



## Home Literacy Environment and Parental Support as Advocates of Children Literacy

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### ABSTRACT

Creating readers who want to read rather than creating readers who can read should be the focus of school teachers who have extensive opportunities to inculcate reading habit among children. This study aimed to investigate the role of school teachers in promoting reading habits among primary school children. We conducted in-depth interviews with primary school teachers, both male and female, teaching in two private school systems in Lahore, to gather data. Most of the respondents (66.6%) considered evolving technologies, TV, and mobile as hindrances, citing that these were replacing books, eliminating reading interest, and capturing the children's leisure time. Social and environmental factors such as the father's occupation, parents' illiteracy, and parents' negative attitude towards reading had a negative impact on the reading habit. Other social factors, such as insecurity, load-shedding, and an unstable political situation, also had negative effects. The findings of this study will be helpful for educationists, education policymakers, school teachers, librarians, and parents of children to effectively inculcate a reading habit among schoolchildren. We have made several recommendations to this effect.



## **Introduction**

It found that there was a general decline in reading habits among schoolchildren due to many evolving factors, such as the use of social websites, the Internet, SMS, blogs, chatting, etc. Many other computer and mobile applications prevailed widely in society, capturing children's leisure time. It was concluded that promoting leisure or voluntary reading was an uphill task as educational institutions and educators were creating readers who could read rather than creating readers who wanted to read. Most children had to face great pressure from their parents and school teachers to prepare themselves to pass tests and examinations, which negatively affected their reading motivation.

Research also showed that the home environment significantly influences schoolchildren's reading habits. Parents' personal beliefs, their attitude towards reading, their own reading habit, their visits to libraries and reading programs, and the availability of reading material were dominant factors that contributed to the reading motivation of schoolchildren. These children, who were avid readers or intended to be more enthusiastic readers, hailed from homes where parents aimed to foster reading motivation in their children.

## **Background of the Study**

Some studies have focused on the roles of parents, siblings, friends, and school teachers in instilling reading motivation in children. After parents, school teachers have a large impact on schoolchildren's reading habits. However, researchers discovered that teachers employed incorrect and monotonous methods, lacked proper training, misapplied literacy techniques, failed to advocate for library use, and lacked comprehension of children's literature. They did not use the library frequently, and they were not good readers either. Innovative strategies like reading aloud, sustained silent reading, providing reading choice and time for reading in class, having good knowledge of children's literature, and recommending materials by investigating the reading interests of schoolchildren were mentioned as having a positive effect on reading motivation.

## **Refrain from Leisure Reading**

Greaney (1980) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between the amount of time spent on leisure reading and personal, home, and school-related variables. The study included children reading in fifth grade from a stratified random sample of 31 Irish schools. These students spent only 5.4 percent of their leisure time reading, while 22 percent did not read at all. The study further revealed that gender was the most dominant factor, as girls proved to be more avid readers than boys.

Morrow and Weinstein (1986) investigated the relationship between children's voluntary use of libraries and their personal attitudes towards their involvement in a program intended to promote book pleasure. They used a questionnaire and made observations before, after, and during the program. We employed a time series design of 10 weeks to collect data from 142 second grade boys and girls from a suburban school. The study revealed that very few primary-grade and preschool children enjoyed looking at books during leisure time at school. The researchers lamented that most of the institutions were creating readers who could read, but they did not create readers who wanted to read. The researchers strongly recommended that schools should shift their focus from preparing students for tests and examinations to encouraging them to become volunteer readers.

## **Factors that influence Reading Habits**

Nweke (1987) conducted research based on the University of Ibadan's Reading Program Readership Promotion Campaign. The study revealed many factors that hampered Nigerians from developing a reading habit. The study discovered that Nigerian society, due to its communal nature, prioritizes oral and dramatic traditions over books, posing a significant barrier to the development of a reading habit. Secondly, Nigerians have a non-stimulating linguistic culture because they do not provide more quality literature in their mother tongue. Other factors

included a shortage of time due to the growing demands of daily work and the high cost of imported reading material.

