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UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' READING HABITS AND ONLINE LITERACY PRACTICES IN AN INDONESIAN ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

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Abstract

Digital technologies have transformed the location and manner of reading as well as broadened students' access to reading resources. Digital access, nevertheless, does not always result in critical or long-lasting reading. Little information covers reading preferences, online activity, and reported support for reading-habit development in Indonesian Islamic higher education. This study looked at students' reading patterns across print and digital resources, their online content and activity, and elements felt to help to develop reading habits. A cross-sectional quantitative descriptive study of 83 Raden Fatah State Islamic University, Indonesia Islamic Education Study Program undergraduate students were conducted. An organized questionnaire gathered the data and descriptive statistics in SPSS were used to examine it. Less often read were newspapers (M = 2.00, SD = 0.73) and periodicals (M = 2.30, SD = 0.79); online information was the most often read material (M = 3.80, SD = 0.83). Reviews of movies, food/nutrition facts, stories and books garnered the highest internet content mean (M = 3.70). Talking with friends was said by 97.5% of people. Facebook was the most often chosen first-click destination (44.6%). Reading materials and vocabulary development based on interest garnered the greatest support 98.7% each. Print and digital reading live side by side in many different social and informational online settings. The results show that deliberate material selection, sustained attention, critical reading, and source assessment should be used together with digital access. Future studies ought to use bigger samples, tested tools, longitudinal designs, and direct evaluations of critical literacy and digital reading comprehension.

INTRODUCTION

The terrain of intellectual reading has been transformed by digital developments. Through mobile and internet-connected devices, students may now find scholarly publications, college archives, news, e-books, social media updates, and many other forms of internet content. Though this development has changed the way books are chosen, gone over, and interpreted as well as their accessibility and readability, Unlike the long linear reading usually connected with print, modern digital reading is sometimes characterized by hyperlinking, searching,

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skimming, focused attention, and processing information in many forms (Liu, 2005; Coiro, 2003). Recent studies on higher education also reveal that students use different strategies for both digital and physical texts; their decisions are motivated by their reading goals, accessibility, motivation, and perceived efficiency (Bui et al., 2023).

Particularly significant is the difference between access and knowledge. Critical digital reading is not automatically generated from digital access. Students in higher education could struggle more to assess information quality, credibility, and bias even as they are at ease corresponding online. Social digital-literacy abilities were somewhat strong while evaluating information and judging quality and bias were weaker areas, according to a recent big-scale survey of college students (Santos et al., 2022). Studies on digital academic reading also show that access, socioeconomic circumstances, and the features of digital materials and devices might affect students' experiences (Kuhn et al., 2024). Research on college reading habits should therefore investigate not just how often students read online but also what they read, where they start their online activity, and what elements they find favorable for ongoing reading.

Furthermore, more complex than a straightforward replacement story is evidence on print and digital reading. While printed books could be preferred for concentration, annotation, and sustained intellectual reading, university students sometimes value digital reading for accessibility and convenience (Mizrachi et al., 2018). More recent research points to text type, device, reading settings, and scrolling needs determining the link between reading medium and comprehension rather than on a general superiority of one medium (Strømsø, 2024; Clinton-Lisell & Litzinger, 2026). Digital reading can help foreign language learners improve their vocabulary by giving them easy access to several resources (Zhu et al., 2024). These results show that the main educational issue is not whether digital reading should take the place of print reading, but rather how kids may create successful reading habits across media.

Though earlier research has shown that college students utilize both print and digital media and that accessibility, ease, reading goals, device characteristics,

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and social environments define digital reading (Mizrachi et al., 2018; Bui et al., 2023; Kuhn et al., 2024), several factors still need to be properly addressed. First of all, current studies have usually looked at digital and print reading tastes or digital-literacy skills as independent concerns, therefore offering little descriptive data on how reading frequency, chosen internet content, more general online activities, and first-click choices coexist inside the same student population. Second, although earlier research has stressed challenges in assessing internet information, credibility, and prejudice (Santos et al., 2022), they offer little context-specific data from Indonesian Islamic higher education—where students' personal interests, social media use, and institutional context collide with their academic reading habits. Third, less emphasis has been placed on students' own perceptions of the resources and educational help that could help them to keep reading, especially interest-based materials, vocabulary building, teacher support, and well-designed reading materials. Therefore, what is still underreported is not just whether kids read digitally but also how various reading materials and online activities are combined and which aids youngsters find useful for building reading habits in this particular educational environment. To close this gap, the current study offers a context-specific descriptive analysis of Islamic Education Study Program students at Raden Fatah State Islamic University along five linked factors: reading frequency across print and digital resources, online content choices, online activities, first-click choices, and noted methods for creating reading habits. The study advances current descriptive data and clarifies the traits of students' digital reading environment by combining these elements without forming causal conclusions about how digital technology affects reading behavior. Accordingly, the study addresses three research questions:

RQ1. What are university students' reading habits and preferences across print and digital materials?

