

Exploring Reading Motivation of Undergraduate Level Students: A Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract

The research topic *Exploring Reading Motivation of Undergraduate Level Students: A Narrative Inquiry* sprouted from our confession as a late reader and our experience as a teacher in undergraduate level for past 12 years. Over the years, the researchers experienced very few students are motivated to read books even though book reading can benefit the students in many ways. Particularly, only handful of students remain as readers by the time they enrol in undergraduate levels. We were alarmed about the decline in reading habit and wanted to explore the reasons for motivation to read among the undergraduate level students. Purposefully, we selected four undergraduate level avid readers as participants from two different institutions in Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts in Nepal.

The purpose of our study was to explore the reasons of reading motivation among avid undergraduate level students. We applied narrative inquiry and adopted interpretive paradigm relating to our ontological, epistemological and axiological stance and we were mindful that each undergraduate level student has her/ his own unique experience about book reading motivation. Collecting information via the participants' narrative, with their prior permission, we recorded the interview and later on translated/ transcribed maintaining the ethics of research. They belonged to different socio-cultural background, and they had distinct motivation experiences of book reading.

For the theoretical foundation of the research, we substantiated motivational and social constructivist theories as the key theories since the students were motivated into reading for various reasons. In motivation theory, we applied self-determination theory and Value Expectancy Theory. On the other hand, we also applied social constructivist theory to analyse the societal influences in their reading. These theories were used as parallel of our research which, on the one hand, enabled us to think analytically and on the other hand, encouraged us to act reflectively throughout the entire research journey. Thus, the motivation and social constructivist theory provided a clear lens for exploring the reasons why undergraduate level students were motivated to be avid readers.

Furthermore, we got various insights from our research participants on reading motivation. According to stories of the participants, their social circle, teachers, home environment, and self-interest all served to drive them to read books. The home environment plays an essential role in motivating children from their early childhood. Home influence where parents impart love for reading and kindle reading yearning on children is central to influence children to imbibe reading habit from their early childhood. Similarly, their narratives indicated that individual teachers play instrumental role in motivating students to read

even though the schools have no particular reading program. Next, it was also found that social circle like friends, book clubs, neighbours and social media encourages students to recognize reading as a social activity. Finally, in the initial stage, extrinsic reasons are instrumental to motivate students to read books; in later years, their self-interest or the 'Me' element support in becoming a lifelong reader.

This study contributes to raise an awareness of the stakeholders about the reasons why students read books informing them about major contributors in students' motivation. This study more specifically helps parents, teachers, curriculum designers and policy makers to set the reader centric provisions for nurturing reading motivation in Nepal.

Keywords: Reading Motivation, Narrative Inquiry

Raising the Curtain of the Study

We could not unleash our potentiality for two reasons during our childhood: our parents had no awareness of benefits of reading books and all of the schools we attended, lacked book reading environment. It took years for us to understand the importance of reading books before we became an avid reader. We think we are not only in this situation, but this could be reality of thousands of students across the country. So, intrigued by this, we got interested in carrying out a research to explore the reasons why tertiary level students read books.

Being an important area of literacy, we have a stern belief that more studies should be interested in reading motivation so that stakeholders and educators stay informed about the issues influencing adult reading habits and behaviors, especially in this digital age. In this regard, De Naeghel et al. (2012); Guay et al. (2010) indicate that not only reading motivation in general, but the type of students' reading motivation in particular must be considered. Furthermore, many researchers, including Chen and Lu (2012), Guthrie et al. (2013), Klauda and Wigfield (2012), and Summers (2013), came to the same conclusion that people's reading behaviors and motivation are substantially influenced by their life experiences. These life experiences encompass the house and family, friends, the community, the educational system, and the teachers. In their studies, they lay emphasis on school and home environment and social reasons as crucial in shaping reading habit among students. However, in our experiences as students as well as teachers, we have realized that motivating children and adolescents in reading is a herculean task. Our situatedness could not yield the answer to this issue: How would students get motivated when their family and schools lack this environment? We would always challenge that if all the aforementioned findings common to students of university levels in Nepal? What are their contextual understandings? What are the experiences and stories Nepali undergraduate level students share? Our review also discovered that literature is silent about reading motivation from undergraduate level students from their own perspective. In this sense, reading motivation of undergraduate level students is an unexplored territory to look at. Therefore, we are interested to look at the experiences and stories of these students on this issue.

We also believe that promoting reading habit among students is only possible when their teachers encourage them to read, becoming their role model (Chen, 2015). Teachers' role can be only be effective when they read books and engage themselves with the students. Highlighting our notion, Fisher and Frey also pointed out that effective questioning by teachers encourage inquiry. Similarly, their modeling shows

students how to read, analyze, and select suitable books offering students a chance to exert influence over learning. We also learned that a practice called sustained silent reading (SSR), which takes place in the classroom when pupils are given a brief window of uninterrupted silence for 15 to 20 minutes for reading whatever they choose, might motivate children. Furthermore, giving students access of e-books also stimulate them to read as they can enjoy the facilities of highlighting, annotating and searching for meaning for unfamiliar words and phrases which ultimately activate the text-to-speech feature (Larson, 2010). This means, these researchers recommend new techniques in implementing effective classroom instruction in the background of changing educational context. Hence, we are interested to understand what particular instructional assistance they expect from their instructors and teachers.

