
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Reading Habits and Motivation Among Educated Arabs in the Age of Social Media and Distractions

Reima Al-Jarf

Full Professor of English and Translation Studies, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Corresponding Author: Reima Al-Jarf, **E-mail:** reima.al.jarf@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

This study sought to find out whether educated Arabs read paper or digital materials; which reading technologies they use; amount of material they read; the place where they read; how much time they spend on reading; when they read; how they reduce distractions; how they motivate themselves to read; how they interact with the text; their reading rituals; and whether there are significant differences in reading habits according to gender, age, area of specialty and educational level. Unsolicited responses to a Twitter survey from 172 male and female adult Arabs with different ages, educational levels and areas of specialty showed that 13.5% use reading technologies, 15% prefer to listen audiobooks, and 71.5% read paper books. 16% read an hour a day; the majority read less than an hour a day and 13% read whenever they can. Some read 10 pages a day; others finish three chapters/articles a week; 14% read before bedtime; 15% listen to audiobooks while driving, working out, walking, cooking, and running errands; 5% read during wait times; 4% read before they start work; 3% read during their break at work; 3% read in the afternoon; 3% read after sunset prayer, and over the weekend. Some carry their Kindle device with them and read anywhere. To reduce distractions, 23% set a specific time for reading; 12% stay away from their smart phones or turn their mobiles to the silent mode; 6% read in a quiet place; 6% use a timer; 3% drink coffee to focus; 2% listen to music; and some use a pencil and paper to take notes and underline. No significant differences were found among respondents in terms of gender, area of specialty, educational level, the type of material read, reading technologies and applications they use, how much time they allocate to reading, where they read, how they reduce distractions, how they motivate themselves to read, their reading rituals and how they interact with the reading material. The study gave recommendations for encouraging the young generation to read in the age of social media and distractions and which technologies help them develop better reading habits.

| KEYWORDS

Reading habits, reading motivation, reading culture, reluctant readers, positive reading experiences, reading technologies, educated Arabs, social media, leisure reading, audiobooks.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Reading for pleasure or extensive reading is an activity that people of all ages and educational levels engage in during their free time. Elementary, junior high, secondary, college students and professionals need to read for academic as well as non-academic purposes. Reading for pleasure is significant for enhancing students' vocabulary, acquiring knowledge and skills and gaining information about issues of interest to them. People need to read to continue to grow academically and professionally. The reading habit is essential for creating a literate society, shaping the personalities and mental capacities of individuals and it helps develop proper thinking methods and create new ideas (Palani, 2012). It affects the intellectual and emotional growth of individuals. Those who read well have more chances for widening their mental horizons and better opportunities of success (Baba & Affendi, 2020).

Due to the influence of social media and the digital environment, students, nowadays, do not show much interest in reading books, magazines, and journals (Ahmad, Dar & Lone, 2019). Some studies have shown low reading habits and attitudes among university students. For example, Alsaeedi, Ngadiran, Kadir, Altowayti, and Al-Rahmi (2021) reviewed the literature and found that the majority of university students do not enjoy reading and mainly read to pass their exams. They mostly like to read novels and magazines. Nevertheless, electronic materials are their favourite source of reading. Social networking sites negatively affect students' reading habits. In Malaysia, engineering and business students have a low interest in reading. They do not enjoy reading as much as they enjoy doing other technology-related activities (Annamalai & Muniandy, 2013). Similarly, students enrolled in undergraduate ESL courses at Universiti Malaysia Sabah had an overall positive attitude towards reading with minimal enjoyment as they faced anxieties and difficulties (Ahmed, 2016). Thai students in their early twenties to early thirties in the study sample do not read fiction regularly, neither in Thai nor English. They mostly and non-fiction books for academic purposes (Strauss, 2008). In Italy, EFL business college students do little reading in English beyond the course requirements. A negative correlation was detected between reading attitudes and the number of years of past English study (Camiciottoli, 2001).

Further studies showed positive habits and attitudes towards reading in college students in a variety of majors and universities. For example, B.A. students majoring in IT and Arts at the International Islamic University consider websites as an increasingly important reading source. Significant differences exist between academic programs, types of reading materials and reading resources. Male and female students differed in reading habits and attitudes as well (Karim, & Hasan (2007). Students at the Faculty of Education, UiTM Puncak Alam had an overall positive attitude towards academic and leisure reading. They read daily or at least once a week for academic and leisure purposes. They prefer digital materials to printed texts due to the plethora of digital materials. Instructors have an impact on students' reading habits and attitudes (Baba & Affendi, 2020). Interestingly, Malaysian Chinese university students prefer electronic media when reading for leisure but prefer the printed media to pass exams (Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi & Lean, 2011).

In Pakistan, the majority of engineering students prefer electronic books for academic reading and have no preference of formats for leisure reading. Most of the students use social networking sites for fun. However, the students have problems in searching online reading materials (Mirza, Pathan, Khatoon & Hassan, 2021).

In India, significant differences between male and female students at colleges of Medicine, Arts, Humanities, Commerce, Home Science, BCA, BBA, Mass Communications and Journalism were detected in reading habits, attitudes, reading material and reading resources used. Social and digital media greatly impacted students' reading habits and behaviour for both genders (Ahmad, Dar & Lone, 2019).

