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Shalini Nagaratnam

Taylor's University, shalini.n@taylors.edu.my

Harpaljit Kaur

Taylor's University, harpaljit.k@taylors.edu.my

R. Ratneswary V. Rasiah

Taylor's University, ratneswary.v@taylors.edu.my

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The Effect of Stress Factors

On the Reading Habits among Gen-Y students

Shalini Nagaratnam, Harpaljit Kaur & R. Ratneswary V.Rasiah

Taylor's University, Malaysia

E-Mail : shalini.n@taylors.edu.my , harpaljit.k@taylors.edu.my, ratneswary.v@taylors.edu.my

Abstract - The complexity in teaching the generation Y students is a challenge faced by academics in many higher institutions. This includes the evolution from conventional reading to reading using the ever expanding web based resources. This quantitative study was undertaken to examine the relationship between stress factors and reading habits among Gen Y students. The purpose of this study is to identify the type of stress which affects Gen Y students, the effect of these stress factors on the Gen Y reading habits and the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between stress factors and reading habits. The data was collected from 206 business students in a private higher institution of education using a structured questionnaire after a prior pilot test of 76 samples. The data was analyzed using reliability, factor analysis, and multivariate General Linear Model. The use of factor analysis identified four constructs for readership and two constructs for stress factors. An association between stress factors and reading habits was established. It was discovered that stress affected the knowledge and the exam purpose readers. Further investigation showed that gender moderates the effect of stress on the Gen Y reading habits. These findings will be of value to educators as they seek a better understanding of the needs and priorities of the millennial students. It is hoped that these findings will enable educators to establish a good understanding of the Gen Y students and their distinct needs so as to promote the use of more innovative teaching methodologies to further encourage a healthier learning environment.

Keywords: *Generation Y, Reading Habits, Stress Factors, General Linear Model, Factor Analysis*

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most fundamental components of the learning process and is seen as a catalyst for life-long learning and intellectual growth. Reading is also significant in the knowledge building of the youths, which contributes to the human capital growth of a country. It has been observed that the interest in reading is gradually fading. Nathanson (2008) found that lack of reading had caused a drop in the literacy level of the future generation. The reading trend has shifted from the conventional or rather physical reading to web-based (virtual) resources (Rennie and Petterson, 2008). This is consistent with a study done by Mokthari, Richard and Gardner (2009) which showed that Internet usage is very much significant than any forms of reading.

There has been greater awareness about problems associated with the reading habits. The readership profile must be addressed before dealing with the problems. Su Yen Chen (2007) discovered that gender acts as a determinant in the reading behavior among college students. Study done by Nor (2007) showed that there were more exam purpose reader as compared to pleasure reading. Further study by Brintz (1993), Worthy & Mc Kool (1996) and Gay Ivey (1999)

revealed that another form of reader, the reluctant readers, have distorted opinion about reading. Also identified was the disabled reader behavior in reading is due to stress related to reading constraints (Gay, 1999).

Stress is known to be a common threat to the well-being of students (Fields and Prinz, 1997). There are many reasons that contribute to the stress and anxiety student experiences. Among the stressors are module assessment related, peer related, parents and educators expectation (Burnett and Fanshawe, 1997). In China, Chen & Lan (1998), Xing (2005), Chao (1996) and Ho (1996) have underlined that students have inflicted stress onto themselves to meet parents' expectation. However, in the study by Macan Theresa (1990) it was concluded that there were no correlations between stress and reading, but indicated that students performed poorly as a result of stress. James Deese (1953) has investigated the stress and learning in various conditions. His study showed that the leading causes of stress were academically related.