Moreover, reading motivation can be understood as a concept that specifically includes feeling experienced while reading (e.g., reading enjoyment), mental skills like reading include eye movements, visual perception, language processing, reasoning, and memory and the purpose to read (Artelt et al., 2010). Here questions may be raised: Is reading a construct of emotional and cognitive experiences only? What are other dimensions of reading motivation that are unexplored? We believe that for a student to be motivated, there are other dimensions in this changed world purely dominated by the digital technology. Next, is the contextual understanding of other research finding on this topic similar or context specific? What are the changing belief and priorities of undergrad level students in Nepali context? In this setting, as an avid reader ourselves and instructors and aspiring reading campaigners, we want to explore the contextual epistemic ground of reading motivation of undergrad level students from their own experiences. We still do not have a clear picture of the scenario how avid readers develop reading habits in Nepal.

Finally, methodologically, there are many methods like quantitative, mixed and qualitative to understand the ontological and epistemological meanings of reading motivation in relation to the ever changing educational world. After going through the literature such as Merga (2017); Brooks and Young (2011); and Neugebauer (2013), we realized study on reading motivation among students has been conducted from the post-positivistic approach. we believe, purely quantitative measure of reading motivation is unlikely to understand the all-inclusive aspects of motivations in adolescent students. Internationally, there have been few qualitative studies on interpretive standpoint. However, in Nepali context too, there is limited research giving voice to students' experience of reading in and out of educational institutions . Alongside, undergraduate level students who are in the crucial point between their high schools and upper level university degree are less studied. Therefore, there is need to expand knowledge in this area which could be a unique contribution to reading motivation and leadership literature.

Purpose

This narrative inquiry aims to explore the reasons of motivation for reading among undergraduate level students.

Research Questions

How do students at the undergraduate level narrate their experiences for reading books?

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative standpoint within an interpretative paradigm relating to our ontological,

epistemological, and axiological stance. We used narrative inquiry as a method to gear up this study. We selected four participants to collect information purposively because they addressed our expectations and purpose of researching on motivation for reading. In-depth interview was a tool to elicit information from the participants. The collected information was transcribed into English language and coded the main idea expressed in the narratives. Themes were generated based on coded information from the narratives of our four participants and then information were analyzed and interpreted merging signature literature and theory. Finally, meanings were made informing with literature and theories. The motivation and social constructivist theory provided a clear lens for exploring the reasons why undergraduate level students were motivated to be avid readers.

Unfolding the Pack

The information collected from the participants were presented and analyzed under the four themes. They were home influence and early exposure, teaching and learning, personal interest and relevance and social circle. Each of these theme are described below.

Home Influence and Early Exposure

Throughout interview process, participants associated their reason for book reading to their home environment. They recalled either their parents or other members in the family influenced them to read books. The study also found that the home environment was such that the reading habit sprouted within them as they had exposure to books early in their life. Their narrations pictured that parental encouragement, either from parents or other family members played a positive role to draw them to books in their childhood.

Bari has strong memories about how her home environment attracted her towards the magic world of printed books. She particularly made mention of a small library her mother had established. *"I remember reading books when I was in Grade 1. I would go to library which was on the ground floor of my house. I enjoyed my new habit so much that I finished reading all books by the time I reached Grade 2. She also shared the availability of books at her home library not just provided her access to different stories but attracted her towards the magic of storytelling. She added: "Sometimes, my mother would read stories for me. She was always supportive and it never happened to me that she did not like my reading. Instead, she encouraged me"*.

When Bari was just 10 year old, her mother died of an illness. In her mother's absence, she could not get support from her father. Bari recounted that her father, though a university graduate, never encouraged her in any pleasure reading but insisted her to read textbooks only. She revealed: *"I think my father had a fear that I might spoil my academic performance by reading books other than textbooks"*. After the demise of her mother, her family shifted to their ancestral house in Lalitpur. There, she was united with her cousin brother who was only 3 day younger to her. Being the same age and in the same class, they could spend hours in each other's company sharing about events in schools and their likes and dislikes. As her school had a reading club, he would share interesting things discussed in his reading club. He would share about characters and plot of stories that were discussed in the reading club. At first, the concept of the reading club was strange for her since she had not heard of such club. Slowly, she liked to listen to him and his book sharing. She also started to look for books her cousin had suggested her to read. With thrill in her

eyes, she shared: *"I started reading Goosebumps Series since he shared a lot about it. We shared many things about books we read till I reached Grade 8"*. Although Bari's maternal uncles helped her read by putting together the books she wanted to read in the later years of her schooling years, she acknowledged that her mother and cousin had a significant impact on her adoption of the habit.