Majid and Tan (2007) investigated the attitudes, motivations, and preferences of children towards leisure reading. Three schools in Singapore selected 440 upper primary students from 12 upper primary classes, using a pre-tested questionnaire to collect data. The study revealed that emerging technologies such as computers, gadgets, television, the internet, chat rooms, SMS, blogs, Wikis, etc. were role players that were heavily affecting children's reading attitudes. They believed that Singapore's rigorous education system prioritized passing tests and examinations over voluntary reading. The students faced excessive pressure from their parents and teachers. The authors recommended that teachers and parents play their role in educating children to keep a balance between leisure activities and their leisure reading. A similar study recently conducted by Majid et al. (2017) to know leisure reading preferences of teenagers.

Many studies have proven that electronic environments, the internet, TV, radio, and other technologies compete against reading in capturing schoolchildren's leisure time (Aina et al., 2011; Majid & Tan, 2007).

### **Home literacy has an impact on children's reading motivation.**

Children started their familiarity with literature by observing their parents at home and extended their experience by viewing their teachers at school (Morrison et al., 1998)). Moreover, school teachers and parents can play a very important role in educating children on how to keep balance in their leisure activities, including fun reading (Majid & Tan, 2007).

Ho and Lau (2018) wanted to know whether parents' reading habits influenced their children's reading habits or not. We used the Inventory of Reading Experiences Part II questionnaire to collect data from 300 ninth grade students and their parents in a suburban Midwest district, selected through a random sampling table. Parents' reading habits significantly influenced their children's reading habits. The study conceded that the home environment had a strong effect on children in their preschool and elementary years of school. Galda and Cullinan (2000) pointed out that the amount of outside school reading was significantly associated with achievement in verbal fluency, reading comprehension, general information, and vocabulary enhancement. Researchers also established a significant relationship between a student's level of independent reading and their school success.

### **Purpose and Study Objectives**

The proposed study aimed to investigate the role of the school teacher in promoting reading habits among schoolchildren in grades one through five in Lahore's private school systems. The study delved into the perspectives of school teachers on the intrinsic motivation of students to read, the current methods they employ, the teaching strategies and best practices that foster reading motivation, the implementation of innovative and new methods, and the challenges they encounter in cultivating a reading habit. The study is intended to:

- To explore intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors for leisure reading among schoolchildren
- To explore parental support and role in stimulating literacy habits among schoolchildren
- To investigate positive and negative factors influencing schoolchildren's literacy development

### **Review of Related Literature**

We searched relevant databases such as Wiley Online Library, ERIC, JSTOR, Tylor & Francis, and HEC Digital Library to identify relevant studies for literature review, utilizing all possible keywords and alternative terms related to leisure reading, voluntary reading, free time reading, and literacy habits.

### **Parental involvement and support are crucial in stimulating the reading habit**

Greaney (1986) investigated the parental influence on reading among their children. The study revealed that factors such as verbal interaction between child-parents, parents' interest in reading, parental reading, access to reading material, opportunities for reading, and parent-child reading significantly influenced children's reading motivation. Wakeman et al. (2021) added that only half of the parents have focused on the increasing need for literacy development among their intellectually disabled children. However, Ece Demir-Lira et al. (2019) acclaimed that a large majority of parents were positively contributing to their child's literacy development by starting early reading before going to bed.

Klauda (2009) conducted a study that intended to explore the support parents provide for their children to help them develop reading habits and stimulate reading motivation. The study found that parental support played a very important role in developing reading motivation and habits among their children. However, by discussing the books they had read and sharing books and articles of mutual interest, parents supported their older children more than their younger ones. Akkermans-Rutgers et al. (2021) explored parents and their children's interaction in terms of school-assigned literacy assignments through an in-depth analysis of 26 Dutch children by including each parent of the interviewee children. According to the study, there are three main types of readers: autonomously motivated readers, generational non-readers, and incompatible readers.