In view of the importance of reading and the possible influence of stress, this study was undertaken to see the relationship between stress and reading habits among Gen Y students. The following are the research questions:

1. What are the reading preferences among Gen-Y students?	12	Others 5.8
2. What are the types of stress affecting the Gen-Y students?	Past Education 146	Government 70.9
3. What are the types of reading attitudes among Gen-Y students?	52	Private 25.2
4. How do the stress factors affect the Gen-Y reading habits?	6	International 2.9
5. Does gender moderate the affect of stress factors of the Gen-Y students?	2	Others 1.0

II. METHOD

In this study, a sample of 79 respondents participated in a pilot study which was done to refine the questionnaire. The questionnaire was structured into fewer constructs eliciting the demographic of the respondents, readership and stress factors which was a 5-point Likert scale items. The readership construct had 23 items which was reduced to 16 items while the stress construct initially had 9 items which was reduced to 5 items based on the reliability analysis.

The refined questionnaire was given to 206 respondents whom were randomly sampled. The data was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software. Analyses performed onto the data include descriptive statistics, factor analysis, reliability test, crosstab, and General Linear Model.

III. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

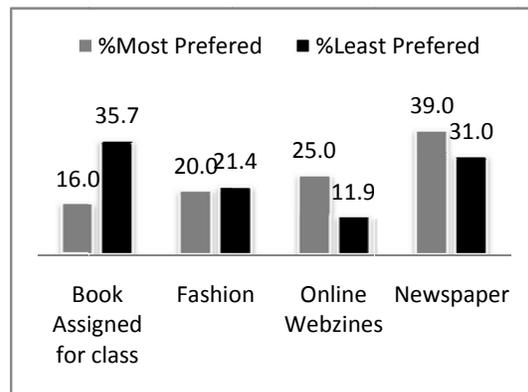
Sample Profile

Table 1 : Sample Demographic

Measure Frequency	Item Percentage (%)
Gender 94	Male 45.6
	Female 54.4
Nationality 178	Malaysian 86.4
	Non-Malaysia 13.6
Race 143	Chinese 69.4
	Malay 12.6
	Indian 7.3

Table 1.1 depicts information of the 206 respondents who took part in the survey. Majority of the respondents were female at 54.5%. A little more than 70% of the respondents have studied in a government funded school while 25.2% come from private schools. The mode for the Father’s Education Level is SPM/MCE/O-Levels (32.5%) followed by Degree/Masters (37%) and STPM/HSC/S-Levels (11%). Similarly, the respondents Mother’s Education Level follows the same trend with 50.7% with SPM/MCE/O-Levels education, followed by Degree/Masters (26.6%) and STPM/HSC/A-Levels (9.9%).

Figure 1: Reading Materials Preferences among Gen-Y students



The Gen-Y respondents were asked to rate the most preferred reading material and the least preferred material. Among the choices given were books assigned for class, fashion/beauty magazines, webzines and newspapers which is illustrated in Figure 1. The number one choice for most preferred reading material was the newspapers, followed by the online webzines with 39% and 25% respectively. Newspaper and Online magazines had been highly rates as most preferred as compared to least preferred. Books assigned for class has the highest percentage leaving it at the top of the

least preferred reading materials. This is consistent with the study done by Mokhtari et al. (2009) suggesting that students prefer surfing the internet rather than reading for educational or leisure purposes. Fashion Magazines preference is somewhat even among students.

Table 2 : Preferred Reading Materials

	Books assigned for class	News papers	Fashion/ Beauty magazines	Online websites or webzines	Total
female	9	18	18	13	88
	56.20%	46.20%	90.00%	52.00%	53.30%
male	7	21	2	12	77
	43.80%	53.80%	10.00%	48.00%	46.70%
Total	16	39	20	25	165
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The preferred reading materials by gender are somewhat equal except for Fashion/Beauty Magazines. It shows that Fashion/Beauty magazines are more popular among female students (90%) as compared to males.