RQ2. What types of online content and activities do students engage with most frequently?

RQ3. What factors do students perceive as supporting the development of effective reading habits in the digital era?

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The study offers a context-specific descriptive narrative of college kids' reading habits in an Indonesian Islamic higher education environment. Its impact is empirical instead of causal: the survey shows trends and noted supports but does not show that digital technology affects reading performance or behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading Habits in Digital Contexts

Reading habits are fairly regular approaches to interaction with written materials' frequency, choice, goal, and style. While Anderson (2003) distinguishes behavioral aspects of reading from motivational ones including interest and perceived value, Palani (2012) stresses the need of regular reading habit development of a knowledgeable society. These dimensions are communicated in digital settings via traditional reading as well as searches, skimming, hyperlink navigation, selective reading, and multimodal participation.

The rise of digital reading does not automatically mean the end of print reading. Global data reveals that university students typically utilize both media, with choice guided by intent and convenience. Students in a multi-country survey said print offered focus and annotating advantages but also noted digital reading's convenience as a great advantage (Mizrachi et al., 2018). Similarly, a survey of Vietnamese students revealed that they employed different techniques for digital and printed materials; print was linked to increased memory and concentration while digital texts were related with faster access and searching (Bui et al., 2023).

Digital Literacy and Online Reading

Beyond only technical skill, digital literacy encompasses the ability to find, understand, evaluate, synthesize, and share knowledge through digital media (Gilster, 1997; Eshet-Alkalai, 2004). Coiro (2003) saw Internet reading as a kind of new literacy that calls readers to interpret non-linear, dynamic settings. Coiro and Dobler (2007) also showed that good online readers actively predict, find, evaluate, and synthesize material.

Information evaluation is particularly crucial in the setting of modern higher education. Online students can interact and engage socially without always

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having equally strong knowledge-literacy skills. Studies with college students have found that information assessment and judging the impartiality or quality of digital data are topics needing more help (Santos et al., 2022). Similarly, recent studies on digital reading literacy stress the need of metacognitive techniques and reading-related attitudes instead of only technological exposure (Chen & Xiao, 2024).

Therefore, the current study views internet behavior as background information of kids' digital reading environment instead of as a straight indicator of digital literacy ability. The questionnaire categories about first-click choices, online activities, and online content especially provide descriptive indicators of students' digital involvement. Since the study did not directly evaluate source evaluation, credibility judgments, or online reading comprehension, they should not be viewed as a validated measure of critical digital literacy.

Motivational and Environmental Factors

Motivating and environmental variables help to define reading behavior. Self-determination theory separates autonomous forms of motivation from more externally driven ones (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In reading situations, chances to choose personally relevant content could help to increase involvement. Like Krashen (2004), free voluntary reading and access to engaging content are crucial circumstances for ongoing reading. Reading motivation, according to Baker and Wigfield (1999), is complex and linked with reading activity and success. Teachers, families, and the learning environment's support might also impact reading habits. Therefore, interpreted as contextual elements linked with reading-habit development rather than as experimentally proven causes, perceived supports include teacher motivation, well-prepared materials, parental encouragement, and interest-based resources in the present study.

RESEARCH METHOD

One point in time, a quantitative descriptive survey strategy was used to characterize readers' internet literacy practices and reading behaviors. The design served the said goals of recording mean responses, frequencies, and perceived

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reading-habit supports. The cross-sectional and descriptive design of the study prevents any causal claims. The Islamic Education Palembang Indonesia was where the study was carried out. There were 83 college students among the participants. The sample had 85.5% male students and 14.5% female students. Most of the participants were between 20 and 21 years old (74.7%), then those under 20 (16.9%), then those between 22 and 23 years old (8.4%).