Klauda and Wigfield (2012) examined elementary school students' perceived support for reading from mothers, fathers, and peers. A sample of 130 fourth grade and 172 fifth grade students from three public schools in a rural area of Mid-Atlantic State participated in the study. The study revealed that the children viewed their mother as more supportive than their father and friends. The study also found little difference in perceived reading support, reading motivation, and reading habit based on gender and grade level. Guthrie and Greaney (1991) remarked that parents' personal beliefs and attitudes towards reading widely affected their children's reading habits. Parents who registered their children in the library demonstrated their appreciation for literacy. It also showed that they were interested in reading, and they expected their children to be interested in reading. However, Karakaya and Ulper (2011) lamented that parents were insensitive in this respect, which negatively affected their children's reading habits and their visits to the library.

### **Children's reading habits are affected by their home environment.**

Morni and Sahari (2013) investigated the impact of the living environment on the reading habit among children. Researchers used a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to study a sample of 98 students from four faculties of Universiti Teknologi MARA Sarawak. The study confirmed a strong relationship between children's reading habits and the living environment their parents provide. Researchers found a positive relationship between the reading environment and the average hours a child spends at home. The parents who provided a good and encouraging reading environment with the availability of materials and their positive attitude had a very positive impact on the reading habit and motivation among their children.

Baker and Wigfield (1999) conducted a longitudinal study to investigate the influences of family on reading motivation among children. The study was based on the Early Childhood Project, which primarily focused on the emergence of early childhood literacy. The participants, recruited in two phases, included 41 kindergarten children and their parents who had participated in the project during 1993–94 and 68 families who participated in 1994–95. Research revealed that children who engaged in reading for pleasure were more likely to become proficient readers in the following years. Children's interaction with print material, an effective home literacy environment, and book sharing practices at home were considered effective predictors of reading motivation among children. Parents' belief in reading and their consideration of how children learn to read had a significant effect on their children's motivation to read. McKool and Gespass

(2009) revealed that the children can be avid readers who came from homes where literacy and reading flourished and where parents were making their efforts by doing daily read aloud. Parents were discussing books they had read, presenting themselves as role models, and recommending good books for recreational reading to their children.

Kuo et al. (2004) demonstrated that family background and daily reading routines were very important for early literacy development among children. Parents and children's book sharing practices not only developed their language and literacy but also increased emotional attachment through child-parent interaction. The study found that fewer parents were reading daily to their children due to the non-availability of reading resources. The study found that factors such as race or ethnicity and maternal educational level were associated with daily reading to their children.

### **Home literacy: contributing factors**

Yusof (2010) examined the relationship and influence of family factors on children's reading habits and interests at level 2. Yusof (2010) used a survey and interview to analyse family factors such as family income, parents' occupation, educational level, encouragement to read, and home literacy environment. The study revealed that the father's occupation played a dominant role in promoting the reading habit, while the family's monthly income had no effect. The study also revealed that children who had shown continuous involvement with their parents were either good readers or tended to be so. The author strongly recommended that parents cultivate a reading attitude among their children because they are role models for them, and home literacy has a very positive impact on children's reading interest. van Bergen et al. (2017) carried out a quantitative study to assess the association between the home literacy environment and children's skills by collecting data from 101 fathers, mothers, and children. The number of available books at home was strongly associated with the significance of the home literacy environment.

Igbokwe et al. (2022) investigated children's activities, the number of hours spent reading, and whether electronic media was affecting reading habits among schoolchildren. Most of the children were reading at home for examinations, test preparation, or to complete their homework or syllabus. They found that most of the students were involved in watching TV or playing games on cell phones. Surprisingly, the study revealed the children's widespread engagement with the internet, online chatting, TV watching, musical gadgets, and other electronic devices. The researchers warned that too much engagement with electronic devices could be harmful for the reading habit among children.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

We used a survey research design with in-depth interviews to collect data. Many researchers (Gambrell, 1996; Morrow & Weinstein, 1986; Ogunrombi & Adio, 1995; Lebowitz & Omer, 2013) had successfully employed direct interviewing, making it the most suitable method for the current study. We developed a new instrument with the assistance of related literature, expert advice, and a pilot study.

