play, which allows us to

experience different worlds in our imagination and a creative and active/interactive process (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). The National Library Trust (UK) defined reading for pleasure, as independent, leisure or recreational reading, like reading, we do of our own free will. According to Kuchirkova *et al.*, (2017), “Reading for pleasure is a social practice, in the sense that the reader’s pleasure from engaging with a narrative is increased through the possibility of sharing this experience with others” (p.14). Pleasure reading can be defined as reading that is freely chosen or that readers freely and enthusiastically continue after it is assigned (The National Library Trust, UK). According to Cremin & Swann (2016) “literary interpretation involves the co-construction of particular sets of social relations between readers (p.9).” Cremin (2007) defined, “Reading for pleasure is oriented towards finding personal meaning and purpose and related to the human need to make sense of the world, the desire to understand, to make things work, to make connections, engage emotionally and feel deeply (p.6).”

We are living in a knowledge-based and technology-driven society. Reading is a must to develop literacy skills. Frequent reading helps people to be more literate. Reading is a gained skill, not a natural skill. To be a skillful reader is not a cup of tea. Continuous reading helps to gain such skill. Reading is very important for an individual’s transformation as well as social and economic well-being (Bamberger, 1975). The habits of reading have much more influence on educational success rather socio-economic identity (Clark & Rumbold, 2006; OECD, 2002). Reading different types of books helps people to attain diverse literacy. Because literacy is very important for the enhancement of language proficiency. For example, by reading various types of literary materials, a learner can be capable to learn and capture complex words (Nippold *et al.*, 2005).

Reading effectively takes students forward to the ocean of knowledge (Javid & Al-Khairi, 2011). There is a relationship between reading a good amount of text and fluency (Beglar *et al.*, 2011). A reading unquestionably helps an individual to be a better one. Pleasure reading helps people to think, again and again, ask various types of questions, prepare notes for further use and ultimately become well transformed (Christie, 2012). Early reading is connected to vital cognitive development between the ages of 10 and 16, whereas playing an instrument is not. Reading is most importantly linked to capture and develop vocabulary mathematical knowledge (Sullivan & Brown, 2015). Those who are indulged in reading, possibly they are the successful learner and do well in academic performance (Laurenson, 2015, p.19). Reading helps in materializing equal justice and positive transformation in every phase of society. It influences on person’s lifestyle, beliefs, social norms and ideologies (Dewan, 2016). Efficient reading habit is a must to gain knowledge of other languages (Ahmed, 2016). Technological attachment or use of ICT for reading influences on emotional changes as well as getting pleasure (Antón *et al.*, 2017). Reading helps in meta-cognition and better realization of oneself (Ekstam & Knutsen, 2018).

Students can get or learn more information from science fiction books (Alexander & Jarman, 2018). Regular reading habit impacts on academic achievement (Kumara & Kumar, 2019). Pleasure is a core thing in human life. Reading is very effective to catch pleasure and be a communicative, experienced, imaginative and insightful human being (Whitten *et al.*, 2016). “Pleasure is the secret ingredient that motivates people to put the thousands of necessary hours into an activity. When we read for enjoyment, we painlessly develop the skills necessary to become literate. Reading then becomes effortless and rewarding. Consequently, we turn to it as a favorite activity, which in turn further enhances our literacy skills. Far from the escapist activity that it has been depicted as, reading for pleasure is fundamental to the development of proficiency in literacy” (Dewan, 2016, p. 558; Gladwell, 2008).

III. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

A growing number of studies show that the interest of pleasure readers is alarmingly deteriorating due to technological advancement. For light entertainment young and adults tend to enter into a digital environment and using most of their time on social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, and so on), games and many other things that create addiction but left nothing for personal development.

In some recent studies, it is found that reading for enjoyment tends to decrease with age, and students from lower socio-economic groups do it less than students from higher socio-economic groups. The OECD’s report, ‘The ABC of Gender Equality in Education’ states that one reason boys may be lower achievers than girls is that they are less likely to read outside the school for pleasure. Other reasons include:

1. Their attitude to study and school.
2. They are more likely to spend time online – gaming and on the internet.

State leaders, having deep concern on this issue undertaken many projects to develop suitable programs for increasing recreational readership. Many international authorities and different societies are researching on pleasure reading worldwide and admitting that reading is a prerequisite for personal growth, social as well as economic development. So, effective programs should be designed to influence pleasure reading that helps lifelong learning. Academic and public libraries can take considerable initiatives to increase reader engagement and change the trends and attitudes of pleasure reading.