Mujura also shared similar experience of her childhood reading. Because both of her parents were educated and were employed in government services, they knew the value of book reading. She was brought up seeing both of parents reading all the time as both of them were preparing for the examination of joint secretary post. She expressed that her mother, in particular, had a powerful influence in her reading habit. Her mother would read other books too. As an imitation to read books, Mujura would flip through the pages of illustrated books brought for her. *"I asked money to buy Fairy Tales and read it for my younger sister. However, I didn't like reading them even in my early childhood"*, she shared. Explaining the reason, she revealed: *"I didn't like the traditional fantasy where princess are rescued by a prince every time. I wanted to read more than this; I did not know what, though"*. By this time Mujura was in Grade 3. She also related an incident with her mother. She was weak in Nepali language; therefore, she always asked her mother not to bring books in Nepali language. However, something opposite would happen: *"My mother would bring books in Nepali language by intent. She wanted me to improve my Nepali as well because she knew only after I read books in Nepali I could improve my writing and speaking in Nepali"*, she mentioned. Both of her parents always motivated her to read and never questioned her reading habit nor did they supervise her choice of books.

Being the eldest amongst the siblings, Mujura was in a position to influence her juniors. In a way, she was in a disadvantageous situation that she had no one to turn to except her parents. And, her parents were always on the move, in different places of the country. At times, she wished she was not the eldest in the family and she had few senior cousins so that she could talk and share about reading and exchange books. She further recalled her mother's support:

My mother still recommends books to me. She reads different types of books and upon finding any book that she thinks interests me, she recommends it to me. I remember I had read Hamlet by Shakespeare which my mother had brought for me in my childhood. She has been my mentor and a friend to discuss books.

Mujura thought that she was lucky to have understanding parents. She had seen many of her friends' educated parents who would discourage their children not to read pleasure. Explaining her father's influence, she acknowledged that he also motivated her in pleasure reading. Though he was stationed out of the Kathmandu Valley most of the time, he kept on encouraging her to read books saying that books enhance her knowledge. Being satisfied, Mujura was thankful to her parents for giving her freedom to read books that were outside of her course in her school years. She was brought up seeing her parents read books, specially, her mother.

The home environment in relation to parental influence is different when it comes to the childhood reading experience of Shishir. Unlike Bari and Mujura, Shishir's parents were not university graduates. His mother had attended up to high school and his father stepped in college but he never took his study seriously. This could be because Shishir hails from a Newari community and his family owned a business by the time of

his grandfather. His grandfather was a household name for gold and silver jeweler in Patan. After his grandfather, his father has been looking after the business. Shishir never got his parents' motivation in reading. However, he was brought up seeing his grandfather read books. He recounted: *"My grandfather was an avid reader. He would read books particularly on myth and gods and goddess. He, too had a collection of these books at home."*

Shishir's grandfather had a habit of sharing different stories to them. Having faith in Buddhism, his grandfather would read different myths and stories of life of the Buddha. Also, he would read the Hindu scriptures like *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana*. Interestingly, his grandfather would share the myths and stories of origination of rituals and tradition along with other Buddhist narratives. He said:

He was the only person who asked me to read books in my family. Perhaps this practice drew me to religious stories. It was so fun listening to my grandfather. I am not sure, but this tendency might have planted in me how magical the storytelling could be. Now I realize he was not directly pushing me to book reading but trying to teach me the importance of understanding.

Shishir shared that other family members hardly had any influence on his reading habit. His father and mother do not read themselves; therefore, there is no question when they are not readers themselves, they cannot motivate him to read books. He added: *It was my grandfather who I saw with books in my family. Later, as I understood the importance of reading books, I started reading on my own.* He admitted that he was "serious" in book reading only when he was in his later years of schooling.

When it comes to Suyog's turn to share his stories of home influence and early exposure, he could not recall a typical experience when he was helped or encouraged by his parents. His father was retired from army and was not highly educated. His mother was illiterate. Even his seven sisters were not given proper education. In a home environment like this, it is no surprise that Suyog did not get constructive reading encouragement. Remembering his distant memory of books, he shared: *"No one in my family read"*. His father would write occasionally. He would also narrate his life experiences, tell stories of god and goddess, spirits and ghosts. But he never encouraged his son to read books.

Recalling his childhood, Suyog said: *"Reciting Shree Swasthani was a favorite pass time during our winter vacations in the month of December and January. But the real reason for taking part in reciting the holy book was the Prasad.* He also collected another event where he would read biographies of famous scientists like Thomas Alva Edison and Einstein. He could not remember where those books came from but he had these books in his house. He was more interested to know what very thing triggered these scientists to the discovery and invention. He admitted: *It might be my sheer curiosity to know"*.

Suyog was jealous of his cousin brother who was very studious. Everyone in his family would talk about him, praise him. He was a kind of epitome of a good student and a good son. Suyog and other cousins were brought up in his shadow. Suyog shared: *Therefore, just to show his brother and his family members, he wanted to be a better performer. But I remained an average student throughout my school days.*

Teaching and Learning

The finding from this study shows a nexus between the participants' motivation to read with their

classroom instruction in both schools and colleges. When they were asked about the role of their classroom instructions in reading motivation, one participant articulated a straight association of her teacher's instruction whereas three other shared even if they were not inspired by any teacher. Bari recalled one of her teachers and her interesting approach to reading during her A Levels:

The most fascinating thing about my teacher was she knew all the titles with their available copies collected in the library. She would also recommend us books to read. However, she never forced us to read a particular title. Instead, she would make us understand what happens when we read books.