Before journal submission, the manuscript should clearly describe the recruitment process, inclusion and exclusion criteria, sampling method, and data-gathering timeframe. These information are required for readers to evaluate the temporal relevancy of the reported platform-use data as well as sampling bias. A self-administered structured questionnaire modified from an already developed reading-habits tool was used to gather data. There were six sections in the survey: demographic data, frequency of reading materials, online reading content, online activities, content first read online, and approaches thought to help one to develop a reading habit. Participants answered the survey without offering their names. This was meant to help honest responses and allay identification fears. The manuscript now lacks enough details on voluntary participation, withdrawal rights, data protection, the date of data collecting, informed consent, ethical approval or institutional permission. Before submission, these facts need to be included in line with the research-ethics guidelines of the target journal.

SPSS version 20 helped to describe the data's analysis. Categorical factors and online activity indicators were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Reading-frequency objects and online-content goods' means and standard deviations were assessed. Using the following five-point scale, mean scores were translated: Never (1.00–1.80); Rarely (1.81–2.60); Sometimes (2.61–3.40); Often (3.41–4.20); and Very Often (4.21–5.00). The analysis does not justify claims such as "significant increase," "significant difference," or causal relations as the research questions are descriptive. Such language has been taken out of the updated interpretation unless a deductive test is really mentioned.

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FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to Table 1, the participants were mostly men (85.5%) in their 20–21s (74.7%). Most respondents (66.3%) said they spent 0–1 hour daily online, while 32.5% said 1–3 hours. Just 1.2% said they had four to six hours; none said more than six. This pattern points to the fact that the subjects were not distinguished by high daily internet exposure. The result is relevant for understanding later tables since often participation in certain internet activities does not always signal prolonged internet use. Instead, students could use rather little internet time for social, informational, and recreational activities. Given the highly male-dominated and institution-specific sample, though, these results should be seen as descriptive data from the surveyed pupils rather than as indicative of the larger Indonesian university population.

Table 1: Participant Profile and Internet Use

Characteristic	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male	85.5%
Gender	Female	14.5%
Age	Under 20	16.9%
Age	20–21	74.7%
Age	22–23	8.4%
Age	24 and above	0%
Internet use/day	0–1 hours	66.3%
Internet use/day	1–3 hours	32.5%
Internet use/day	4–6 hours	1.2%
Internet use/day	Over 6 hours	0%

The results in Table 2 show that online information—which falls under the "Often" category—was the most often mentioned reading material among participants (M = 3.80, SD = 0.83). Conversely, magazines (M = 2.30) and newspapers (M = 2.00) were assigned the "Rarely" classification. It was noted that novels (M = 3.40), books (M = 3.00), and e-mails (M = 2.70) were at medium levels. This pattern shows that although print and longer-form materials still comprise part of their reading repertory, kids' reading habits have a major digital component. Thus, the results are more suitably read as proof of the coexistence of print and digital reading than as the replacement of print by digital media.

Table 2: Reading Habits and Preferences

Reading material	M	SD	Interpretation
Newspaper	2.0	0.73	Rarely

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Reading material	M	SD	Interpretation
Magazines	2.3	0.79	Rarely
Textbooks	3.0	0.71	Sometimes
Novels	3.4	1.00	Sometimes
E-mails	2.7	0.99	Sometimes
Online information	3.8	0.83	Often

Table 3 shows that students' online reading included commercial, academic, entertainment, practical, and informational material. Stories and books, film reviews, and food/nutrition data got the highest mean scores (M = 3.70); online news, journal articles, and sales data also had somewhat high means (M = 3.50). These results show that students' digital reading settings are varied and go beyond academic reading only. Still, the rather high frequency of journal-article reading points to the fact that digital environments provide access to academic materials as well as entertaining and practical information. Digital reading in higher education should therefore be seen as a complex activity with many goals and degrees of academic involvement.

Table 3: Online Content and Activities

Online content	M	SD	Interpretation
Online news	3.5	0.84	Often
Online magazines	2.6	0.88	Rarely
E-books	3.4	0.97	Sometimes
Stories and novels	3.7	1.04	Often
E-mails	2.9	1.03	Sometimes
Journal articles	3.5	0.89	Often
Sales information	3.5	1.03	Often
Movie reviews	3.7	0.97	Often
Horoscopes	2.0	1.01	Rarely
Weather reports	3.1	0.94	Sometimes
Health information	3.4	0.87	Sometimes
Comic strips	2.5	1.15	Rarely
Jokes	3.3	0.99	Sometimes
Fashion	3.4	1.05	Sometimes
Sports	3.3	0.92	Sometimes
Job information	3.2	1.06	Sometimes
Food/nutrition	3.7	0.00	Often