IV. SCOPE AND METHODS

The fact of pleasure reading as a common social practice is concerned with several fields of teaching and learning, e.g., education, literature, psychology, and certainly with the teaching and learning communities of library and information science (LIS) and there are huge number of literatures, latest and retrospective, available online on pleasure reading.

However, this study is confined only to the importance of pleasure reading and the role of libraries and library professionals to promote it. Moreover, for general idea development latest journal articles in some education journals were selected to review and to examine the role of university libraries in pleasure reading relevant articles were searched to review. It is significant to note that the literature reviewed in this study have been primarily identified through Google Scholar and through databases and journals devoted to issues associated with the importance of pleasure reading and the role libraries.

For the convenience of understanding, the findings have been divided into two main segments:

1. The importance of reading for pleasure
2. The role of libraries and librarians for pleasure reading

V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

A. General Importance of Pleasure Reading Reported in the Literature

Reading for pleasure is definitely an important practice for human beings. Pleasure reading enlightens an individual by broadening outlook and refining sensibility. It widens cognitive thinking and empowers an individual in exploiting the offered opportunities of it. Pleasure reading assists a person to be mentally afresh. It is very helpful for mental and intellectual development. It helps an individual to create new knowledge and to share it with others. It impacts on human conscience. It aids in thinking differently and independently. It helps a person in developing a literacy base. It affects human's ways and choices of living. It helps in building a culture of intellectual practice. A number of research scholars found that pleasure reading assists a person in many diversified ways.

1. Academic Success

According to literature, pleasure reading leads to academic success. In a study, Burak (2004) examined the attitudes, intents, and behaviors of college students towards leisure reading using theory of reasoned action and found pleasure reading as crucial factor to students' attitudes, desires, and behavior. This study strongly suggests that leisure reading helps reducing the stress, involving the thoughts of students therefore lead to utmost intents to read during their semester, spring break, and throughout the summer. In another study of Clark & Rumbold (2006) reported that pleasure reading offers plentiful opportunities and motivates students to form a passion for reading that ultimately leads to lifelong learning and literacy. Family atmosphere, socio-economic status and parents exercises a substantial influence on promoting academic score such as phonemic consciousness, vocabulary, understanding and writing. Later in 2010, Parlette & Howard corroborated with same findings conducted among the undergraduate students of two universities of Canada that students primarily read for pleasure with the notion to relieve

stress and to bring positive breakthrough in their academic performance. A concurrent study by Whitten *et al.*, (2016) also reported that the students in a rural Southeast Texas high school who engaged in reading self-selected literature for pleasure averaged higher grades in English, Mathematics, Science, and History than their non-reading counterparts.

2. Cognitive Development

Pleasure reading influences on the cognitive and executive function of our brain and improves our noggins. Reading helps people in making more interactive with others through enhancing emotional intelligence (Abdolrezapour, & Tavakoli, 2012; Ebrahimi *et al.*, 2018). Berns *et al.*, (2013) identified that pleasure reading strengthens networks in the different segments of the brain which helps in acquisition of long-term connectivity after the reading observed in bilateral somatosensory cortex, suggesting a potential mechanism for 'embodied semantics'. This study also reflects that reading stories reshape individual's cognitive styles through neural change through the association of both physical sensation and mind improvement. Sullivan & Brown (2015) conducted a significant study on the correlation between cognitive progress and pleasure reading and found that reading for pleasure is most importantly linked to capture and develop vocabulary mathematical knowledge. It is also strongly linked with parental education to lead cognitive progress in adolescence. On a slightly different angle, Wilhelm & Smith (2016) critically examined the reading of teens in a free environment means the text typically demoted by schools strengthens cognitive progress through distinct functional and psychological development. In the lifelong reading and literacy perspective, Garcés-Bacsal *et al.*, (2018) found that reading for pleasure has had a great impact on cognitive and socio-cognitive achievements while studying to determine wide-ranging literacy instructional strategies in the classroom.

This echoes findings in Ekstam & Knutsen (2018) who found that reading for pleasure and personal enrichment lead learners to use metacognitive strategies towards deeper and advanced reading practices. As a suggestive viewpoint, Hempel-Jorgensen *et al.*, (2018) claimed that reading for pleasure enables children from low socio-economic schools with the cognitive and active learning to make personal accomplishment and merits.