She recounted the teacher was a British citizen and was brought up in the western culture. However, she always respected the eastern philosophy and culture. Every student in A Levels wanted to be in her class. She further added: *"She would invite us in her residence and discuss about books. We were served with tea and cookies. Just to be part of this atmosphere, we would read books and go there to take part in the discussion."* Unfortunately, she never had such teacher and mentor in her life after that.

Reflecting upon early school experience, Bari could recollect the memories as far as when she was in Grade 5. She noted that a reading class was allocated for and that was a time they would read and discuss about books. As she kept on changing schools after that she had a faint remembrance of library classes. In later years, her teachers would take them to libraries in leisure. However, she did not recalled any particular influence of a teacher like she did about the British teacher. Mostly, the instruction was to read books and write the summary of the same during long vacations. during But, she was least motivated in reading in real sense since teachers never cared even if the assignment was copied from the internet.

Bari also noted that while she is in her undergraduate level, the course did not demand lot of book reading other than textbooks. But her teachers of English Literature and Cultural Tourism often talked about books they read. She added: *"Our tourism teacher help us with a facility of borrowing books from his office. I read two books this way– one about Muslim girl education and another on spirituality"*.

However, unlike Bari, neither Mujura, Shishir nor Suyog recalled any experience of direct book reading influence from a teacher in their junior and middle school years. Mujura kept on changing schools in Janakpur and Hetauda as her parents were transferred to these cities for few years. Later, even after she came to Kathmandu, she changed two schools. Remembering her school days, she recalled that she had very limited experience of reading environment in the schools she studied. These institutions had no provision of focused reading program for students. Yet, she was encouraged in stories and reading by her English teacher during two years in high school. She added: *"Our English teacher would read stories aloud in the classroom. I would be mesmerized by his narration and I would lost myself in his narration."* She also added that this was the only class she would give all her attention only because of the reading aloud. She noted that she enjoyed a novel *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald when she was in Grade 12. She liked *"Everything American about the protagonist"*. Through his teacher's reading, she got an opportunity to peek through the American Dream. *"I was drawn to the wonder of storytelling after that. I enjoyed my teacher's technique so much that I started reading books aloud."*, she added. Sharing her reading experience in her undergraduate level, she mentioned few other teachers who often talked about books and benefits of reading. Her college principal, though he was not a subject teacher, brought

references from books during his visit to her class. She shared that he always encouraged them to read books. Also unique to her experience was her Technical Writing instructor:

*While explaining points, our Technical Writing teacher brings many contexts from books. For instance, while teaching public speaking and presentation, he talked about a book *How To Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie. He showed a motivational video of famous actor Manisha Koirala and spoke about her book *Healed*.*

Shishir also acknowledged the influence of teaching and instruction method in his reading behavior. I remembered: “*My teacher would assign a reading project and we had to write a summary after reading the book.*” Another incident he shared about reading experience was his promotion to Section A in his Grade 10. It was a matter of pride for any student getting promoted to section A because students from section A had a better status among students in our school. He experienced a different environment in the Section. To his surprise, along with good academic performance, students in Section A had a habit of reading books. They would talk about different ideas presented on books. They also knew many things. He experienced those who read had unique ways of thinking. He made the statement: *I wanted to be like them and I also thought to start reading books. Then, impressed with other bright students, I unsuccessfully tried to read *The Alchemist*. I read half of it and left.*

As Shishir was telling his experiences, he also did mention of an essay writing competition that completely drove him to reading afterwards. He shared:

I participated in a writing competition. Students from around six high schools had participated in the event. But I only wanted to skip my class. In the competition, we were given a topic to write an essay. Since I was not serious, I ended up writing only two and half pages whereas other participants had completed four to six pages. To my surprise, I came third in the competition. However, one thing is certain. I had written from my heart and ideas and words came to my mind naturally. I think words sprung naturally to me as I had started reading books. Motivated—I realized the importance of reading books.

When I asked Suyog about how he was motivated by any teacher or classroom instruction in school and college environment, he admitted that being graduated from a school in Terai was different than from a school in Kathmandu. Though he studied in a private institution, he experienced no motivation from his teachers during his junior, middle and high schools. He revealed, “*I saw a library only when I was enrolled in B.A.*” By then he had already started reading books on his own. At times, he discussed about books he had read with his teachers. And, in return, his teachers would discuss books with him. He started reading books on Philosophy as he was introduced to Western Intellectual Thinking in his B.A First Year.