Students' internet activities were mostly social, recreational, and informational, according to Table 4. The most often mentioned pastime was chatting with friends (97.5%); next came looking at pictures and reading general knowledge (93.9% each); listening to music (92.7%); and internet shopping (90.3%). These results point to the fact that students' digital surroundings go beyond academic reading and are buried inside more general social and

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recreational activities. Still, regular internet involvement shouldn't be taken as proof of great digital competency. Digital literacy calls for more skills including judging information reliability, spotting bias, combining information from several sources, and managing attention. Because this study didn't straight assess these competencies, the findings should be taken as signs of kids' online participation instead of digital-literacy ability indicators.

Table 4: Online Activity used by Students

Online activity	Yes (%)	No (%)
Listening to music	92.7	7.2
Playing games	49.3	50.6
Looking at photos	93.9	6.0
Reading all kinds of information	93.9	6.0
Shopping online	90.3	9.6
Using MSN Messenger	62.6	37.3
Checking email	79.5	20.4
Chatting with friends	97.5	2.4
Downloading movies	61.4	38.5

Facebook was the most often mentioned first-click destination according table 5 (44.6%), followed by education-related material (21.7%). The other groups—entertainment and news/media (6.0% each), reference and science (4.8% each), and business/economy (3.6%)—were considerably lower. This pattern indicates that social media was a significant entrance point into students' digital settings. Still, first-click behavior shouldn't be taken as a gauge of the overall reading or learning time spent online. Rather, it offers a descriptive sign of the first internet orientation of pupils. The results so underline the need of knowing social-media settings as part of the background against which kids' academic reading behaviors take place.

Table 5: First-Click used by Students

First-click category	Percentage
Facebook	44.6%
Education	21.7%
Entertainment	6.0%
News and media	6.0%
Reference	4.8%
Science	4.8%
Business and economy	3.6%
Health	2.4%
Recreation and sports	2.4%
Society and culture	2.4%
Art and humanities	1.2%

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First-click category	Percentage
Computers and internet	0%
Government	0%
Regional	0%
Social science	0%

Table 6 shows that when creating supports to develop reading habits, the participants of the focus group arrived at 98.7% agreement for using materials that highlight areas of interest and develop vocabulary. The next highest agreement levels (95.1%) were reached for the Availability of and Training for the teacher, followed by Reading Out loud (92.7%), Visits to the Library (90.3%), and Parental Guidance and Encouragement (89.1%). The results of this study show that the participants indicated that Reading Habit Development is a result of combination of various factors such as individual interests and needs, teaching and social (peer) guidance and reinforcement. Interest-based reading materials and vocabulary development materials are essential to improve and sustain students' interest in reading. The results of this study further indicate that teachers are in a position to adjust and channel students' interest in reading to more academic and behavioral outcomes.

Table 6: Perceived Supports for Reading-Habit Development

Perceived strategy/support	Yes (%)	No (%)
Reading materials about hobbies/interests	98.7	1.2
Studying to improve vocabulary	98.7	1.2
Teacher motivation	95.1	4.8
Well-prepared reading material	95.1	4.8
Book reading	92.7	7.2
Visiting libraries	90.3	9.6
Parental guidance/encouragement	89.1	10.8
Consistent dictionary use	49.3	50.6
Daily newspaper reading	16.8	83.1

The main result of the study was the role of online documents in students' reading habits. This trend reflects the general shift toward the use of digital documents in educational contexts. The use of textbooks and other print materials by the participants shows that although digital formats promote reading, other forms of printing, such as the reading of lengthy materials, are still utilized.

The participants in the study have been found to integrate various reading modes depending on the requirements of the task. Digital formats are preferred when a user is able to read and review a text several times, for example when

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reviewing and interpreting textual materials. Print formats, on the other hand, are preferred when a user needs to read a text and review it only once, for example when performing a summary of the text or answering a review question.

A second important outcome concerns online behavior. Participants spent a great deal of time in online activities such as chatting, viewing pictures and music, and other entertainment. Participants made their first selection on the web for social interaction (i.e. first click), primarily to access Facebook (44.6%), and only slightly more than one-fourth (21.7%) for school-related activities. The researcher concluded students' academic reading is situated in social and recreational activities.

