



# Examining the Reading Habits of University Students: A Study of Students at the Katima Mulilo Campus of the University of Namibia

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## Abstract

A good reading habit is critical among university students, particularly for students in teaching programmes, as their reading habits may be transferred to their future learners. The aim of this study was to investigate the reading habits of students in teacher training programmes at the Katima Mulilo Campus of the University of Namibia. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a questionnaire and interviews. The results showed that the university students have poor reading habits, they read only for study purposes, and male and female students have a uniform reading habit. The study also revealed that the poor reading habits among students is affecting the quality of learning negatively. The results of this study may help to understand the academic performance of the students and for the university to take measures that would promote good reading habits among future teachers.

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## 1 Introduction

University students are supposed to be independent readers who explore written materials and generate new knowledge. However, there have been continuous complaints from some lecturers at the University of Namibia, particularly at the Katima Mulilo Campus, about the students' inability to follow assignment questions and to produce quality assignments. Some students even engage in cheating in assignments, tests, and examinations. To some extent, all these issues might be attributed to poor reading habits and poor reading comprehension levels. A few studies have been conducted in Namibia to establish the reading habits of Namibian children in primary school (Kirchner, Alexander, & Töttemeyer, 2014; Siririka, 2007) and some studies on reading habits had been conducted at university level and among teachers in other countries (Applegate and Applegate, 2004; Owusu-Acheaw, 2014). However, no studies on reading habits had been conducted at the Katima Mulilo Campus of the University of Namibia. This study is significant as it may help to uncover some issues causing poor academic performance among students.

### ***1.1 Background to the study***

The Katima Mulilo University Campus mainly enroll students from the Zambezi Region. The region has high levels of poverty (National Planning Commission, 2012), and a reading culture is unlikely to be developed in economically poor societies. Students from low socio-economic homes are often not exposed to reading materials and parents tend to have low literacy levels (Pretorius, 2014). The school-leaving results for Grade 12 in Namibia had been consistently very low and only a few students (below 40% of the total number of Grade 12 students) qualify for university admission each year. The Grade 12 results have been particularly poor in English as a second language. Many students are admitted into the university with E symbols in English Grade 12 school-leaving results, and these students get admission through mature-age entry, English Access course, or based on the courses they did elsewhere.

The students with E symbols in English performed poorly in Grade 12 due to, among other factors, poor reading habits and limited assistance to develop their English proficiency levels. Generally, an E symbol in Grade 12 English results means a student can hardly construct a clear sentence in English (Lukhele, 2010). Students who enter the university with low English proficiency level may struggle academically if they do not receive strong assistance. To improve students' English levels, the University of Namibia has a number of courses such as English Communication and Study Skills, English for Academic Purposes, English Language Proficiency, and English for Teachers that are designed to compensate for the students' language deficiency and to improve their academic performance. However, it seems some students benefit less from the courses considering the quality of their assignments, and results in tests and examinations.

### ***1.2 Statement of the problem***

The weak scores of the students in assignments, tests and examination can be attributed to poor reading habits, which may result in limited learning engagement. The problem of poor academic performance can be partly solved if students develop positive reading habits, which can lead them to develop academic language, reading skills, and general knowledge. Lecturers have been complaining about students' written English which is not for academic purpose and does not reflect their academic levels. Students who cannot read independently face challenges in reading to learn, and are likely to fail academically or resort to academic dishonesty in order to pass.

### ***1.3 Main objectives of the study***

The aim of this study is to examine the reading habits of students in teacher training programmes at Katima Mulilo Campus of the University of Namibia. In terms of specific objectives, this study seeks to establish:

- a. Whether the students have a good reading habit.
- b. Factors influencing the students' reading choices.
- c. Gender differences in reading habits.
- d. Effects of the students' reading habits.

### ***1.4 Research questions***

The following are the research questions underpinning this study:

- a. How much time do the students invest in reading?
- b. What are the factors influencing the reading choices of the students?
- c. What are the gender differences in reading habits?
- d. What are the effects of the students' reading habits?