Personal Interest and Relevance

Several significant issues emerged from the reading narratives of the participants. While answering the 'why' of their reading behavior, not surprisingly, the participants shared common reasons for their reading practices. All four participants shared their interest and curiosity matter most while choosing titles. They also mentioned how important reading books was to them and how it motivated them. Relevance was the overarching theme of the interview for Bari. She shared, as a child, she loved to read books that interested her. For example, she reflected that she finished reading whole of *Goosebumps Series* when she was in

Grade 5. She enjoyed it a lot. Even today, she loves stories and fictions more than any other genre. She admitted: *I want to escape from this world through books. Living a life that the fictitious characters live is a wonderful experience*". For her, pleasure and relaxation she gets from book reading is almost impossible from other hobbies. She also remembered that when she read Chetan Bhagat's *One Night At A Call Centre*, she felt kind of 'wow'. She added that reading fantasy has very little to do with our real life. However, She concurred that the characters' experiences might be comparable to what we go through in real life.

When I asked her any other reason she would like to share behind enjoyment, one of the things she said was, *"I read books to quench her curiosity."* Elaborating more on this, she clarified:

I have seen deaths of my dear ones in my family. I lost my mother when I was just 10. Since then, I had had questions like why people die? Why do we follow a certain rituals after death? What happens to the person when she (my mother dies)? To kill my curiosity, I read Sadhguru's Death. Watching his YouTube videos and speech, I was intrigued to know more about death and rituals related to it, especially in Hindu family. Death has quenched my thirst to know the death rituals to a greater extent. It is a seminal book on Death."

Similarly, Bari added one more reason for her reading behavior. She mentioned that she looks for the significance of reading books. She wants to implement knowledge gained from a particular book. Recently, she finished reading a called *Raising A Girl*. The only motivation behind choosing the titles was to understand the behavior of her younger sister who is just 3. She mentioned: *"I want to learn practical approaches or rearing a girl"*.

Mujura expressed a similar opinion. When I questioned her about what motivated her to want to read, she responded: *"Books that impart lessons for real life are more appealing to me. I often wonder how this book will apply to me in a practical way "*. She stated that non-fiction held a special place in her heart because of its "practical worth" and "everyday applicability." However, she clarified if she was asked why she read books, her answer would be for relaxation and happiness. She went on: *"I feel kind of relaxed when I sit alone with a book on my hands. This is a great respite from the humdrum of daily life."*

She summed up her response by adding that she only reads what interests her. Since her childhood, she noted, she did not like stories of imaginary land, prince and princess. I never picked and read books for any sort of reward both in my home and school environment. *"I think I started reading books for myself"* , she reflected. Unbeknownst how she was drawn to book reading, she knows she reads for her inner happiness now. *"I read to satisfy my personal interest and to relieve their stress"* , she added. "

Mujura also talked about another reason why she reads books. She revealed that she was fond of becoming a program host. Therefore, she did try to improve her English through books. She opened up: *"Recently, I have started reading particular books to enrich my vocabulary and language structure."* Earlier in school day, she would read books and upon coming across alien words, she would copy these words on her diary. She had a separate diary for this purpose. Later, she would look up in the dictionary and write the meaning of the words. She agreed that she reads books to improve her command over English language.

She revealed that she does not do any reading just to better her academic achievement. However, she admitted: *"It is like buy one get one offer. When you read books, your understanding of the text grows"*. At times, she read books to improve her command over English language. She acknowledged her reading habit has direct benefit in academic achievement. She recalled:

I had a habit of listing difficult words in a separate note copy and I would write the meaning of these words looking up in a dictionary. I continued this habit till my 10th Standard. Whenever I come across these words, it reminds me of the context in the book. This habit obviously helped me in boosting my vocabulary.

Recently, it happened that she was hosting a college program and was speaking in English. But right vocabulary did not come to her mind to express herself better. She knew the meaning but the right use of these words was not easy. Therefore, with an aim to boost her vocabulary, she started reading particular books. In the end of the interview, she emphasized she has never picked and read books for any sort of reward both in her home and school environment. *"I think I started reading books for myself...I read for my inner happiness and satisfaction."*, she mentioned.

Additionally, Shishir opened up and said: *"I like anything where I can broaden my perspective and satisfy a childlike inquisitiveness inside me"*.

For him, books helped him to focus. It's a kind of meditation. In the interview, he mentioned his learning from a *12 Rules of Life* by John Paterson. He also gets attached with the characters. Commenting on character attachment, he explained that he could relate with the ethical and moral dilemma of protagonist in the book. This gave him an opportunity to open up his perspective. He added: *"It taught me to compare myself with what I was yesterday but not with someone else today. I realized the competition is within"*.

Furthermore, Shishir admitted that he has taken books as a tool to grow, update and improve oneself than comparing with other fellows. Influenced by books, he was more focused on himself during his undergraduate study. He later shared that he read *Eat That Frog* by Brian Tracy and *Who Moved My Cheese?* by Dr. Spencer Johnson just widen his life skills. He noted:

Eat That Frog taught me the techniques to stop procrastinating and get more of the important things done. Success does not lie in trying to do everything but focusing on the most important tasks and get those done. This means eating the frogs. Similarly, Who Moved My Cheese? is a timeless business classic. It uses a simple fable to reveal profound truths about dealing with change (cheese as metaphor) so that one can enjoy less stress and more success in work and in life.