In Turkey, pre-service language teachers mostly utilised digital media on a daily basis. Psychological factors such as reading interest, motivation, and anxiety occasionally influenced the reading process using digital media. The teachers read digital manuscripts to obtain information, for entertainment and to chat with others. Internet use on their mobile phone and having a page on social media affected their digital reading habits (Maden, 2018). At Atatürk University, most students learning English and literature are affected by technology. They spend long hours in front of their computers. When online, they first check their Facebook account, play games, listen to music, and others. Most students claimed that they often read online news, read comic strips, check the weather forecast and their email (Akarsu & Dariyemez, 2014).

In Indonesia, 43% of the students at the English Education Department, Universitas Kristen reported that the internet developed their reading habits. However, the majority regarded reading as merely an activity for getting information for their school assignments. They considered the internet the main source of information for their assignments. About one-fifth of the students preferred paper-based reading (Bana, 2020).

In Chile, university students majoring in human sciences, economic and business preferences varied according to the purpose of reading (academic, entertainment, or information seeking). Although they use different media, they have a clear preference for paper books and materials. Regardless of the discipline, cognitive processes such as memory, comprehension, and learning have no main effect on their preferences. The researchers concluded that at this day and age, there is a 'Gutenberg-Google' generation, i.e., a generation in transition that still recognizes the importance of paper, especially for academic purposes (Parodi, Moreno-de León, Julio & Burdiles, 2019).

Regarding adult readers in a wide variety of occupations, adults with more education and those employed in higher-status jobs had more positive attitudes toward reading and spend more time reading. Adults with more education rated their own reading ability higher than those with less education. They also apply more sophisticated reading skills (Smith, 1990).

Moreover, the majority of readers write on their books and want e-readers to support this feature. However, many reported that annotating electronic books are too difficult, time-consuming, or inconvenient with the current technology. They added that the way readers annotate books depends on whether they are reading for pleasure or for work and education (Bold & Wagstaff, 2017).

In Saudi Arabia, few studies reported the reading preferences and interests of college students and educated adults. Al-Jarf (2022e), Al-Jarf (2004b), and Al-Jurf (2004) found that 77% of female college students read women's magazines; 77% read about fashion and make-up; 66% read articles about popstars and movies; 24% read poetry magazines; between 1 to 4% read educational, religious, historical, literary, political, computer and internet articles. Analysis of the reading schoolbooks revealed that 10% of the reading texts are devoted to Quranic verses and Prophet Mohammed's traditions; 29% are about Islamic history; 11% deal with Arabic classical literature and 13% focus on general topics. In another study, Al-Jarf (2022c) revealed that 80.7% of educated Arabs (students, faculty, and professionals) prefer to read paper books and 19.3% prefer electronic books. In most Twitter reading surveys examined in the study, between 50%-60% of the respondents do not read at all and in two surveys, between 76%-80% do not read. 32.5% read 5 books, 38.5% read more than 20 books. 31% of graduate and undergraduate students read nothing beyond their course textbooks.

Regarding reading habits in educated Arabs, there is a dearth of research studies in Saudi Arabia that investigate the reading habits and motivation for reading among college students and professionals in the digital age and the changes in educated adults' reading habits over time, as part of other global changes in the 21st century. Research on students' and young adults' reading habits needs to be updated by including current advancement in ICT, where technology has enabled students and adults to read using digital reading devices such as Kindle readers, computers, tablets, and smart phones without the presence of any printed documents. Therefore, this study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by exploring the reading habits of educated adults in Saudi Arabia in the era of technology and social media. Specifically, it seeks to explore the following: (i) whether educated Arabs read paper or digital materials, i.e., changes in reading patterns due to the widespread use of the internet and alternative reading resources particularly hypertexts and multimedia resources; (ii) which reading technologies they use; (iii) amount of material they read, i.e., how many pages, chapters or books; (iv) the place where they read; (v) how much time they spend on reading per day, per week, or per month; (vi) when do they read, i.e., which part of the day; (vii) how they reduce distractions and promote attention; (viii) how they motivate themselves to read and fight boredom; (ix) how they interact with the text they are reading; (x) whether there are significant differences in reading habits and motivation according to gender, age, area of specialty, educational level, type of reading, amount of time they allocate to reading, when and where they read, how much they read, how they motivate themselves to read.

This study is significant because reading habits have changed as a result of advances in technology, the extensive use of the internet, the use of various forms of reading materials, the use of social media, mobile apps, and the rise of text reading from computer screens, smart phones, tablets and digital readers, in addition to printed text materials. It will shed light on the recent changes in educated Arabs' reading habits, the medium from which they read such as reading from paperback books, or electronic devices as e-book readers, tablet computers, computers and mobile phones which have become widespread.

2. Data Collection and Analysis

Data about educated Arabs' reading habits in the age social media and distractions were collected from tweets on Twitter. Responses to questions, hashtags and threads asking questions like *"For people who read long articles or books: Do you read whenever you have a chance? Do you set aside a specific time for it? Do you do anything to help you read with higher concentration? Tell us about your experiences with this topic, especially with so many things distracting us these days,* were collected. The responses were tweeted by a sample of 172 educated Arabs (139 male and 33 female respondents). Responses to the questions were unsolicited, i.e., given voluntarily.