The primary school teachers teaching from grades one through five in the private school systems of Lahore were the population of the study. We selected two private school systems, namely Beaconhouse and Dar-e-Arqam, due to their ease of access, prior permission, and teachers' consent to participate. We used convenience sampling to select a total of 30 participants. We collected data through face-to-face interviews at various school branches, using both Urdu and English.

### **Data Analysis**

The section will present the analysis and interpretation of data collected from 30 school teachers teaching in two private school systems in Lahore.

### **The participants' demographic information**

The 30 teachers who participated in the study consisted of 10 (33.3%) males and 20 (66.6%) females. The ratio of male and female participants varies widely, but it was done intentionally due to the ratio of male and female teachers teaching in the selected private school systems. Most of the participants (n = 24, 80%) possess master's degrees. Four (13.3%) teachers had a bachelor's degree, while only two (6.6%) had an MPhil degree. As far as professional qualifications were concerned, less than half (n = 13, 43.3%) claimed to have professional qualifications, while 17 (56.6%) admitted that they had no professional qualifications in teaching. A little more than half of the participants (n = 17, 56.7%) had teaching experience of up to two years, while only three (10.0%) had experience of more than six years. The experience ranged from a minimum of one month to a maximum of eight years. It showed that most of the teachers were working with limited professional experience.

### **Intrinsic motivation among schoolchildren**

We asked the participants to express their opinions about the level of intrinsic motivation among schoolchildren. Table 1 shows that 14 (46.6%) of the teachers reported that schoolchildren were motivated to read for pleasure, while 10 (33.3%) reported the opposite. Three participants (10%) mentioned that children were slightly motivated to read for pleasure. Only two (6.6%) teachers said that school teachers were playing their role but parents were not whereas one (3.3%) of them reported that teachers and parents were playing their effective role in promoting reading habit among school children.

**Table 1.** *Intrinsic motivation among school children (N = 30)*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Children are intrinsically motivated	14	46.6	1
Children are not motivated at all	10	33.3	2
Children are slightly motivated	3	10.0	3
Teachers are playing their role but parents are not	2	6.6	4
Teacher and parents did play their role	1	3.3	5

According to the study, most schoolteachers considered schoolchildren intrinsically motivated to read. These findings are consistent with the research studies by Morni and Sahari (2013) and Hughes-Hassell and Rodge (2007), which found that most of the children showed a positive attitude towards leisure reading. However, these findings contradicted those of Aina et al. (2011a) and Greaney (1980), who revealed that most of the children and youth were not motivated for pleasure reading. It seems that the reason behind the positive perception by school teachers was that the school administration was focusing more on library use by implementing library periods and promoting activity-based learning.

### **Children find motivation to read for various reasons.**

We made an effort to understand why schoolchildren were intrinsically motivated to read for leisure. Table 2 presents the data. Seventeen participants answered this question. Five (29.4%) of the teachers believed that regular use of the school library motivated most children, while four (23.5%) mentioned that the school teacher fostered the children's reading for pleasure. Three (17.6%) teachers stated that the children felt stimulated to read based on their own interests, and another three (17.6%) said that activity-based learning enhanced reading motivation. Friendly environments and social activities motivated children to read more, as mentioned by two (11.7%) participants.

**Table 2. Reasons – why children motivated to read (n = 17)**

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Library use fosters school children	5	29.4	1
School teacher motivates children	4	23.5	2
Children can be motivated through activity based learning	3	17.6	3
Children read for their interest	3	17.6	3
Friendly environment and social activities motivate children	2	11.7	4

The study showed that the majority of participants believed the children's frequent use of the library motivated them. They mentioned that the school teacher was a motivational factor in boosting their reading habit. The reason for this was that the surveyed school's libraries were well organized and actively working. The administration showed more interest in frequent library use and focused on school teacher training.