Shishir also talked about *Fight Club* when describing his reading experiences. He opened up saying the book was a *"mind opening book"* about masculinity. *"I am sharing all these because I gravitated to books only after I realized I need something to read that takes away my sleep"*, he responded. Similarly, he read business books like *Rich Dad Poor Dad* to learn some investment strategies. The biggest driving force behind his flipping through the pages is the book should teach him something new. It should challenge his present perspective and teach or show different horizon about the same.

Suyog, like Mujura, started to read books for the enrichment of his vocabulary as well as for pleasure. After passing his twelfth Grade, he was wishing to apply for foreign university in Australia. He wanted to better his English. Therefore, he started reading dictionaries and quotation books. “*I am well versed in English vocabularies and this was the time I learnt most of them.*” He also had an inferiority complex since his English language—both written and spoken—was not up to the mark.

Sharing an incident, Suyog opened up: “*I stole Wilkie Collin’s Moonstone from a house where I was a tuition teacher.*” After finishing the book, he was drawn to read more of Collin’s. Then searched for *Women in White*. The hunger for books continued and he started reading Charles Dickens. He read *Bleak House, The Tales of Two Cities and Christmas Carol*. In the *The Tales of Two Cities*, he came to know about the French Revolution. Now, he wanted to know more about the event. In a way, Suyog was trying to quench his curiosity by reading books. “*I also read the Bible and Bhagawat Gita to answer the existential questions I had then.*” In later part, Suyog was drawn away from western philosophical books and literature. He preferred to learn more about his own tradition and culture. Because of this curiosity, he tried the Upanisad.

Social Circle

The result of the study also indicated that the participants were also motivated to read because they wanted to belong to a group, circle and wanted to be like what book readers do or look like. Their personal accounts demonstrated that they had made a connection that offered a point of connection and a method to connect with others. Reading culture around them attracted them to read. Bari mentioned the influence of her peer group and relatives in particular. She had visited his grandfather’s friend’s house. There, she had seen the house was furnished with books everywhere. Similarly, she had seen books nicely showcased in her aunt’s house. At that time Bari had an impression that rich and wise people read books. She noted: “*Seeing these families, I had vowed myself that I would also collect books and be like them, rich and wise.*”

Later in her school years, Bari started taking reading books as a part of social activity where she could connect to different people. She read books to get connected with her friend circle. Within peer groups, the group members would recommend and discuss books. Next, a television talk show, *Dishanirdesh* encouraged her to pick books. “*I was so influenced by the life journey of Madan Krishna Shrestha that I could not stop myself reading his autobiography Maha Ko Ma.*”, She added.

She also admitted that that she posts books cover on social media such as Instagram and Facebook. Recently, she had posted Sadhguru's *Death* and Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking Fast And Slow*. Clarifying the reason, she further added, “*I want to belong to those who read. Is not it great if someone gets motivated to read books from my posts?*” She had closed circle of friends who read almost similar type of books. (Pakistani neighbor)

Mujura had similar affinity about her habit of reading books. She had a circle of few close friends. Within the group, they would share their experiences about reading books. “*Along with the books we read, we discussed about characters and show our emotion to the characters. It was fun to related with one of the characters from the book*”, she noted. Thrilled to share, she acknowledged that checking friends' bag and

try to find out what they were reading was famous among them. She admitted that the circle was of greater value to take up particular titles. Her friends would recommend their favorite titles.

Mujur was also influenced by social media. Though she was not frequent on posting books or information related to books on Facebook and Instagram, she posted certain titles and wanted to make know about the book. She also admitted: *“It feels special to show that you have been reading some serious good books.”* She believed that books should be posted on a presentable. Illustrating one of the books she posted on Instagram, she shared:

I posted a book called Stunning Success by Robin Sharma. One of the followers agreed with me that the activity right after each chapter makes the book unique and practical. Belonging to the world of books and readers via social media encourages to read more.

Sharing the influence of social circle, Shishir also went through similar experience like Bari and Mujura. He shared he started reading books when he was promoted to Section A in Grade 10. There, he came to a circle of studious students. His new students were bright and would talk about different topics. They would talk a lot about scientific inventions and discoveries. Just to belong to the studious group of students and be like one of them, he picked few books on science. “I also tried reading books on computer coding and Law of Relativity just to impress them”, he mentioned.

Shishir also had another friend during the same time. He also wanted to be like his friend. This friend had a good impression in the friend circle because of his confidence about what he would speak. Even if he was wrong, he would speak very confidently. *“This too had an impression me. I also wanted to be confident and be liked by my friends. Just to be confident like him, I started reading The Art of Seduction by Robert Greene”*, he added. Shishir also had a habit of gifting books. Books were warm gifts that helped his friendship warmer. Similarly, he was heavily influenced by media in selection of books. He would watch Youtube channels. Through these channels, he learnt a skill to analyse the plot and the character of a film. He applied his newly learnt skill to analyse characters in books. Eventually, the influence of YouTube videos helped him choose mature content even in books. He shared: *“I also turn to book reviews on media. For instance, after reading a review, I listened to 48 Laws of Power in audio.”*