3. Self-Realization

Ross (1999) stated that reading for pleasure helps readers to strengthen personal communication, gather various experiences, and realize themselves and the universe with the connectedness of the sense for human desire in the real world. Cremin (2007) also argued that the fact that the pleasure reading helps in realizing one-self, guiding things to be functional, building networks and involving via emotions and deep feelings Pleasure reading has been linked with the development of self-realization and other's details. Other studies point to a different perspectives of self. For instance,

Ekstam & Knutsen (2018) in their conference paper noted that reading for pleasure has a strong association with the progress of self and understanding of people's identities through better realization of one-self.

4. *Achieving Potential Quality*

In an earlier study, Nell (1988), got an excellent finding that readers perceive literary merit is inversely related to reading pleasure means if reading is physiologically more aroused than other waking activities, and is succeeded by marked physiological deactivation then many reading rewards are mediated by large-scale conscious quality and mechanisms. In the form of popular reading, Adam (1989), denoted that reading for pleasure is a very crucial habit that reshapes a person's thinking patterns and intellectual practices by preparing him/hers strategic, insightful and confident. Duncan (2010) reported that beyond the intellectual aspects, cognitive reading for pleasure helps in potential gains like critical literacy, reading identity, community engagement, cognitive exercise, social involvement, political participation and confidence development. Furthermore, there is the additional issue, discussed for instance in Cremin & Swann (2016), Kuchirkova *et al.*, (2017) and Tarulli (2014) of interpreting finding that it helps to gather experiences in many human senses with a set of social networks through particular type of facultative activities through uncovering the possibility of consciousness (Kuchirkova *et al.*, 2017). With regard to intellect, it is reported in Dewan (2016) that pleasure reading helps people to be more literate by observing the reflection of one's thoughts and learning behavior to be prosperous and equitable in the society they belong.

5. *Career Development*

Caramela (2017) affirmed that reading increases imagination power which is most important for a career. She further pointed out reading helps a person to be a workaholic at the workplace and to achieve problem-solving expertise resulting into a resourceful career. McGee *et al.*, (2015) also reiterated that free reading makes people commiserative and successful in their careers crowning with the characteristics of creative, cognizant, foresighted, intelligent and perseverant qualities. On the slant of ontology, Sullivan & Brown (2015) stated that regardless of any kind of reading matters enable a person to understand the meaning of life by providing instruction to an individual with better vocabularies which are very effective in business communication.

B. *The Role of Libraries and Librarians for Promoting Pleasure Reading*

Nothing can be best replaced by or alternative to the library for reading diversified pleasure reading materials. Library guidelines are very important in pleasure reading. In this regard, librarians can transform an amateur reader into a habituated reader in selecting good materials. There is good

evidence in the literature that, many researchers have come up with the notion that library and library professionals are great source of influencer for promoting pleasure reading culture among students as well as library patrons. There have been several literatures on the role of libraries and librarians for promoting pleasure reading.

Zahua (1993) observed that the academic browsing room at a university or college library is very helpful to students. The researcher also added it may assist indigenous and foreign students to be accustomed to the library environment. It facilitates students to use the collection for a course and research purposes as well as recreational purposes. Odess-Harnish (2002) conducted a survey on twenty-two academic libraries within the country about leased leisure reading collection in lieu of buying leisure literature for a permanent stack. Campbell *et al.*, (2004) declared the Sherrod librarians are supposed to patronize pleasure reading. Librarians could collaborate with teaching faculty in allied disciplines to make non-scholarly fictional bibliographies. They believed that the Sherrod Library will carry on looking for modes to build a robust culture of sharing. In other studies, Trott & Elliott (2007) outlined the library can establish leisure reading promotion by existing collections and collaboration with others. Like academic libraries, public libraries can build a shared network with local academic library communities to promote extracurricular reading among college and university students. Academic and Public libraries can work together to meet leisure reading needs and nurture the next generation of leisure readers. The researcher stated that Libraries can promote extracurricular reading by following two methods namely displays and browsing areas. Academic libraries can promote popular reading through paperback collections and book exchange program.

Bosman *et al.*, (2008) conducted a study on the Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries. They stated that libraries can play a significant role to promote and strengthen lifelong learning and student engagement. In another study, Sanders (2009) carried out an experiment regarding pleasure reading trends at three universities in the United States. He identified that many undergraduate students read library collections for recreational purposes. Ross (2009) surveyed on pleasure reading by deploying two models which are available for library professionals to utilize in making policy and their oration. Each model describes different aspects of the power of the book, the reader's role and the impact of reading. Dewan (2010) identified three trends recently at university and college libraries. The academic librarians are to revisit their ideas regarding popular reading collection. The emerged trends showed a user-centered library, library rejuvenation as a place and development of lifelong learning and literacy attainment. Pleasure reading offers chances in order for targeted and lifelong learning. The researcher suggested that library professionals should take consideration in implementing a popular reading collection.