Types of Reading Attitudes

Table 3 : Factor Loading for Reading Attitude Factors

	Component			
	Reluctant readers	Exam purpose readers	Disadvantage d readers	Knowle dge purpose readers
I basically don't read much at all (C4)	0.826			
I don't like reading books with many words but not much pictures in it (C12)	0.801			
I don't care much for reading (C5)	0.774			
I don't like reading (C9)	0.710			
I prefer computer games or face book rather than reading during my leisure time (C17)	0.700			
Reading makes me sleepy (C11)	0.681			
I don't like reading for leisure (C8)	0.589			
I only read materials that are required in my studies (C7)		0.840		
I only read what I'm supposed to for my studies (C3)		0.780		
I will only go to the bookshop/library if I need to get a particular reading material. (C23)		0.713		

I find it difficult to understand materials written in the English Language because I have a poor command of the English Language (C18)			0.917	
It takes me a very long time to read materials written in the English Language because I need to use a dictionary to translate the words I don't understand (C19)			0.912	
Reading enhances my knowledge and skill (C16)				0.870
I perform better in my studies with the new knowledge acquired through reading (C10)				0.823
Composite reliability (CR)	0.888	0.822	0.911	0.835
Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	0.533	0.607	0.836	0.717

The reading attitudes of the Gen-Y students were captured with 16 items in the questionnaire. The factor analysis performed on these items returned 4 factors which accounted for 68.149% of the total variation in the items in the construct. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) is 0.790. This indicates a strong reliability and implies that the data reduction is of a satisfactory level of adequacy. After rotation using the Promax Method, these factors were then identified as Reluctant Readers, Exam Purpose Readers, Disadvantaged Readers, Knowledge Purpose Readers and Indifferent Readers. The Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Explained (AVE) for each factor of the reading attitudes are presented in Table 3.

Reluctant readers are the Gen-Y's who prefer doing anything else, but read. Exam Purpose readers, just as the term suggests, are students who only read to ace their academic goals while Knowledge Purpose Readers are students who read with the intention to broaden their knowledge and sharpen their already existing skills and ability. Having language as a barrier, these Gen Y students are clustered as the Disadvantaged Readers.

Types of Stress Factors

The stress factors affecting the Gen-Y students were captured with 9 items at the pre-test stage, which was then reduced to 5 items which accounted for 68.076% of the total variation. The KMO test for these 5 items is 0.696. This indicates a strong reliability and implies that the data reduction is of a satisfactory level of adequacy. After rotation using the Promax Method, these factors were then identified as Self Inflicted Stress and Parent Induced Stress. The Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Explained (AVE) for each factor of the reading attitudes are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Pattern for items measuring Stress Factors

	Component	
	Self Inflicted Stress	Parent Induced Stress
I have the fear of failing to meet my family's expectations(E3)	.706	
I get very stressed studying for a test (E4)	.778	
I am worried whether I will get a job after I graduate (E9)	.840	
My parents have strict discipline in my social life (E5)		.811
My parents are against me dating in college (E6)		.925
Composite Reliability (CR)	0.819	0.861
Average Variance Explained (AVE)	0.603	0.75

Self Inflicted Stress is the form of pressure student put onto them to do well, let it be exam orientation or meeting families' expectations, while Parent Induced Stress is the pressure and influence the parents have on the children.

Effects of the Stress Factors on the Reading Attitudes of Gen-Y students.

The theoretical framework that is being tested is presented in Figure 2, which is investigating the possible relationship between reading attitudes and stressors.

The multivariate test suggest that Self Inflicted Stress affects the Reading Attitudes among Gen-Y students with a significant value lesser than 0.05, while Parent Induced Stress does not have a significant effect on the Reading Attitudes.

The results from Multivariate Analysis (MVA) for Self Inflicted Stress as the Independent Variable and the Readership factor scores as the Dependant Variable are shown in Table 5. Based on the result, Self Inflicted Stress has an influence on the Exam Purpose Readers (p=0.041) and Knowledge Purpose Readers (p=0.083). This implies that students who read for knowledge and for exam purposes are normally stressed.