Suyog related a fascinating tale when discussing the role that his social circle has had in influencing his reading experiences. By nature he was introverted. He read books and it was within him. There was no outlet of his knowledge or learning acquired from book reading. However, when he found a friend to whom he could share everything about books, his confidence boosted up. His friend would listen to him and discuss more books with him. Remembering his experienced, he shared that discussing two books– Siddhartha by Harman Hesse and The Stranger was the most revealing. He opened up: *“ An opportunity to discuss about books with my friend was like an ego satisfier.”*

Next, since Suyog’s childhood, he had an impression that reading literature was an luxurious concept. He had seen wise and good people reading books. In a way, he had linked book reading habit with status symbol. Therefore, he wanted to be among *‘literature reading people’*. With a blush in his face, he admitted, he wanted to show off that he was among the wise and rich people. This particular experience

of his is aligned with Bari's experience. Finally, he would watch YouTube videos. Recalling one incident, after watching a video on YouTube, he searched for a book by Socrates and read it.

Insights

The key insights generated from this study are listed below.

Supportive home environment was found to be a catalyst for the motivation for reading

- Teachers were found motivators for reading besides parents and family members.

Social Actors were found to have responsible for mativation for reading.

The 'Me' element in their reading behavior was the definitive motivation behind their continuous reading conduct

Discussion

According to Chen and Lu (2012), Guthrie et al. (2013), and Summers (2013), children's reading habits, actions, and drive to read are significantly influenced by many life situations. Analysis of participants' narratives revealed various reasons why undergraduate level avid readers chose to read and continued reading books at a time when a significant portion of their peers had less or no motivation to read books. The stories of our research participants revealed that they encountered reading in the very beginning of their lives. Although each of the four participants profiled in this study came from a different family and had a different socioeconomic background, attended a different school, and had a variety of reading experiences, there were some commonalities that emerged that convey the essence of their narrative of reading motivation. By the time they entered college, they realized how important reading was to their lives and developed the habit of regularly reading books. The stories they shared with us have provided a treasure of information. Therefore, to recognize the reasons behind their reading motivation, we generated four themes and discussed here based on their narratives.

Home is where the reading motivation begins

As claimed by Chen (2015), parents and other family members can nurture reading activity and behavior in children. This component is mirrored in our participants' desire to read during their early childhood. While interpreting the stories of the participants, we found 'home environment' as the repeated theme used by our participants while narrating the reasons for their motivation to read book. The participants shared that they were influenced by their home environment in one or other way. For two participants, their parents especially, mothers were direct influence and other two were attracted to books because of guidance of other family members and availability of books in the house.

After interpreting the participants' as well as our reading experiences, we came to the conclusion that parents and other family members are crucial in encouraging young children to read. Assistance and encouragement from parents and other family members have direct link with the development of children's reading interests. A small action of encouragement received by these undergraduate students from parents exposed and attracted them to develop reading habit. In terms of reading atmosphere, the availability of books at home and the freedom they got promoting their interests in books. Environment at home which was comfortable and conducive to the participants enthused them to read.

This understanding which we have drawn from our participants is also the understanding of researchers. (Mansor et al., 2013; Merga, 2017; Yang et al., 2018; Dong et al., 2020); Inoue et al., 2018). In the studies of Mansor et al. (2013) and Merga (2017), they confirmed that A child's interest in reading is first sparked by a mother's early childhood interventions and a welcoming home environment.

The Social Constructivist Theory of Vygotsky (1978), which concurs with SDT, acknowledges the role of parents in encouraging their children to learn an activity. According to this theory, reading is a social activity, and children can learn anything with the help of an adult who is more knowledgeable or skilled. Zone of Proximal Development, which Vygotsky named More Knowledgeable Others, is the region where a child can learn with the help of someone who has more understanding (MKO). For the participants, their parents and other family members were the MKO who encouraged them to read books. The participants received mediation through feedback, support, encouragement and modelling provided by parents, and other adults is responsible because of which they enhanced performance since their childhood (Scharlach, 2008 as cited in Ceyhan & Yildiz, 2021). It is evident from the theory that the participants imbibed reading behavior with the help of parents as MKO which they could not do independently.

Teachers are not just torchbearer but trailblazers for book reading

The narratives of our participants revealed that their reading habits were influenced by their teachers at their schools and colleges, much as they had been influenced by their parents and other family members at home. They were stimulated to read more not because of reading climate in their schools and college but because of influence of individual teachers. Certain teachers and their encouragement, as described by the participants, were helpful stimulator for them to read more frequently. This finding of our study is in line with those of other studies (De Naeghel et al., 2014; Fisher & Frey, 2012; Takaloo & Ahmadi (2017); Claessens et al., (2016) and Ushiodo (2016). These studies concluded that the teachers' encouragement to read has affirmative linking with the student' motivation to read books.

Along with SDT, Social Constructivist Theory of Vygotsky (1978) validated instructors' role in encouraging students to read. As presented by Vygotsky (1978), like parents and other family members, teachers played crucial role as MKO. By showing concern, giving praise and appreciation, encouragement, choosing books and giving new information about new books and being emphatic fostered the ZPD of students. This supportive environment from teachers can also be termed as planned instructional scaffolding.