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Reading ability

Reading is defined as the cognitive process of decoding words (i.e. identifying words) in order to comprehend a reading text (Lee & Spratley, 2010). Students with reading ability read with speed and comprehend what they read (Padgett, 1997). Reading ability shows that a reader has good reading habits, and those with good reading habits tend to develop rich background knowledge and cope with their academic studies. In this study, students with a good reading habit are described as those who give reading a priority and do not only read because of external pressure, for example, to complete an assignment or pass an examination. These students have the love for reading and read regularly.

Students who do not prioritise reading tend to be those who find reading quite challenging and benefit less from reading activities, because they do not comprehend what they read. McCormick (1995) groups readers into four categories: independent readers, readers at instructional level, readers at borderline level, and readers at frustration level. Independent readers are skilled readers and are able to read effectively at their level. These readers can read on their own, find reading material at their maturational level quite easy and acquire more knowledge and reading skills as they engage in reading. According to Pretorius (2002), independent readers have 98% decoding accuracy and a minimum of 95% text comprehension level.

Instructional readers benefit from reading instructions and do not have serious reading challenges. These readers have a decoding accuracy of 95% and about 75% comprehension level. Borderline readers read at between 90–94% level of decoding accuracy and between 55–74% comprehension levels (Pretorius, 2002). These readers need extra reading assistance in order to benefit from reading activities. Readers at frustration level have poor word identification (decoding) ability and reading comprehension levels. Those reading at frustration level have 90% or lower decoding accuracy and 50% or less comprehension level (Pretorius, 2002). The readers at frustration level have major reading challenges and do not enjoy reading.

### 2.2 Why students need good reading habits?

Students with reading good habits have reading materials in their homes, borrow reading materials frequently and read regularly. There are enormous benefits for reading fiction and non-fiction books, such as vocabulary development, rich background knowledge, positive reading attitudes, development of reading ability, and academic success. Students who read regularly develop a large vocabulary. Students need a large vocabulary size to comprehend reading materials better, especially academic vocabulary which enables university students to comprehend academic texts (Nation, 2001).

Through reading, readers develop background knowledge which interact with vocabulary and other knowledge accumulated over time to comprehend a text. Students with a good reading habit acquire knowledge of different topics and text structure, which makes reading much easier. Once students are able to find reading easier and benefit from reading, they develop a positive reading attitude, read more, and acquire more reading skills to be able to read better (Pretorius, 2002; Pulido, 2007). Poor readers tend to have negative reading attitudes and avoid reading as reading is 'nightmarish' for them because they do not experience reading success. The skilled readers on the other hand enjoy academic success and avoid the unethical practice of cheating in assignments and examinations. A study by Owusu-Acheaw (2014) supports the relationship between reading habits and academic performance.

### 2.3 *Factors affecting reading habits in the Namibian context*

Reading habits, among other factors, develop through exposure to interesting reading materials, good reading instructional practice in school, and reading role models. Students who are exposed to reading materials earlier in their lives are likely to develop a love for reading and practice reading from childhood to adult life. In the Namibian context with print-poor environment, only a few are likely to develop good reading habits. The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ, 1998, 2005 & 2010) revealed that Namibian Grade 6 children are not exposed to rich reading materials both at home and school and that they are poor readers with a weak academic performance. The SACMEQ assessments also found that the Zambezi Region has high levels of poverty and is the region with least reading materials among all Namibian regions.

Nengomasha, Utoni and Yule (2012) conducted a study to explore the state of combined and secondary school libraries in Namibia and found that the schools are poorly resourced and only a few relevant reading materials are available in school libraries. Similarly, a study by Kirchner, Alexander and Töttemeyer (2014) found a poor state of Namibian libraries, limited reading materials and poor reading habits among Namibian children. The results of these studies imply that the poor reading habit that starts earlier in children's lives is likely to be carried over to adult life. Owusu-Acheaw (2014) argues that children who are not exposed to books early in their lives tend to find it difficult to acquire good reading habits later in life. Indeed, the carry-over of poor reading habits may apply among Namibian university students considering the poor state of reading materials in Namibian schools and their reading background.