The researcher refers to this body of work in relation to students' digital literacy. It takes digital literacy to a more refined level, beyond the ability to access the Internet. It encompasses the ability to analyze online material, integrate different pieces of information, and determine how to control their concentration and focus. It takes a higher level of digital literacy for students to evaluate the credibility of different pieces of information. It is important to understand how students weigh different pieces of information, including social information. Higher education students may be adept at integrating different social pieces of information. However, they may need help to evaluate social information (Santos et al., 2022). Based on the first click study, students may be adept at using different online information. However, this should not be viewed as students lacking digital literacy.

The results support previous studies that show there are intentional digital reading practices. For instance, a class may agree to use digital books for research, and then print books for class discussion (Bui et al, 2023). University teachers should take note of these practices. Teaching students to attain skillful control of their reading behavior, for example, helping them differentiate when to read critically or attentively versus when to skim, should be of greater assistance than promoting students' digital reading skills. With regards to resources and activities, students preferred teacher-guided practice (i.e. games and worksheets) to promote vocabulary and reading skills and materials based on students' interests.

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The strong endorsement of interest-based materials is especially relevant to reading on digital media. Digital media allow for a wide range of texts to be matched to the student's interests, academic needs, and language learning objectives. In addition, digital media provide opportunities for second/foreign language learners to develop vocabulary through various resources (Zhu et al., 2024). While interest alone does not guarantee that students will develop academically literate skills; however, they require assistance in evaluating sources, synthesizing information, identifying bias, and maintaining focus during more challenging cognitive reading experiences.

The support for motivating teachers to develop quality materials supports a role for mediation by teachers. Teachers can start with the digital reading practices that their students already have and provide instruction on how to evaluate sources, take notes, synthesize information from multiple sources, and reflect on what they read. By doing so, teachers will avoid seeing students' social media practices as a distraction and will view them as part of the digital environment in which academic literacy must be taught.

The findings have three practical implications. First, reading instruction should integrate digital-literacy skills with conventional reading strategies. Students need explicit practice in evaluating source credibility, comparing sources, identifying evidence, and distinguishing information from opinion. Second, academic reading tasks can incorporate interest-aligned digital materials while maintaining structured requirements for close reading and evidence-based synthesis. Third, print and digital reading should be treated as complementary resources. The objective should be purposeful medium selection rather than replacement of one medium by another.

CONCLUSION

The reading patterns of university students, their interactions with online material, and their perceived support for developing reading skills in the framework of Islamic higher education in Indonesia were examined in this study. The findings show a reading environment where physical and digital formats live

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together instead of one totally replacing the other. Whereas books and textbooks continued to be essential to the pupils' reading activities, online materials were most often used.

The data also show that most of the internet activity of the kids was social, fun, and educational in character. Among the most often reported activities were interacting with peers, viewing images, and getting general knowledge; Facebook seemed to be the main starting site (44.6%) with educational material making up 21.7%. Furthermore, the most highly approved resources for the growth of reading habits were those based on students' interests and vocabulary development (98.7% for both); closely trailing were encouragement from teachers and well-structured reading materials (95.1% each). These patterns show that academic reading is included inside more general online activities and that the digital reading environments of the pupils differ.

The theoretical importance of the study is in supporting a multimodal and context-dependent perspective of digital reading instead of only a substitute for print reading. The results support the need to set more-advanced digital-literacy skills such as source credibility assessment, bias detection, information synthesis, and sustained attention apart from basic digital access and engagement. Therefore, the study provides background-specific data from Indonesian Islamic higher education indicating that often online activity should not always be seen as proof of great critical digital literacy.

The practical value is that better education reading education may link students' current digital interests with clear academic-literacy instruction. Teachers can assign thorough reading, source assessment, comparison of data, synthesis throughout sources, and reflective reading while yet including interest-based digital materials. With the aim and demands of a reading assignment rather than from a basic preference for one medium guiding the choice of media, print and digital materials can also be seen as complimentary resources.

One should take the study inside its technical limits. Its cross-sectional descriptive approach, self-reported questionnaire data, and solitary institutional setting preclude causal inferences or generalizability to the bigger Indonesian

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university population. Future studies should include direct evaluations of reading comprehension and critical source-evaluation abilities as well as longitudinal designs, verified measures of digital reading literacy, bigger and more varied samples across institutions. Studies using comparative or mixed methods could also look at how students' stated online behaviors interact with their real-life academic reading processes and results.

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