Reading is a Social Activity

Our participants shared with me that social influences like friend circle, neighbor, book club, reading for approval, recommendation, shared social habit and media influence were recurring mechanism of influence for the participants.

The findings of our research which claim social agents like friends, neighbours and media also influence students to read more is also authenticated by The Expectancy Value Theory (EVT) (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). According to this theory, a person's motivation is influenced by their expectations, value placed on

particular task-specific beliefs, and personal ambitions. It further adds that these expectation and value are again influenced by other peoples' beliefs, socialization, and personal past achievement experiences. Like the extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985), EVT differentiates utility value as external motivators that aren't linked to an activity's inherent enjoyment but instead are linked to achieving some desired outcome through the behavior or activity (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

Personal Interest Reengages in Read

Generally, stories revealed that motivation for participants' book reading included curiosity and knowledge, perspective taking, freedom and pleasure and improved language skills. This finding is in line with Raza et al. (2017), Allred and Cena (2020), and Barber and Klauda (2020). Emphasizing the importance of self-interest in motivating students to read books, these researchers summed up that students possess curiosity and desire for pleasure so that they can continue reading books. Similarly, these researchers put stress on the way how the students challenge themselves to learn new things. They have concluded that 'Me' element is essential for motivating them inwardly.

The Expectancy Value Theory (EVT) further validates the study's result that participants' internal motivations for self-interest drove them. According to the notion, someone must assign a task and have at least a moderate expectation of achievement (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). The task value provides an explanation for "why I should accomplish this." Therefore, the participants' enjoyment of the reading activity is categorized as intrinsic value. The pure pleasure a learner experiences while working on a task is an intrinsic value. As they taste the intrinsic value, they become involved in the task. When the participants read books for pleasure, knowledge, escape, perspective taking and freedom, they have developed intrinsic value. These rewards are obtained from completing a task or participating in an activity with subjective interest.

Conclusion

First and foremost, the role of parents and caretakers is crucial in influencing children to read books. Their involvement in children's reading behavior affirmatively influences them to be lifelong readers since their early childhood. Parents who make books available at home, share reading experiences and give freedom to choose books are likely to draw the young minds into books. Particularly, mothers, as they are emotionally closer to children, are instrumental in kindling the desire to read books. A mother reading a story aloud is the most loved activity for children in their childhood. By reading together, a child tastes joys reading and takes them to their imaginative world of interesting characters. Also, by nature, children imitate their parents and caretakers at home. So, seeing both the parents and either of the parent reading books at home sets an example. In addition, talking about what they read, appreciating their reading habits, gifting books on different occasions, reading aloud and creating an environment where children are encouraged to read books help the children take reading seriously. Another aspect is reading should be fun for children. Therefore, freedom to choose books also encourages children to read more. A child does not become a reader on his or her own. Parental involvement and suitable home environment impart love for reading in the children and guide him her to continue to read books in their teenage and adult years.

Similarly, when teachers share their personal experiences about reading particular books make students curious. Likewise, bringing examples from non-textbooks while interpreting the text content also drives their inquisitiveness about the books. Together with these, if opportunity is given to students to choose their own titles, they are more driven to read as opposed to when students are forced to read certain books. Furthermore, students who are appreciated and recognized for their reading habit are likely to continue this habit and become lifelong readers. A lifelong reader may be cultivated in schools when students are exposed to a love of reading, whether they observe their teachers reading and discussing books or when they actively give access or promote choice through interaction and shared delight. In social circle, students are encouraged to read because they take it as the shared social habit. When students who read books find another book reader, they feel happy. Being recognized as a book reader is the greatest incentive for them. As a result, they share their views and suggest books within the circle. This comradeship brings enjoyment of reading together. Further, they get the chance to continue and establish important relationships with other people. Similarly, modern technology, particularly, social media, enables students to meaningfully connect with the authors, content and the outside world which ultimately encourages these curious minds to flip through the pages of books. Students are to be intrinsically motivated before they take reading habit as one of the important slices of their life. For this, extrinsic motivation they get at home, school and community only serve as driving force which helps them to take the journey as book readers for some time. After they lack these extrinsic motivations, they are reluctant to continue their reading. This is where most of the readers in schools stay away from books after the end of their schooling years. However, to be lifelong readers, they need to be intrinsically motivated towards reading. Their willingness to read book is not thrived until they perceive it as an activity that is naturally satisfying and rewarding to them. Not surprisingly, the biggest intrinsic motivation for their reading experiences relates to personal relevance and interest. Through the habit of reading, they connect with the plot and the characters and become immersed to it. It is an escapism for them, and it is pleasurable, too. Similarly, their own curiosity to know more motivate them from inside to read more books. Students are likely to seek anything that interests them, and books are the greatest source to quench their thirst. This tendency also be expressed as perspective taking. Students view reading as a crucial ability that helps them achieve goals in a variety of contexts, including school and job advancement. They are aware that reading regularly helps them develop their language and vocabulary.

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