**The role of parents in motivating their children to read is crucial.**

Table 3 presents the perceptions of school teachers regarding the role of parents in promoting reading habits among their children. Most of the participants (n = 19, 63.3%) thought that the role of parents in developing reading habits was important, whereas only one (3.3%) thought that the parents played a minor role. Six respondents (20%) demonstrated that literate parents played a more effective role than illiterate parents of children. Only two (6.66%) teachers said that the parents were not playing their role at all. Discussing the role of parents, 11 (36.6%) teachers demonstrated that children saw their parents as their reading role models. Six (20%) participants perceived that encouragement and motivation from parents played a great role in promoting reading habits among their children.

**Table 3. Parent's role in reading motivation among their children (N = 30, multiple response)**

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Parents have important role	19	63.3	1
Parents as reading role models for their children	11	36.6	2
Parents should provide opportunities and books	7	23.3	3
Encouragement and motivation from parents has great role	6	20.0	4
Literate parents develop reading habit while illiterate did not	6	20.0	4
Parents are not playing their role	2	6.6	5
Parents have slightly role	1	3.3	6

This study found that parents play an important role in developing reading habits among their children. Its findings were similar to those of Klauda (2009), who revealed that parental support played a vital role in promoting reading habits among their children. It was also clear that parents' presenting themselves as reading role models before their children was effective. Tlou and Snyman (2020) finding that parents' presenting themselves as role models before their children positively affected their reading habits was confirmed by this study.

**The impact of home literacy on reading motivation is significant.**

What was the effect of the home-literacy environment on the development of reading habits among schoolchildren, according to school teachers? The data revealed that most of the teachers (n=21, 70%) considered that home-literacy had an import role while only one (3.3%) felt that the parents' literacy had a slight role. Nine (30%) participants reflected that literate parents could play a more effective role. The findings added as 2 (6.6%) said that a parent's own inspiration to

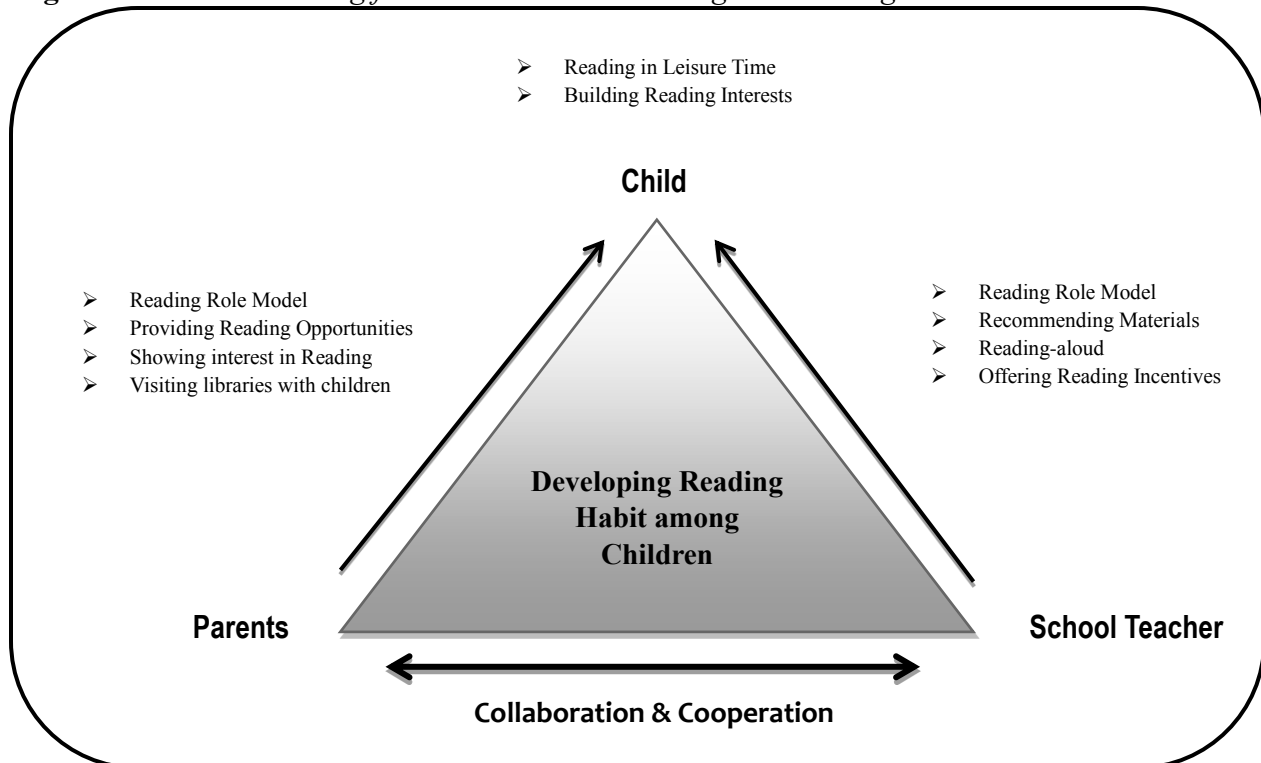
read effectively works. Finally, 3 (10%) demonstrated that home literacy creates motivation to read more.