Fig. 2: Framework on the relationship of the Stress Factors and Reading Attitudes of the Gen Y students

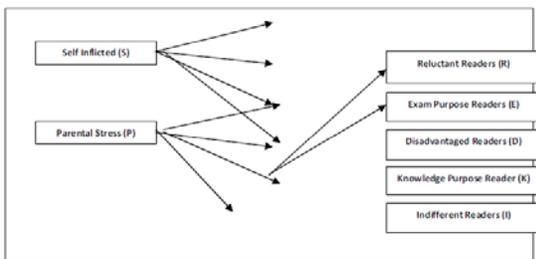


Table 5: Regression Coefficient for Self Inflicted Stress Against Reading Attitudes

Parameter Estimates				
Source	Dependant	Coefficient	Std. Error	Sig.
Self Inflicted Stress	Exam Purpose Readers	0.145	0.070	0.041
	Disadvantaged Readers	-0.019	0.072	0.791
	Knowledge Purpose Readers	0.124	0.071	0.083
	Reluctant Readers	-0.061	0.071	0.393

*Significant at 5% and ** at 10%

Table 6: Regression Coefficient for Reading by Gender

Component					
Source	Gender	Dependent	B	Std. Error	Sig
Self Inflicted Stress	Male	Exam Purpose Readers	0.267	0.088	0.003

*Significant at 5%

Table 6 indicates that it is statistically significant that male Exam-Purpose readers tend to have put an amount of stress onto them (p<0.01). Where else for female students of all the various reading attitudes identified in this study, it is not possible to statistically prove that they inflict stress onto themselves.

DISCUSSION

It is found that Parent Induced Stress does not affect the reading habits in this study. This seems to differ from the initial hypothesis. However, the possible relationship could be that Self Inflicted Stress mediates the Parent Induced Stress to the Reading Attitudes. This would be looked into, as a continuation to this study.

Table 5 presents the parameter estimate which indicates the nature of the relationship between Self Inflicted Stress and the dependant Reading Habits. Students who easily stress themselves are more of the Exam Purpose Readers (b=0.145) and the Knowledge Purpose Readers (b=0.124). There is a positive relationship suggesting that the more prone they are to inflict stress onto themselves, the higher the orientations are towards reading for exams and seeking knowledge. Male students who seem to be focused on Exam are mostly the ones who inflict stress onto themselves. Though beta coefficient is 0.267, the positivity indicates that the more prone in creating stress the higher chances that these male students are exam oriented students.

There can be many reasons to this result; however this indirectly indicates that in some way or rather, the

education system has created students who stress themselves for exams and seeking knowledge. Thus, a need to revise the exam oriented education system, is essential, to sway away from the traditional form of teaching and learning. This would also enhance students' knowledge retention from one level to another. The primary goal of education is to promote long term comprehension and retrieval of knowledge. Since the computer and internet has become the most favorable possession of these Gen Y students, experiential learning via this mode would support the retention of knowledge.

CONCLUSION

This study has identified five types of readers which are; Indifferent Readers, Exam-Purpose Readers, Disadvantaged Readers, and Reluctant Reader. The stress factors that were elicited were the Self Stress and Stress from Parents.

Though initial thought would be that Stress from parents would affect the readership, this study shows otherwise. More over, not all the 5 types of readerships had been influenced by Self Inflicted Stress. Only the Indifferent and Exam Purpose Readers had an influence.

Further study on gender, similar to study by Su Yen Chen (2007), investigation was positive that gender acts as a determinant in the reading habits.

The preliminary and actual findings in this study certainly will provide an insight into the students' reading attitudes and the impact of stress on the reading habits of Gen Y adolescents. Nevertheless the study was carried out with some limitations, for example, sample size was quite restricted. Furthermore, the questionnaire developed for this study has room for further improvement. Despite this, the preliminary and actual findings certainly provide an insight into the students' reading attitudes and the impact of parental influence on the reading habits of Gen Y students.

These findings will be of value to educators and parents as they seek a better understanding of the needs and priorities of these young adults. It is hoped that these findings will establish a better understanding of the Gen-Y reading attitudes and help in the development of healthy reading habits.

Further possible research tailing this study would if Stress from Parents really does n't affect students reading habits or academic performance.

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