The lack of (or limited) reading materials can be compensated through good reading instructional practice among language teachers. Schools that value reading allocate more time for reading to develop good reading habits among students (Pretorius, 2002). If students are left in a 'sink or swim' situation in reading, they are unlikely to develop good reading habits. Students also need reading role models to emulate. If students observe people they admire reading, particularly their teachers and parents, they are likely to start reading regularly (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). If teachers do not read themselves and share their reading experiences with their students, students may carry on with negative reading attitudes, poor reading habits and weak academic performance.

The literature reviewed in this study show that there is a need to investigate students' reading habits in order to take measures that would assist the students to develop good reading habits. As reflected in the literature, weak reading habits can impede academic progress of students and even engagement in social activities later in life. In the next section, a brief description of this study's methodology is provided.

### 3 **Research design**

This study applied a mixed methods approach, using closed-ended questionnaire items, lecturer interview, and focused group interview (FGI). A mixed methods approach integrates the elements of quantitative and qualitative approaches. It provides rich information by drawing strength from both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and reducing inherent weaknesses for each approach (Creswell, 2014). The intent of using a mixed methods approach in this study is dual: 1. to gain a deeper perspective into the reading habits of students; 2. to generalise the results to the population (i.e. students at the University of Namibia, Katima Mulilo Campus).

A convergent parallel mixed methods design was used. In this design, quantitative and qualitative data are collected separately, and then the findings are compared to examine whether there are consistencies or inconsistencies in the findings (Creswell, 2014). If there are some inconsistencies in the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data, a researcher has to examine why the results diverge from each other. The study was a cross-sectional assessment of university students' reading habits.

The participants in this study were 258 year 1–4 students in the Faculty of Education at the Katima Mulilo Campus of the University of Namibia. There were 105 male and 153 female students.

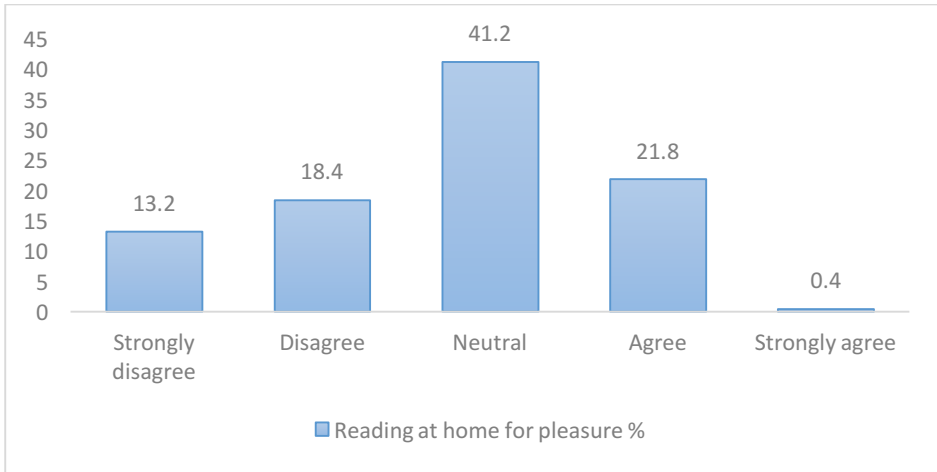
The students were from the following two teacher training programmes: Diploma in Junior Primary Education and Bachelor of Education Honours. A total of four lecturers lecturing English for Academic Purposes, English for Teachers, Curriculum Studies, and English Communication and Study Skills were interviewed.

Two research instruments were used in this study, namely a structured questionnaire for students and interviews (FGI and face-to-face interviews with lecturers). The questionnaire comprised 13 closed-ended items gauging the students' reading habits. The questionnaire was used to answer the first three research questions (see 1.4). Six students were selected at random to participate in the FGI, and these students did not fill in the questionnaire. The FGI probed further into the students' reading habits. A face-to-face interview was conducted with four lecturers to examine their perceptions and experiences of the students' reading habits. The interviews with four lecturers and six students were conducted to gauge their views on the students' reading habits and the effects of the reading habits. The interviews were intended to provide responses to the first research question (i.e. *How much time do the students invest in reading?*) and the fourth research question (i.e. *What are the effects of the students' reading habits?*).