The respondents were faculty, schoolteachers, professionals, graduate and undergraduate students, and others. Some have a Ph.D. degree; others have an M.A. or a B.A. degree. The respondents have different areas of specialties such as computer science, business, languages and translation education, Arabic literature, and others. Only tweets in which the respondents talked about reading habits were compiled. What mattered was the reading habits tweeted, not who tweeted them. Replies to or comments on tweets were computed according to how many responses related to the questions of the study were there as long as they showed some kind of reading habit. Responses such as *"I agree; That's good!"* were not counted.

A limitation of the current study is that the Twitter surveys of educated Arabs' reading habits and motivation may not be reliable and valid as the group of respondents is not homogeneous in terms of age, area of specialty, profession, educational level, and number of male and female respondents in the sample.

A total of purposes, a total of 237 responses was collected and analyzed. The responses were sorted out according to: (i) the type of reading material the subjects read (paper or digital); (ii) the types of reading technologies they use; (iii) how much they read in pages, chapters, articles or books; (iv) how much time they spend reading; (v) when they read, i.e., which part of the day; the place where they read; (vi) how they reduce distractions and promote attention and how they fight boredom? (vii) how they motivate themselves to read? (viii) any reading rituals such as listening to music, drinking coffee and so on; (ix) how they interact with the text they are reading.

Percentages of responses in each category were calculated. The results of the analysis are reported quantitatively and qualitatively.

3. Results

3.1 Paper and Digital Reading That Educated Arabs Prefer

Data analysis showed that 13.5% of the respondents in the current study use reading technologies, 15% prefer to listen to audiobooks, and 71.5% read paper books. The reading technologies that some subjects use are as follows:

- Electronic readers. 6% use *Kindle* and the *Kindle iPhone app*.
- *iPads* and *tablets*.
- *Books*, an iPhone App.
- *Storytel*: It has thousands of audiobook titles covering all genres. Users can listen to a book on their iPhone or Android mobile while jogging, cutting the grass and other activities.
- *Wajeez* App to listen to podcasts, audiobooks, book and novel summaries, and read on their smart phone.
- *Audible*¹ has the world's largest selection of titles ranging from classics to new releases and original podcasts. Users can download or stream their chosen titles with a membership to Audible.
- *Feedly*², an application that compiles news feeds from a variety of online sources for readers to customize and share with others. It is available as a cloud-based service and can be accessed from any web browser and mobile devices.
- *Instapaper* to save favorite interesting articles, cooking recipes, videos, and whatever the user encounters while browsing. It lets the users read, save, and manage what they find on the Internet. Users can highlight and comment on the text in any article. They can easily store articles, retrieve them, quote them and share them. Instapaper synchronizes the articles a person saves so that he/she can access them on all the devices that he/she uses whether they are Kindle Android, iPhone, or iPad. One can read anything they save, anywhere.
- *Evernote* for taking notes while reading, for saving web pages and marking them up with highlights, arrows, and text. It can be used anytime and offline!
- *Read Aloud*, an extension from Google Chrome, that reads out loud texts, webpages, pdfs and ebooks with natural sounding voices. The subjects indicated that they can listen to a text while working or browsing something else.
- *Natural Reader Pro*, a text-to-speech desktop software. Users can listen to natural-sounding voices reading any text such as e-mails, webpages, Word files, and PDF files.
- *Raindrop.io*, a bookmark manager, that is available as a Chrome, Firefox, Safari, and Edge extension. There is also an Android, iPad, and iPhone app, a Web, Windows, Mac, or Linux extension. Subjects in this study use it to save articles to read them later over the weekend.
- *Pocket*, a social bookmarking device to save interesting stories, read them whenever the user wishes instead of sending themselves links. When a user comes across a long text, an interview, a think piece, or even a recipe, he/she can save it to the user's personal Pocket library with the Save to the Pocket button in his/her browser or with the Pocket app. There is a Pocket extension on all browsers. The subjects who use it indicated that when they find a long text on social media, they can add it to Pocket and during a break at work, they open their Pocket account and read the articles on their computer screen.
- *E-Ink (electronic ink) or electronic paper device*, a brand of electronic paper (e-paper) display technology. It fits many e-readers, such as Amazon Kindle and Kobo devices.

The subjects mentioned numerous benefits of using the above reading technologies, how, when, where and why they use them as in the following responses:

- *My endeavours to read and complete several books have failed. I started to listen to dialogues and audiobooks, and I found them beneficial.*
- *I use the Pocket extension on all browsers and as a mobile app. So when I find a long article on social media applications or a browser, I easily add it to Pocket. During breaks at work, I open my Pocket account and read some articles on the computer screen.*

¹ <https://www.audible.com/>

² <https://feedly.com/>

- *Personally, I started using Pocket, especially artificial intelligence for audiobooks. It is excellent.*
- *I have a problem with sustained reading, I tried listening to audiobooks and it worked with for me very well.*
- *In the past, I used to read a lot because I was free; but now because I have a lot of work to do, I read twice a week and I use Kindle and Kindle application on my iPhone which helped me a lot.*
- *If Audible is available, I listen and read the book at the same time, because it is faster.*
- *I link more than one account as Twitter and Feedly accounts to Instapaper and read them later.*

3.2 Amount of Material that Educated Arabs Read

Data analysis revealed that the amount of material that educated Arabs read varies among the respondents in the current study. It was found that 4% do not read a lot and can never finish a book or an article. Few do not prefer to read articles because articles add nothing to them. Other respondents browse Twitter and other social media. A respondent sarcastically declared that he pushes himself to read a long message on WhatsApp to train himself to be patient, to break the routine and to find out what the topic is. On the contrary, few respondents indicated that reading is something they enjoy, therefore, they do not set an amount of time for it, nor specify how many pages or chapters they have to read. Some read long articles whenever they have free time.