Researchers discovered that home literacy significantly contributed to the promotion of reading habits among schoolchildren. These findings were consistent with Yusof (2010), Baker et al. (1997), and Morni and Sahari (2013), which demonstrated that the home literacy environment was a significant predictor of reading motivation among schoolchildren. However, Ulper (2011) cited that some parents' insensitivity to providing a positive reading environment negatively affected their children's reading habits (Yilmaz, 2004). The present study also found that literate parents tended to develop reading habits while illiterate parents did not. This was consistent with Ogunrombi and Adio (1995), who found that most parents of Nigerian children were illiterate and did not cultivate a reading attitude among their children.

### **Tri-collaborating factors to stimulate reading habits among schoolchildren**

The role of parents in promoting reading habits and the role of home literacy in reading motivation among schoolchildren are useless if underlying tri-collaborating factors do not work. Firstly, the parents should play their role right from infancy, as research has found that that is the best stage to develop a reading habit (Karim, 2004). They should play their role by reading aloud to their children, providing reading opportunities like an effective reading environment, making available reading material, offering reading rewards, etc. They should also consider that their own reading interest, reading habit, frequent visits to the library, visits to reading programs, and book fairs all had a very positive impact. Second, school teachers should promote reading habits by reading aloud, presenting themselves as reading role models before schoolchildren, recommending material based on children's interests and preferences, and offering reading incentives. Yet, lack of collaboration and poor communication among school teachers and parents negatively affected the whole process. Finally, the schoolchildren should try to build their own reading interest by reading different materials in different formats, which would be helpful in making them lifelong readers. The following figure illustrates this collaborative endeavor:

**Figure 1.** *Tri-collaborating factors to stimulate reading habit among school children*





### **Impact of social, economic and environmental factors**

This study investigated the impact of social, economic, and environmental (SE and E) factors on schoolchildren's reading habits. More than half of the school teachers (n = 16, 53.3%) reported that these factors had a significant impact, while three (10%) thought that the impact was slight. Another three (10%) surprisingly believed that these factors had no impact on the reading habit. In the interviews, it was revealed that four (13.3%) respondents felt that these factors had a positive impact, while another four (13.3%) thought the impact was negative. The probing questions revealed that if these factors were positive, the impact would be positive, but if they were negative, the impact would be negative. Further discussions revealed that more teachers (n = 6, 20%) considered that environmental factors had more impact, whereas four (13.3%) demonstrated that economic factors had more impact. Two (6.6%) respondents thought that providing an environment according to the mental level of children was better. Interesting. Six (20.0%) respondents said that the internet and social media were taking over the whole society. The findings demonstrated that social, economic, and environmental factors had an impact on reading habits among children. Yusof (2010), who found that socio-economic status was the foundation for the formation of reading habits among children, supported these findings. The present study found that economic factors had a greater impact on schoolchildren's reading habits. It affirmed the findings of previous research, which found that a father's occupation was a dominant factor that affected reading habits among schoolchildren (Ogunrombi & Adio, 1995; Yusof, 2010).