## 4 Results

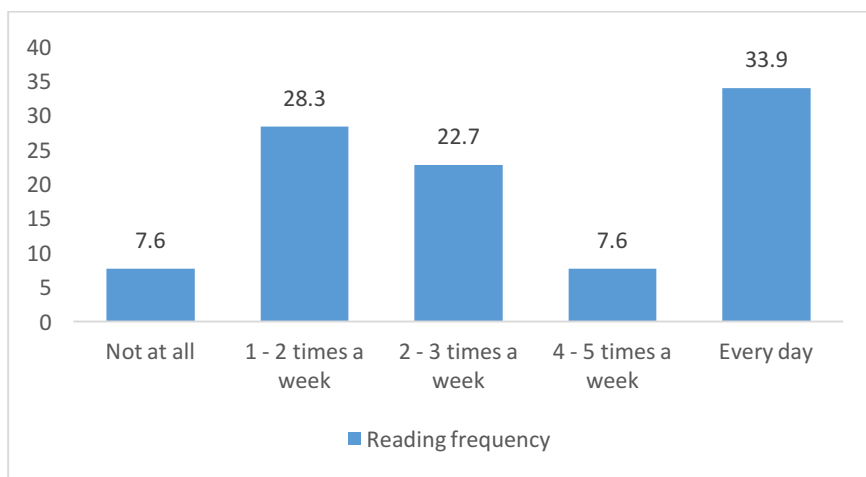
### 4.1 Descriptive statistics

This section presents the results of this study following the order of the research questions as presented in section 1.4. The first research question is: *How much time do the students invest in reading?* Descriptive statistics from the reading habits questionnaire were used to answer this research question. One of the questionnaire items required students to indicate whether they read a lot at home for pleasure, and the responses are provided in Figure 1 in percentages.



**Fig. 1. Home reading**

Figure 1 shows that only 22% of the students read for pleasure in their homes. The majority of the students gave a neutral response and disagreed. The high level of neutrality may mean that the students are not sure whether they read much or probably they did not want to give a negative response. The students were also asked to indicate their frequency of reading when it is their choice (not assigned by their lecturers). The findings are presented in Figure 2.



**Fig.2. Reading frequency in percentage**

Figure 2 shows that only about 40% of the students claimed that they read every day. It is surprising to note that about 8% of the university students do not read at all if not given reading activities by their lecturers. On the question as to whether the students spend time during the holidays reading for pleasure, the responses are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1. Reading habits responses**

Questions	Response category	Response %
9. I spend time during the holidays reading for pleasure	Strongly disagree	14.1
	Disagree	18.5
	Neutral	35.1
	Agree	31.9
	Strongly agree	0.4
10. I often borrow books from the library for reading.	Strongly disagree	15.3
	Disagree	21
	Neutral	34.7
	Agree	29
	Strongly agree	0
11. How much time do you spend reading when it is your choice (not assigned in your courses)?	I don't read unless I have to	12.9
	Less than 15 minutes	5.6
	Between 15 and 30 minutes	30.5
	30 minutes or more	51

Table 1 shows that 32.6% of the students claimed that they do not read for pleasure during the holidays, and about 35% gave a neutral response. Only about 40% of the students claimed to read for pleasure during the holiday. The results show that the majority of the students do not spend time reading for pleasure during the holiday. On the question as to whether the students often borrow books from the library for reading purpose, about 36% indicated that they do not borrow books from the library. About 35% gave a neutral response which may mean that they borrow books moderately or they were aware of the negative response and did not want to reflect that. The last question in Table 1 is concerned with time spent on reading. About 13% of the students indicated that they do not read. Table 1 also shows that only 51% of the students choose to read for 30 minutes or more during their own time.