Moreover, educated Arabs' responses show that most respondents read less than an hour a day. Few read 10 pages a day whenever they can; some finish three chapters a week; others read three articles a week; another respondent reads 4 articles a week, a respondent reads between 30 and 50 pages; 80 pages was the largest amount of material finish in the current study finish. Further amounts of reading are reported in the responses of some subjects as:

- *I assign 25 pages a day from a book, and I add another book, if I desire, because the problem of continuity. This way, I finish two books a month. If I do not read an article right away, I use the Raindrop application to save it and save other articles of interest to me for the weekend.*
- *As for books, it is impossible for me to read a book if I am not enjoying it. I mean I have to enjoy and set a time to come back to it because I cannot finish all the books in one reading session or one day.*
- *I read for an hour a day, but not always. This hour can be any time during the day, during which I finish a chapter of about 15 pages. This way I can finish several books.*
- *It takes me one two weeks to read one book to benefit from it.*

3.3 How Much Time Educated Arabs Spend Allocate To Reading

Educated Arabs' responses indicated that 13% read whenever they can; 16% read an hour a day; 1 hour before bedtime; 30 minutes once, twice or three times a day; 30 minutes at the beginning of the day, half an hour in the middle of the day, ten minutes before bedtime. Few read English books for an hour twice a week. Three respondents read for 50 and 45 minutes; few read 30 to 60 minutes daily; few more read 30 to 60 minutes daily for high concentration and two hours over the weekend; some spend 30-60 minutes selecting and reading an article in any field; some read an article in addition to reading in a book for 15-30 minutes. Others read less than 20 minutes, and few read as little as 10 minutes. Few subjects do not have time for reading, or do not set a specific time to read so as not to restrict themselves. Others stated that it depends on their free time. When they have time, they do not hesitate to read at all. Some believe that even reading for 15 minutes is beneficial. Some respondents said:

- *I start reading at 10 pm, read for a maximum of two hours, then stop when I finish reading a specific chapter. I read daily except over the weekend.*
- *For me, it depends on the reading topic. for some topics, I dedicate some time to read them and try to adjust the atmosphere around me in order to maximize my focus. I read other topics whenever I have a chance.*

3.4 When Educated Arabs Read

Participants' responses demonstrated that 14% read daily; 14% read before bedtime; 7.5% listen to audiobooks while driving; 5% read while working out and walking; 5% read during wait time at the hospital, clinic or in the market; 4% read in the morning before they start work; 3% read during the break time at work; 3% read in the afternoon; 3% read after Maghreb (sunset) prayer, and over the weekend; 2% read right after they get home from work. Some respondents wrote:

- *I read books the first hour of the day and read long articles and reports on Friday morning.*
- *I dedicate the beginning of the day to selecting and reading an article in any field for about half an hour to an hour.*
- *Half an hour before work starts is good. It helps raise your reading accomplishments and you get to know the latest articles of interest to you.*
- *I read articles first thing in the morning and read books before bedtime. If they do not need concentration, I read when I feel energetic and have the inclination to read, in addition to taking advantage of leisure and wait time.*
- *I keep a book in my purse and read during my work break, wait times during the day and at bedtime most of the time.*
- *I allocate an hour a day for reading articles from the Internet only. But these days I read after the break at work, then I continue my work.*

- *I mostly read at noon when it is slow at work and when everybody is busy and immediately after work if they are scientific.*
- *The two best times for me to read are after sunset and before bedtime. If I miss the first one, it is impossible to miss the second one.*
- *As much as possible, I read before my bedtime and after I finish my work. If the book is intriguing, I continue reading the whole day, even while I am in the kitchen.*
- *I read before bedtime as I feel comfortable. It is calm. I read for about half an hour until I feel sleepy.*
- *On weekdays (Sunday to Thursday), I read in the afternoon after I take a nap. Over the weekend, I do not have a reading schedule. I read whenever I can, depending on my commitments.*

3.5 Where Educated Arabs Read

Some educated Arabs in the current study reported that they read whenever the opportunity arises. 15% listen to audiobooks while driving, working out, walking, or running errands. Some carry the Kindle device with them and read anywhere. Some read at the mosque, or on public transportation. Some respondents added:

- *I go to Starbucks in the afternoon. I read 3 chapters. I find this time suitable for reading, especially after Asr Prayer.*
- *I read in waiting rooms at hospitals but put my headsets on to block noises.*
- *I read in my office at home and if I am abroad, I read in a quiet place.*

3.6 How Educated Arabs Deal with Distraction and Fight Boredom While Reading

Data analysis showed that 12% of the respondents set their mobiles on silent or flight mode, or turn the Wi Fi off. 10% do not read around their mobile phone, i.e., they put their mobile away. 6% read in a quiet place, stay away from people, or put their headsets on while reading during wait times at the hospital. Another 6% use a timer to keep track of the reading time. The Kindle device helps some solve the problem of distraction. They carry the device with them everywhere they go. Take the printed version of the book together with the audio version. They noticed that when they combine the two (listen to the audio and read in the book), they finish faster, with more focus and pleasure. Some subjects bookmark the articles that they would like to read, save them in Favorites and read them while waiting for their appointments. A respondent offered to post a summary of a book about distraction. Further strategies for overcoming and controlling distractions were given by other respondents as:

