
Title	The impact of technology use on students' independent reading habits and practices
Author(s)	Loh Chin Ee and Sun Baoqi

Copyright © 2021 National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University (NIE NTU), Singapore

This is the published version of the following article:

Loh, C. E., & Sun, B. (2021). The impact of technology use on students' independent reading habits and practices. *OER Knowledge Bites*, 14, 5.

https://nie.edu.sg/docs/default-source/oer/oer-knowledge-bites-volume14.pdf?sfvrsn=cbb0657d_2

The Impact of Technology Use on Students' Independent Reading Habits and Practices

By ¹Loh Chin Ee and Sun Baoqi

¹Loh Chin Ee is an Associate Professor and Deputy Head (Research) at the English Language and Literature Academic Group at the National Institute of Education Singapore. Her research focuses on literacy and literature education at the intersection of social class and globalisation.



In this presentation, we provided an update on the impact of children and adolescent technology use based on findings from two studies. The first study led by Dr Sun Baoqi is a survey of the leisure reading habits of 4,322 primary school children from 8 primary schools between August to October 2020, including focus groups with 36 Primary 4 students from 1 case study school. The second study led by Associate Professor Loh Chin Ee is a survey of 5,732 secondary school students from 6 secondary schools, including focus groups with 37 Secondary 2 and 3 students from 1 case study school.

Device Preferences

The survey showed that students preferred to use print for reading from Primary 3 to Secondary 1 but prefer to use their smartphones from Secondary 2 to 4 (see table 1 below).

Primary school students explained that they found it difficult to find books online, were distracted by gaming, social media and other apps when using their phones, and suffered from eye strain from reading online. They found it easier to find print books and to search for print books they were interested in. Secondary school students who were interviewed mentioned that they preferred reading in print because of eye strain when reading digitally, lack of distractions from a hardcopy book and the feel of the book. Students who were familiar with finding books online shared that reading online books could be more convenient as they could borrow the books easily and read them on the go.

Device Usage and Association with Reading

The findings showed that having access to devices did not necessarily lead to more digital reading. Primary school students explained that devices may distract them from reading as they would use their leisure time to play on the devices instead of reading using the devices.

For secondary school students, device use may conflict with reading, especially if they do not enjoy reading in the first place. Students who enjoy reading are more likely to make use of their devices to search for reading materials and to read on their devices.

Rank	P3	P4	P5	S1	S2	S3	S4
1	print	print	print	print	smartphone	smartphone	smartphone
2	tablet	tablet	computer/ smartphone	smartphone	print	print	print
3	computer	computer		computer	computer	computer	computer
4	smartphone	smartphone	smartphone	tablet	tablet	tablet	tablet
5	e-reader	e-reader	e-reader	e-reader	e-reader	e-reader	e-reader

Table 1. Students' preferred reading devices.

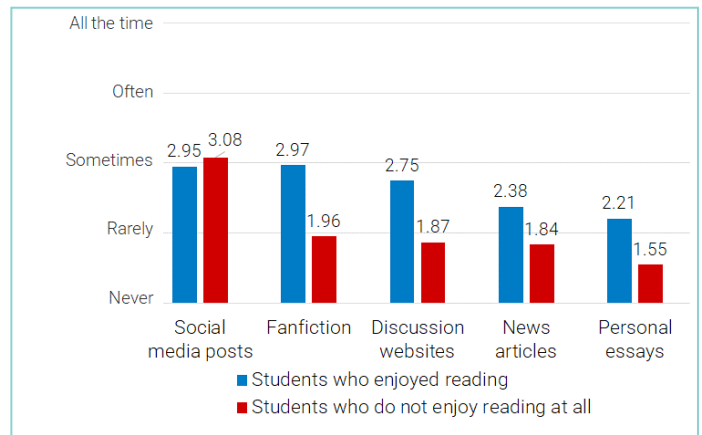
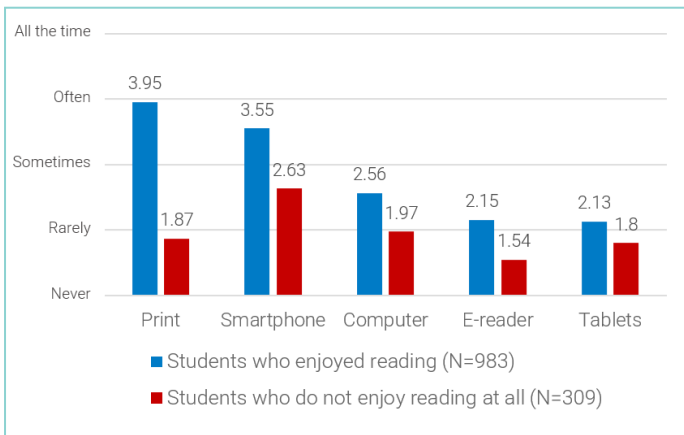


Figure 1. Secondary school students' use of devices for reading. Figure 2. Secondary school students' preferred reading materials on their smartphones.

Although all students used their smartphones for social media, students who enjoyed reading were more likely to use their smartphones for reading fanfiction, discussion websites, news articles and personal essays, which are lengthier and require some degree of concentration.

Implications

The findings suggest that both primary and secondary school students, especially students who do not enjoy reading, may not be familiar with looking for suitable books or reading online. Educators can create environments and set aside time to help students search for books they like, scaffold their reading and socialise them into using their devices for reading. Schools need to sustain engaged reading practices to help students find reading materials they enjoy.

Some suggestions for incorporating the above practices into blended learning include:

1. Providing age-appropriate and high-interest print books for students to bring home.
2. Spending time on book recommendations and read alouds to scaffold students' reading choices.
3. Putting aside time to socialise students into reading both print and e-books.
4. Teaching students how to use the NLB app and Libby through regular usage and practice.
5. Integrating reading activities into schools' online curriculum and programmes.

For those interested in reading more, the primary school study findings have been published in *Computers and Education Open*. You may scan the QR code below to access the findings.

How to Cite

Loh, C. E., & Sun, B. (2021). The Impact of Technology Use on Students' Independent Reading Habits and Practices. *OER Knowledge Bites Volume 14* (pp. 5–6). Singapore: National Institute of Education.



Computers and Education Open