Table 2 shows the students' reading habits in terms of academic year of study (i.e. Year 1, 2 & 4) and study programmes (i.e. Diploma in Junior Primary Education (DJPE) and Bachelor of Education Honours (B.Ed. Up)).

**Table 2. Reading habits responses: Academic year and study programmes**

Questions	Response category	Response %				
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 4	DJPE	B.Ed. Up
4. I read a lot at home for pleasure.	Strongly disagree	14.8	18.8	9.1	19.1	8.3
	Disagree	20.1	12.5	16.5	17.3	19.3
	Neutral	38.9	37.5	45.9	37.3	44.3
	Agree	26.2	31.3	27.1	25.5	27.9
	Strongly agree	0	0	1.2	0.9	0
6. How often do you read when it is your choice (not assigned by your lecturer)?	Not at all	5.3	0	12.9	4.5	10
	1 – 2 times a week	26	37.5	30.6	22.5	32.9
	2 – 3 times a week	22.7	25	22.4	19.8	25
	3 – 4 times a week	6	12.5	9.4	9	6.4
	Every day	40	25	24.7	44.1	25.7
9. I spend time during the holidays reading for pleasure.	Strongly disagree	14.2	12.5	14.3	15.6	12.9
	Disagree	20.3	25	14.3	18.3	18.7
	Neutral	32.4	25	41.7	30.3	38.8
	Agree	32.4	37.5	29.8	35.8	28.8
	Strongly agree	0.7	0	0	0	0.7
10. I often borrow books from the library for reading.	Strongly disagree	12.1	18.8	20.5	13.8	16.5
	Disagree	20.8	25	20.5	21.1	20.9
	Neutral	36.2	31.3	32.5	33	36
	Agree	30.9	25	26.5	32.1	26.6
	Strongly agree	0	0	0	0	0
11. How much time do you spend reading when it is your choice (not assigned in your courses)?	I don't read	12.8	6.3	14.3	9.1	15.8
	Less than 15 minutes	5.4	12.5	4.8	9.1	2.9
	Between 15 and 30 minutes	30.9	25	31	30.9	30.2
	30 minutes or more	51	56.3	50	50.9	51.1

Regarding the question as to whether the students read a lot at home for pleasure, one can see that the first year students have the highest level of disagreement (34.9%) followed by the second year (31.3%) and then the fourth year students (25.6%). The fourth year students have the highest level of neutrality (45.9%). Many students for the Diploma in Junior Primary Education (36.4%) showed that they do not read much at home for pleasure, whereas for Bachelor of Education Honours students the disagreement is 28.2%. The percentage of students who showed that they read much at home is low and almost uniform for the students in these two study programmes.

Regarding reading frequency (Question 6), Table 2 shows that the fourth year students and Bachelor of Education Honours students have the higher percentages of students who do not choose to read on their own. Year 1 and Diploma in Junior Primary Education have the highest percentages of students who claimed that they read every day. Table 2 shows that Year 1 and Diploma in Junior Primary Education have the highest percentage of students agreeing that they borrow books from the library (i.e. 30.9 and 32.1, respectively). The percentage of students borrowing books from the library (Question 10) appears to decrease in the second and fourth academic year of study.

Regarding time spent on reading when it is their choice, it is surprising that Year 4 has the highest percentage (i.e. 14.3%) of students who do not choose to read on their own. About 50% of the students in Years 1–4 and for the two study programmes claimed that they choose to read 30 minutes or more.