- *I only take paper books with me wherever I go and take advantage of every small chance from the mobile and audio. This made a difference to me. I am a designer and I started to listen to many audiobooks while working on my design. My job allows me to focus on two things.*
- *I replaced the time I spend on Twitter by reading articles.*
- *To avoid boredom, I read more than one book in different fields simultaneously.*
- *The best time I read with concentration was when I deleted all my social media accounts.*
- *I set my mobile timer in order to read an hour a day since I have many things to do and focus on.*
- *I set my mobile timer for half an hour once, twice, or three times a day and stay away from my mobile.*
- *I leave the book next to my bed, with the mobile away from me because the notifications I receive are distracting.*
- *I consider reading like studying for an exam. I use a pencil and read in a quiet room without television, with a strong, and bright sun light, prepare a cup of coffee and keep the mobile away.*
- *I meditate and relax my brain for an hour in order to read and overcome distractions.*
- *I hold a pen while reading, the Wi Fi is off, no background noises, no people's voices, no TV sound.*
- *Sometimes the article is very intriguing, so I get absorbed in it and continue reading it.*
- *Concentration depends on the book and the author's style.*
- *I think the first half hour at work is sufficient to raise my level of productivity. I keep track of the latest articles I am interested in on a continuous routine basis. My concentration is often good at this time.*
- *I take advantage of the time I am driving. I can complete a book from the audio library.*
- *I select the number of pages I want to read, set a specific time for each page, calculate the total time needed to finish all pages, set the timer and put my mobile in silent mood.*

3.7 How Educated Arabs Motivate Themselves To Read

The respondents gave a variety of factors that motivate them to read. 6% mentioned reading something that is interesting to them. Some said that if you are interested in the subject, you will read and forget yourself. If you are interested in completing a specific content, you will make a reading plan and commit yourself to reading a certain amount every day. If an article or novel is intriguing, it will encourage you to continue reading. They think that reading without an aim is boring. There should be a need and an urge for reading. If someone is interested in nutrition, he/she will read the best books on the topic. If you love something, you will find time for it despite the distractions. A reader should have a passion and a motive for reading. Reading is a habit and a desire. For general daily reading, some allocate a specific time for it every day until it becomes a fixed habit. For specialized material or research articles, they gather the sources, organize their schedule, and allocate longer periods of time and specific days to complete the reading task. If they are used to reading, it will be effortless. Others added that motivation depends

on the author's style and whether it grabs the reader's attention. The content forces the reader to create time to read it. To stay focused, a person should decide when and how long he/she should read. Reading is like exercise. It requires some mental effort. Additional factors were mentioned by individual respondents below:

- *If a novel takes too long, and if I get absorbed in it, I will create time for it. If I come across an article while searching for something, I scrutinize it because it has caught my attention. If I don't finish reading it, I will dream about it until I finish it.*
- *If I know the story behind the book or the author of the article, I will want to spend more time understanding their perspectives (viewpoints) because reading is a shared experience for the mind. This is the case for me with authors like Eric Reese, James Collins, and Stephen Covey, and articles by Paul Graham in 2013.*
- *If you read for pleasure, the author's job is to grab your attention to the text. So, if you find yourself mentally wandering, look for another book and don't blame yourself. But if you read to learn something specific that is important for you, you should stay away from your phone and read with a good cup of coffee, which will help you focus. Don't eat while reading.*
- *Your sustained reading is a result of the compatibility between your interests and the author's ability to persuade or influence his/her readers.*
- *Reading should be contextually and professionally relevant. In addition to general and diverse reading, I have a schedule that includes reading one to two books per month. I make a list with the book titles that I am planning to read and those that I have finished reading. This adds value to my reading habits.*
- *If the books or articles require quick interaction or they have become a trend, you will be obliged to set a time for reading them. Marketing a book or an article and posting a summary of it will motivate you to read it.*
- *The timing and mental and physical state. If a person has the time, in a good mood, had enough sleep, he/she will read.*
- *If you have to read for a project, study, or thesis, allocate a time and a place where nothing distracts you. For example, Alberto Manguel used to read for four hours a day in a room with only a book, table, chair, and pen."*
- *I isolate myself from people, even if I am in the same place.*
- *I read long articles when someone asks me to read an article they have written or shared. As for books. I read almost daily when I have free time, and I prefer to read before bedtime when it is quiet. If Audible is available, I listen and read books simultaneously.*
- *I usually prefer to download articles whenever possible, turn off the internet, and read them. I usually like to read at night because this is the time when I've finished everything and have free time.*
- *A reading group will motivate you to read. Before that I did not read a lot.*
- *Creating a WhatsApp group dedicated to books, where I share everything I receive or something that I need to read. I upload books to the Books app on my iPhone, which is excellent as it gives you the percentage of progress for each book you read. Of course, you need to dedicate time and be patient, then it becomes a habit.*
- *For me, reading was a daily habit. After a while, the habit became a task that I love and reward myself for from time to time.*