In a preliminary survey, Howard (2011) demonstrated that reading for pleasure materials reshapes students' reading choices and practices and information-seeking behavior linking with the library and information center. In other research, Diers & Simpson (2012) investigated the leisure reading habits and preferences of students, faculty, staff, and community members at the University of British Columbia (UBC). Library collection can promote a culture for academic research. They found that a leisure reading collection could offer a chance for them who are not aware of reading during leisure. In another research, Deveci (2013) also stated a lifelong way of reading possibly ornate a person with the necessary expertise for surviving both in a professional environment and social environment. The library can play a crucial role in lifelong learning and to become lifelong learners.

Leitão *et al.*, (2015) evaluated libraries that can arrange a pleasure reading program by providing interesting reading materials among students which influences a strong bonding between the libraries and the educational institutions. In another study, Harlan & Rigby (2015) noted the idea of a Pleasure Reading Collection maybe not a new concept. Browsing Rooms was a general concept than in an academic library. But, with the passage of time learners were progressively diverted to the public library in order for a non-academic purpose.

In research work, Ramírez-Leyva (2016) inspected that the library can play a significant role in teaching, learning, training, and development of amity and practice needs tests. Librarianship requires improving in detail perceived proposals that go beyond instructional reading models. Reading skills and cultural capital are effective for knowledge construction. Reading can help an individual in creativity, imagination, emotion, contemplation, cognition, curiosity, stimulation and enjoying intellectually and aesthetically.

In another research work, Dewan (2016) examined librarians who can enhance attention about the advantages of recreational reading for societies. People can be more literate, prosperous and equitable in the society they belong by reading more leisure reading books. He believed that librarians can act as a catalyst in building a practice environment of reading and can be an advocate for library resources. Mueller *et al.*, (2017) believed that the data collected from participants' survey offers a satisfactory culture of reading practice among the university community. The researchers believed the data collected from survey participants provide a better grasp of the reading culture of the University community.

The reading attitude of the community provides modified collection building policies and marketing of library resources. In another study, Kuchirkova & Cremin (2017) also identified librarians can play a crucial role to increase readers' engagement and their spontaneous feedback to pleasure reading. Alex-Nmecha & Horsfall

(2019) noted that libraries offer a depth and breadth of resources for users to read, learn, connect and play for self-improvement, pleasure, and relaxation thus promote reading culture in the physical or digital library spaces. The most recent study of Loh *et al.*, (2022) investigated on how primary school library supported the reading of children for pleasure. The two important findings reveal that the role of libraries is changing through:

1. Building a contemporary book collection for promoting the pleasure reading and
2. Create children's diverse tastes and opportunities for children to find new materials to pique their interest in reading.

VI. DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Numerous kinds of literature have been reviewed for the purpose of the study. Many researchers pointed out diverse aspects regarding pleasure reading like what is the necessity of pleasure reading, how reading affects students' attitudes and behavior and most importantly the role of libraries and library professionals to promote pleasure reading culture. According to the studied literature, pleasure reading play vital role in various dimensions like- academic success, cognitive development, self-realization, achieving potential quality, career enhancement.

In light of the review, major roles that libraries and library professionals can play are: creating and displaying non-scholarly fictional bibliographies; establishing separate sections with reading materials that instigate pleasure reading; offering different programs; collaborating with teaching faculty to build a robust culture of sharing; building a shared network with local academic, public and other types of library communities; promote extracurricular reading among college and university students through competition, campaign and programs. There is also a need to create mass consciousness on how libraries can play a significant role in this regard. Different workshops, trainings, seminars can also be organized to create a pleasure reading culture in the libraries.

VII. CONCLUSION

Pleasure reading and its relationship with libraries attracted a great deal of attention, with contributions coming from researchers, librarians, library practitioners, policy makers and others. The main conclusion that can be drawn from this review is that the dimension of importance for pleasure reading is increasing day by day. Most of the study shed light on the importance of pleasure reading is varied like-academic success, cognitive development, self-realization, achieving potential quality, career enhancement. This study suggests that mass awareness regarding the importance and on role of must take place to create and maintain a sustainable reading culture across the communities. Libraries can be at forefront to bring the flag of such culture in all spheres.

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