The second research question is: *What are the factors influencing the reading choices of the students?*

**Table 3. Reading choices**

Questions	Response category	Response %
2. What do you enjoy reading the most?	Newspapers	22.3
	Novels	14.7
	Religious books	10
	Magazines	21.5
	Course prescribed books	31.5
5. What reading format do you prefer?	Hard copy	66.1
	Computer	22.7
	Iphone/smartphone/Ipod	7.6
	Tablet/Ipad	2
	Ereader device	1.6
12. What motivates you to read?	University assignments / tests	61.2
	Recommendation from a friend	1.3
	Need for information	24.1
	Enjoyment	6.9
	Relaxation	2.6
	Other	0.4
13. I would borrow and read more books from the library if...	I had more time in my personal life	
	The books were more interesting	41.9
	If I could read them on my laptop, Ipad, kindle, smartphone, etc.	41.5
	Other	2.1
		2.1

The descriptive statistics for this question are presented in Table 3. Table 3 shows that the students mainly read their course prescribed books (31.5%). Only a few students (10%) read religious books. The table also reveals that students prefer reading hard copies (66.1%) rather than soft copies. Students also indicated that they read mainly to write their assignments and prepare for tests. It is surprising to note that only a few students read for pleasure (6.9%). Table 3 shows that students do not borrow books from the library because they do not have time to visit libraries and the library books are not interesting.

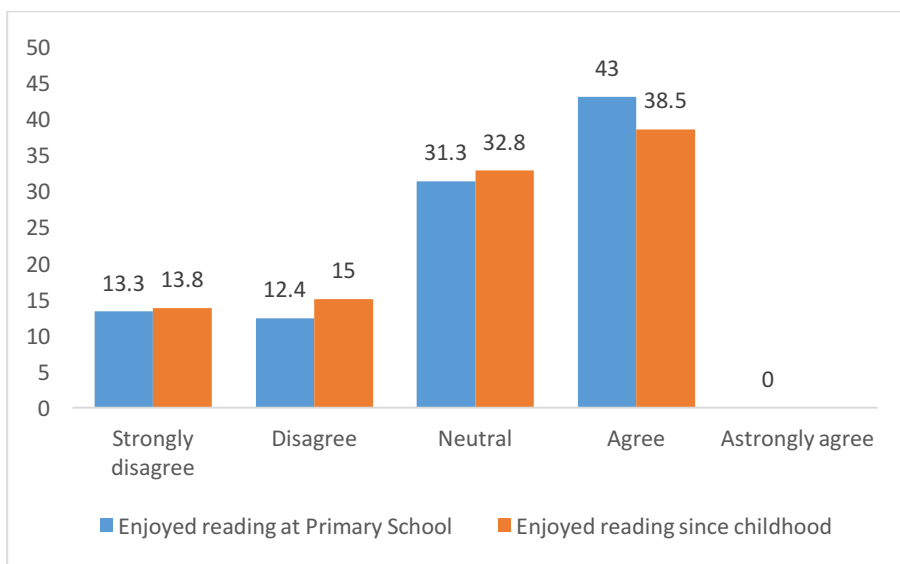
**Fig. 3. Reading background**



Figure 3 shows the reading background of the students who participated in this study. Only 43% of the students agreed that they enjoyed reading books at primary school and 39% agreed that they have enjoyed reading books since childhood. The majority of the students either gave a neutral response or showed that they did not enjoy reading at primary school and have not enjoyed reading since childhood.

## 4.2 Interview findings

The FGI with students and the interview with lecturers were used to answer the first research question (i.e. *How much time do the students invest in reading?*) and the fourth research question (i.e. *What are the effects of the students' reading habits?*).

The FGI results are summarised below:

- Students spend most of their time on social media – posting pictures, chatting, and doing some business activities.
- Only a few students do read novels.
- Some participants have not seen anyone reading for pleasure.
- Students read only to prepare for tests and examinations.
- Some students do not even study their academic books.
- The library is always noisy.
- Students find reading quite challenging.
- Students who do not read cheat in assignments.

The interview with lecturers was used to examine their perceptions of the students' reading habits. The lecturers' responses were based on their observation of the students, students' oral and written responses, and visits to the campus library. All the lecturers interviewed indicated that the students do not have a culture of reading. Some of the lecturers observed that the students cannot even read their own study materials, as their assignments are of poor quality and students show a lack of knowledge for the content of print materials given to them by lecturers. Many students have been observed to exhibit a negative reading attitude that they cannot even read notices on noticeboards. It was also indicated that when students are urged to read their prescribed novels in English service courses, some of the students enquire whether there is a play for the novel because they prefer watching over reading.