3.8 Rituals, Routines and Habits

About educated Arabs' reading rituals, 23% set a specific time for reading; 6% read in a quiet place with a cold AC (no TV, the mobile phone switched off). Some read in their office at home, but if they are abroad, they read in a quiet place. 3% drink coffee and tea; 2% listen to soft and/or instrumental music; use a pencil and paper to take notes; use audiobooks while working out, cooking, or commuting to work and vice versa; use Kindle, or a combination of Kindle and Audible; and put a book next to their bed and stay away from the mobile. Other rituals mentioned by some respondents are:

- *Before reading, I usually lay down for five minutes to clear my mind, and then I start. If I want to increase my absorption in the book (whether electronic or paper), I make coffee or tea."*
- *I read while sitting in a rocking chair with a cup of tea on the table, put on my headphones, listen to instrumental music, and start reading before bedtime.*
- *I set a fixed time for daily reading (half an hour to an hour) before going to bed. I set different time slots depending on my mood and amount of daily work. I usually have coffee and listen to light music. I mostly read through Kindle or the Kindle app on the iPad because it makes it easy for me to translate the text from English books quickly.*
- *I read novels while walking on the treadmill and read a simple book before bedtime.*
- *I use a small notebook to schedule book reading and audiobooks and even Qur'an reading on a weekly basis.*
- *It depends on your interest and the content of the reading material. If I like a book, I read it again because sometimes I am not concentrating well during the first reading.*
- *For readings that don't require underlining or notes, I read them on my smart phone during wait times. But for readings that require note taking or annotations, I sit in a comfortable chair and table in a quiet place, or I go outside and read. When I had a treadmill, I used to read a novel while walking. Also, before bedtime, it is nice to read a simple book.*

3.9 Interaction with the reading material

Only 3 % of the subjects in the current study reported how they interact with the reading material. Some said that they use a pen and paper to focus, take down notes, connect ideas, make comments, or ask questions to search for them later. Another respondent categorizes the content to be read after accessing it. He uses Evernote. He summarizes the content in the form of mind maps or diagrams and to simplify and connect ideas. He searches for the practical aspects of the content and applies them in the following week. A third respondent uses a pen to scribble and make simple annotations on the same book, especially when the book is long. A female respondents declared that when she listens to long articles, she records the main points (ideas) as an audio clip for herself, i.e., she makes voice notes. When she gets home, she listens to her own voice summaries and points of interested to her again. Although this strategy is tedious, she finds it useful and beneficial. Another female respondent browses through the book chapters she is planning to read to find out how many pages each chapter has. If the chapters are not interconnected, she starts with the shortest.

3.10 Differences Among Educated Arabs in Reading Habits According to Some Variables

No significant differences were found between respondents in terms of gender, area of specialty, educational level and whether the respondent is a student or a professional in the type of material read, reading technologies or applications used, how much time they allocate to reading, how much they read, when they read, where they read, how they reduce distractions while reading, how they motivate themselves to read, their reading rituals and how they interact with the material while reading.

4. Discussion

This study aimed to explore the reading habits and motivation of educated Arabia as revealed by voluntary responses of 172 participants to a Twitter survey. The number of respondents is relatively small, taking into considerations the large number of educated Arab Twitter users. This reflects insufficient interest in reading which is confirmed by a study by Al-Jarf (2022c) who found that in most Twitter reading surveys, between 50%-60% of the respondents do not read at all. In 2 surveys, between 76%-80% do not read. The highest number of books read was during the Pandemic where 32.5% read 5 books and 38.5% read more than 20 books. The status of reading after the Pandemic was like that before the Pandemic (43.4% did not read). 31% of graduate and undergraduate students read nothing beyond their course textbooks.

Insufficient interest in reading might be due to the influence of social media and the digital environment. students, nowadays, as Ahmad, Dar & Lone, (2019) found, do not show much interest in reading books, magazines, and journals. Results of another study by Alsaedi, Ngadiran, Kadir, Altowayti and Al-Rahmi (2021) have shown low reading habits and attitudes among university students. They reviewed the literature and found that the majority of university students do not enjoy reading and mainly read to pass their exams. They mostly like to read novels and magazines. Nevertheless, electronic materials are their favourite source of reading. Social networking sites negatively affect students' reading habits. In Malaysia, engineering and business students have a low interest in reading. They do not enjoy reading as much as they enjoy doing other technology-related activities (Annamalai & Muniandy, 2013). Similarly, students enrolled in undergraduate ESL courses at Universiti Malaysia Sabah have an overall positive attitude towards reading but with minimal enjoyment as they face anxieties and difficulties (Ahmed, 2016). Thai students in their early twenties to early thirties in the study sample do not read fiction regularly, neither in Thai nor English. They mostly and non-fiction books for academic purposes (Strauss, 2008). In Italy, EFL business college students do little reading in English beyond the course requirements. A negative correlation was detected between reading attitudes and the number of years of past English study (Camiciottoli, 2001).

Moreover, findings of the current study showed that the majority of educated Arab adults in the sample have positive habits and attitudes towards academic and leisure reading. They read daily even if the amount of time they allocate to reading is as little as 15 minutes and the amount that some cover is 10 pages. This is consistent with other prior studies in the literature conducted in some countries such as Baba and Affendi (2020) who indicated that students at UiTM Puncak Alam, Malaysia had an overall positive attitude towards academic and leisure reading. In Maladybaevna, Absatovna, Ivanovna, Bisenovna, Mentay and Nesipbekovna's (2022) study, the reading habits of university students in Kazakhstan are moderate with female students having relatively higher reading habits than male students. The students did not see themselves as highly qualified readers.