### **The role of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in reading motivation is significant.**

We also investigated the role of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards offered by school teachers in stimulating reading habits among children. We found that 25 (83.3%) teachers believed that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards effectively promoted reading habits. Five (16.6%) teachers said that the rewards created a love for reading. Four (13.3%) of them reported that these rewards created more pleasure and inspiration for reading. Six (20.0%) teachers believed that intrinsic rewards had more effect, while one (3.3%) believed that extrinsic rewards had more effect. Two (6.6%) teachers noted that proper management of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards can enhance reading motivation among schoolchildren.

The results of this study demonstrated that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards had a very positive impact on schoolchildren's reading motivation. These were consistent with Gambrell (1996), who demonstrated that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards effectively increased the intrinsic motivation to read among schoolchildren. The study participants stated that they offered candy, books, and certificates as extrinsic rewards, while stars, book winner awards, titles, and praise were intrinsic rewards. P9 mentioned that "these rewards worked like magic," while P12 remarked that "overuse of extrinsic rewards created greediness among children."

### **TV, mobile, and computer applications have positive effects.**

This research revealed a positive impact of TV, mobile, and computer applications on reading habits among schoolchildren. It demonstrates that a few five (16.6%) of the teachers considered that children took these technologies as attractive and easy, while four (13.3%) thought that these technologies were helpful in effective learning and enhancing reading motivation. Three (10.0%) participants stated that these technologies created creativity and were helpful in schoolchildren's mental growth. One teacher believed that ensuring the availability of these technologies can promote extensive learning and allow children to experience new things.

### **The negative impact of TV, mobile, and computer applications is significant.**

Did TV, mobile, and computer applications have any negative impact on schoolchildren's reading habits? Five (25%) teachers considered that these technologies were replacing books, while four (20%) thought that these were hindrances to developing a reading habit. Similarly, five (25%) of the participants demonstrated that these technologies were eliminating reading interest and habits, while another five (25%) considered that they were wasting schoolchildren's time. Only

one teacher (5%) was concerned about the impact of TV programs and messaging on promoting slang language among schoolchildren, which was prevailing badly.

Eight (53.3%) teachers expressed neutral views, believing that these technologies had both negative and positive effects. Three (20%) participants said that there should be checks and balances when using these technologies. Two (13.3%) participants recommended using these technologies in the presence of their parents. Two (13.3%) of the teachers said that finding a balance in the use of these technologies was necessary.

**Table 4.** *Negative impact of T.V., mobile and computer applications (n= 20), Neutral views and suggestions (n = 15)*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Replacing books	5	25
Eliminating reading interest and habit	5	25
Wasting time of school children	5	25
Hindrances in developing reading habit	4	20
Slang language is badly prevailing	1	5
<b>Neutral views and suggestions</b>		
These technologies have two fold effect	8	53.3
There should be check & balance in using	3	20.0
These should be used in presence of parents	2	13.3
Making balance among use	2	13.3

Most of the participants felt that TV, mobile, and computer applications were negatively impacting reading habits among children by replacing books, wasting their time, and reducing their interest in reading. These findings were consistent with many research studies that had proven that TV viewing preferences, more attraction to listening to radio and chatting, electronic environments, the internet, and other technologies are competitors against reading in capturing the leisure time of schoolchildren (Aina et al., 2011; Chettri & Rout, 2013; Igbokwe et al., 2012; Majid & Tan, 2007). In this respect, Majid and Tan (2007) suggested that school teachers and parents can play a very important role in educating children on how to keep balance in their leisure activities, including fun reading.

### **Conclusion**

The primary school teachers working in these schools were mostly female, with a good level of academic qualification but less professional qualification and experience. They frequently attended workshops, seminars, and short courses related to their profession. These teachers considered school children as intrinsically motivated to read for leisure and regarded parents' role important in motivating children. Most of the respondents (66.6%) considered evolving technologies, TV, and mobile as hindrances, citing that these were replacing books, eliminating reading interest, and capturing the children's leisure time. Social and environmental factors such as the father's occupation, parents' illiteracy, and parents' negative attitude towards reading had a negative impact on the reading habit. Other social factors, such as insecurity, load-shedding, and an unstable political situation, also had negative effects.

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