The lecturers have also observed that some students do not do their assignments, but take assignments that were done by other students. In some cases, students even forget to change details on the cover page of the assignments and submit the assignment with the original owner's names and student number. Several interviewed lecturers mentioned a number of effects resulting from the students' poor reading habits. The first observed effect is poor academic results. Secondly, students fail to acquire adequate course knowledge and end up cheating in assignments and tests. Thirdly, students have been observed to have limited general knowledge, as a result their written essays and assignments exhibit weak ideas when it comes to writing essays on contemporary issues such as human trafficking, accidents, and economic crisis. Lastly, some lecturers observed that students who do not read much deflect the blame of their academic failure to lecturers for not marking well or for poor teaching, and as a result they evaluate lecturers negatively.

## 5 Discussion

In terms of students' reading habits, the results for this study showed that the student teachers at the Katima Mulilo Campus are not good readers and invest limited time in reading. The students showed weak reading habits which is not good for their academic success and teaching career. University students who have strong reading habits tend to succeed academically, as they develop large vocabularies, become skilled readers, and improve their comprehension levels (Mol & Bus, 2011). A study by Stoffelsma (2014) found that university students who spend more time on academic

reading also tend to read for enjoyment. The weak reading habits showed by the students in this study may also imply that they spend limited time on reading their academic books as comprehending the textbooks may be quite challenging for them. Students who benefit from reading experiences choose to read more and read beyond study purposes.

For many students at the university, rote learning seems to be the only way for them to pass their courses as comprehending their study materials is quite challenging. As one student remarked, "I only memorise to pass because understanding my books is difficult. After one academic semester, I cannot remember anything in the courses I passed". With rote learning, the graduates cannot apply academic knowledge to have an influence on their society, and this may have a negative effect on their profession.

For the students who participated in this study, their reading habits are concerning, because they will become teachers in Namibian schools and are expected to be role models for learners. If these students become teachers with the weak reading habits, it means they are likely to transfer their poor reading habits to their learners, as argued by Applegate and Applegate (2004). The situation of poor reading habits among Namibian teachers is reflected in the results of a pilot study for the English Language Proficiency Programme that was carried out in 2011 among Namibian teachers. The results for the study showed that comprehending English texts was the biggest challenge among Namibian teachers (UNESCO, 2013).

Teachers with positive reading attitudes tend to share their reading success with learners, show the interest of reading to learners, and motivate learners to read regularly. It is surprising that 13% of the future teachers in this study do not read for pleasure (see Table 1). It should be noted that there is a reciprocal relationship between reading habits and reading comprehension; students who reading regularly tend to develop reading comprehension skills and those who comprehend what they read tend to read more.

In terms of factors influencing the reading choices of the students, the results for this study show that the students read mainly for study purposes. Over 60% of the students are motivated to read because of the need to complete their assignments or pass tests/examinations. The students may prefer to read lecture notes because of their brevity in order to complete their assignments or pass examinations. However, the researchers in this study did not include lecture notes as one of the options for the preferred reading materials.

The students do not extent their reading to leisure either because of academic studies pressure or reading activity is too challenging to be turned into leisure. According to Mol and Bus (2011), skilled readers are more likely to enjoy reading and engage in pleasure reading activity. Poor readers on the other hand find reading nightmarish and only tend to read because of external pressure or when reading is mandatory for them to succeed in their schooling.

The poor reading habit of the students may be attributed to their poor reading background as only a few students (40%) in this study claimed that they enjoyed reading in their early grades of schooling. This situation of poor reading habit may be carry-over from primary school to university, and if not attended to, they may continue with their poor reading habits and poor reading comprehension skills to their teaching profession and beyond.