A second finding of the current study is that no differences in reading habits and attitudes exist among the respondents in terms of gender, specialty of educational level. This is contrary to results of prior studies such as Karim and Hasan (2007) who found differences in reading habits and attitudes among male and female students, according to academic programs, types of reading materials and reading resources. In another study, Ahmad, Dar and Lone (2019) detected significant differences between male and female students at colleges of Medicine, Arts, Humanities, Commerce, Home Science, BCA, BBA, Mass Communications and Journalism in India in reading habits, attitudes, reading material and reading resources used.

A third finding is that 13.5% of the subjects in this study prefer digital reading with numerous devices and apps and 15% prefer audiobooks as opposed to 71.5% who prefer to read paper material. This is confirmed by findings of a previous study by Al-Jarf (2022c) that revealed that 19.3% of educated Arabs (students, faculty, and professionals) prefer electronic books and 80.7% prefer to read paper books. In addition, the current findings are partially consistent with findings of prior studies such as Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi and Lean's (2011) who indicated that Malaysian Chinese university students prefer printed media to pass exams but prefer electronic media when reading for leisure. In Chile, university students majoring in the humanities, economics and business have a clear preference for paper material (Parodi, Moreno-de León, Julio & Burdiles, 2019). In Turkey, pre-service language teachers mostly utilise digital media on a daily basis (Maden (2018). At Atatürk University, most students learning English and literature claimed that they often read online news, check their email, read the weather forecast and read comic strips (Akarsu & Darıyemez, 2014). In Pakistan, the majority of engineering students, in Mirza, Pathan, Khatoon and Hassan's (2021) study, prefer electronic books for academic reading and had no preference of formats for leisure reading.

A fourth finding is that no significant differences exist among the subjects in the amount of time they spend reading and the amount of material they read regardless of their gender, academic degree, area of specialty and whether they are students and professional. The majority read less than an hour, read 10 pages, 3 articles or 3 chapters a week, and one or two books per month. This suggests that the respondents probably do not have sophisticated reading skills such as skimming, scanning and speed reading and they had not been trained to read long text for prolonged periods of time when they were in college and school. In a study with EFL students at the College of Languages and Translation, Al-Jarf, (2021c) found that the typical instructor taught 50% of the reading texts in Interactions 1 and Interactions 2 (taught in the Reading 1 and 2 courses); one third of the reading texts in Mosaic 1 (taught in the Reading 3 course); and one fifth of the reading texts in Mosaic 2 taught in the Reading 4 course). In Addition, the typical instructor taught 65% of the reading subskills and exercises in the Interactions 1 reading textbook; half of the reading skills and exercises in Interactions 2 reading textbook; one third of the reading skills and exercises in Mosaic 1 reading textbook; and one fourth of the reading skills and exercises in Mosaic 2 reading textbook.

Findings of this study are inconsistent with findings of a study by Smith (1990) who reported that adults with more education and those employed in higher-status occupations had more positive attitudes toward reading and spent more time reading. Adults with more education rated their own reading ability higher than those with less education. They also apply more sophisticated "models" of reading.

A fifth finding is that few respondents in this study read with a pencil and paper in hand, annotate their reading texts, take notes, and use diagrams and mind maps. For digital readers, they use some apps such as Evernote and E-Ink (electronic ink) to make comments and take notes. Few audiobook users make voice comments and summaries. Unlike the current study, the majority of readers in Bold and Wagstaff's (2017) study write on their books and want e-readers to support this feature. Many reported that annotating ebooks is too difficult, time-consuming, or inconvenient with the current technology.

Furthermore, in a study with Thai students, Strauss (2008) concluded that reading habits are determined by positive or negative reading experiences in the past. Subjects who enjoyed positive experiences reading fiction or non-fiction in their early years become regular readers of fiction or non-fiction; whereas subjects who had negative early reading experiences are not regular readers of any kind of books in either Thai or English. In the current study, none of respondents in the educated Arab sample connected their current reading habits, reading practices and motivation to read in the present with the reading habits and motivation they acquired in their early years especially in the elementary grades. In Kazakhstan, Maldybaevna, Absatovna, Ivanovna, Bisenovna, Mentay and Nesipbekovna (2022) reported that the reading habits of university students in their study sample are moderate. The students do not see themselves as highly qualified readers, and the reading habits of female students are relatively higher than male students.

5. Recommendations

Analysis of the data collected from Twitter on the reading habits and motivation of educated Arab respondents show that the amount of time educated Arabs spend reading and the amount of material they read are inadequate regardless of their gender, academic degree, area of specialty and whether they are students and professional. To cultivate Arab adult professionals and students' reading habits, students should be encouraged to read from an early stage. Families, teachers, and peers play a vital role in promoting positive and efficient reading habits among students and instilling positive attitudes towards reading. Students must recognize the importance of reading and allocate time for reading books and other materials that promote reading habits (Altowayti, & Al-Rahmi, 2021).