About 70% of the students prefer reading print books rather than reading books on electronic devices despite the availability of electronic devices such as computers, smartphones, and e-readers. This finding makes one wonder about the extent to which the students read electronic materials posted on student portal and eLearning platform. Students do not prefer electronic books, among other reasons, because they may be distracted by activities that are available on electronic devices such as playing games, listening to music, watching movies, and emails, and may also have eyestrain when reading. The findings are not surprising, as a number of studies elsewhere have established that students prefer reading printed materials even if they have access to computers and the Internet (Buzetto-More, Sweat-Guy, & Elobaid, 2007; Tosun, 2014). These students may do little reading, if most of the reading materials are in electronic form and they do not have access to printing facilities. The finding suggests that, despite the rapid development of digital media, it is not yet "time to throw away paper-based study resources" (Davidovitch, Yavich, & Druckman, 2016, p. 141).

However, the students' limited preference for electronic books may also be attributed to limited (or lack of) instructions on using electronic devices for reading. With systematic instructions on using electronic devices such as mobile phones for reading, students in developing countries such as Namibia can improve their reading attitudes and reading habits. A study on the use of mobile phones to access reading materials in developing countries found that participants who had negative reading attitudes and poor reading habits improved their reading attitudes and reading habits after adopting the devices in reading (UNESCO, 2014). Although access to books on its own is not sufficient to promote reading, it is an important step for cultivating positive reading attitudes and reading habits.

With regard to gender differences in reading habits, this study found that there are no differences in the reading habits between male and female students. The finding support studies that found uniform reading habits in gender among older students (Linn, 1988, cited in Lynn & Mikk, 2009). However, some studies found significant gender differences in reading habits (Lynn & Mikk, 2009; Muhammad, Ali, & Aisha, 2013). Gender differences were pursued in this study, because of the studies that established differences in reading habits between male and female students. In the Namibian context, limited reading opportunities and the narrowing of gender-related activities may be the contributing factors to the results in this study.

With regard to the effects of the students' reading habits, the results from the FGI with students and the interview with lecturers suggest that if the students' reading habits are not improved, many students may not succeed academically and the university may produce graduates who do not meet the university's expected standards. Students who are not readers cannot be expected to have quality discussions in class and produce quality assignments. As indicated earlier, students who read much acquire a vast knowledge during their years of academic studies and thus are likely to be resourceful teachers (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). The students' poor reading habits do not only affect the students themselves, but also the relationship between the students and lecturers, as the students may expect their lecturers to make them pass their examinations despite the poor knowledge they exhibit in their courses. The university can also be viewed negatively by the public based on the poor performance of the graduates in their teaching profession. These future teachers need to be keen readers to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Poor reading comprehension among primary school learners in Namibia as observed in the SACMEQ (1998, 2005, & 2010) assessments can only be eliminated if teachers in Namibian schools become keen readers.

## 6 Conclusion

The findings from quantitative and qualitative data in this study were consistent. This study has revealed that the university students at the Katima Mulilo Campus are not keen readers, and that the students read only for study purposes. Although reading frequency in this study was measured in terms of days rather than time spent, the results still show that the students do not read much. The study also established that the students prefer reading hard copies over electronic materials. Regarding gender differences in reading habits, it was revealed that both male and female students have a uniform poor reading habit. The study also revealed that the negative consequences of poor reading habits among students are already being observed by the students themselves and lecturers. The results of this study have provided invaluable information as indicated in the following quote: "Knowing the reading behaviour of students – how much they actually read – will shed light on their learning behaviour and can broaden our understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in academic achievement." (Stoffelsma, 2014, p. 71).

Students with weak English language proficiency are unlikely to fully interact with their academic reading materials. These students need intensive language programmes to develop their English levels for them to start benefiting from reading. Despite a number of English service courses devised for them, the students' reading habits are low even in their fourth academic year. The poor reading habits may suggest that the students cannot fully benefit from reading print materials. The results for the poor reading habits show that language instruction in English service courses may

not be enough to compensate for the students' weak language learning background. Therefore, it is vital for English service course lecturers to promote pleasure reading, encourage students to read for pleasure on informational and fiction books, and attend to individual students' language learning needs.

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