To enhance Arab adults' reading skills, amount of reading material, and length of time they spend reading, and create changes in reading habits, schools and universities should develop a reading culture among the students through extensive reading and reading for pleasure. Rodrigo, Greenberg, and Segal (2014) reported that students who practiced extensive reading, had access

to books, free choice of reading material, and time to read during instructional hours, developed a reading habit, were more motivated to read, and experienced a positive change in their reading behavior. The researchers also found that a well-equipped library, easy access to books, encouragement from the teachers and allocating sufficient time for reading are all key factors that lead to the development of reading habits.

In addition, reading habits and attitudes of children and young adults start at a very young age. The most important influencing factors are an active home literacy environment with access to books and literacy materials at an early age; practicing reading aloud which may start at infancy, kindergarten and school environment. All adults in the children's environments such as parents, relatives, educators, social media influencers, and librarians act as a role model in shaping children's attitudes towards reading (Dimitrova, 2021).

Giving students explicit instruction on extensive reading on how to choose books at the right level for easy reading, and how to access a wide selection of books will help improve the students' reading proficiency and enjoy extensive reading as a classroom activity while some continue to enjoy reading when there is no classroom imperative to do so. (Barber, 2014).

Teachers and schools may integrate intensive and extensive reading instruction for elementary school students. Maipoka and Soontornwipast (2021) found that Thai students' vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension significantly improved after receiving intensive and extensive reading instruction. The students enjoyed receiving both kinds of instruction and felt the improvement in their English language knowledge and skills. The students' reading habits changed after receiving intensive and extensive reading instruction; and they recognized the benefits of intensive and extensive reading instruction.

Extensive reading on serious topics can be encouraged starting from the elementary school. Students can read books on different topics that are appropriate for their ages. They can write a report on them and discuss them in class. Students can be introduced to magazines and interesting books in different disciplines. Each student is encouraged to make to keep a record of the books he/she has read, and appreciating the students who persevere in reading with prizes and grades.

It is necessary that extensive reading be part of the school curriculum and extra-curricular activities in the pre-university stages, i.e., the primary, junior high and secondary school levels, so that reading becomes a habit for students when they are older. To develop the students' reading appreciation skills, they can collect and analyze motivational and inspirational quotes, and linguistic landscapes in the community (Al-Jarf, 2021b; Al-Jarf, 2021e; Al-Jarf, 2019a; Al-Jarf, 2009b; Al-Jarf, 2009c).

Creating a reading and/or book group or club on social media and a BookTok community on TikTok for out of school reading practices will motivate students of all ages and adults to read a lot as mentioned by some readers in the current study. Students and adults can recommend and exchange books, read, perform collaborative reading activities, discuss books and what the group members have read with each other. Students may create online discussion forums and blogs where they can post book summaries of their own, choose and display new books of interest to them. book reading and summarizing competitions may be conducted, and reports prepared on them within the school extracurricular activities at school and in the summer youth centers (Limlamai, 2021; Jerasa & Boffone, 2021; Al-Jarf, 2021a).

Reading technologies mentioned in section 3.1 above can be integrated in reading instruction at the school and college levels. Mobile reading applications and audiobooks can be used in reading instruction as well, where the students choose the audiobooks that they like to listen to and discuss their content orally or in writing. At home and school, parents and teachers should enhance digital learning capabilities, reading skills and reading habits, and encourage the students to explore digital resources. The students may read online using online course and videoconferencing platforms such as Blackboard and Elluminate, Zoom, WebEx, google Meet, where they read what they like outside the classroom and post a summary of what they have read in the online course. They can be trained to make mind maps using mind-mapping software to summarize and connect ideas in the reading text as few respondents in the current study stated (Sharma, 2021; Al-Jarf, 2022d; Al-Jarf, 2021d; Al-Jarf, 2021f; Al-Jarf, 2019b; Al-Jarf, 2014; Al-Jarf, 2013b; Al-Jarf, 2012; Al-Jarf, 2010; Al-Jarf, 2009a; Al-Jarf, 2007).

Students of all ages should be encouraged to visit public and school libraries to improve their reading habits and to have access to different types of reading materials that are suitable for their reading preferences and meet their diverse reading purposes. Students may attend book fairs and visit cultural centers in order to read some of the books available there. They can participate in reading and book campaigns for students and teachers (Abimbola, Shabi & Aramide, 2021).

A book selection committees may be established at the university for recommending extensive reading material to students to choose from and read, in addition to their course textbooks and material. An academic requirement should be added to college courses to motivate the students to read extra materials.

A course in internet searching skills can be offered to students in each grade level in which they are required and trained to search for specific topics on Internet websites, magazines, and books. A time slot for discussing what they have read can be allocated (Al-Jarf, 2013a; Al-Jarf, 2004a).

Students should be trained to read and understand long texts specialized in scientific, educational and technological fields instead of reading short light magazine articles. It is necessary to develop the students' ability to read fast with comprehension, train them to read a specific topic from several paper and electronic sources, and develop their ability to summarize what they have read, to understand the organizational structure of the text and infer meanings of difficult words from context. Teachers should not delete or reduce the amount of material to be studied in the textbooks to make it easy for the students and help them pass their courses with high grades. The more the students read, the faster they become at reading. Reading will become an easy and enjoyable task rather than a chore (Al-Jarf, 2021c).

The students can be encouraged to read texts and books in various disciplines such as multicultural arts, literature and children's stories to develop the students' awareness of current global issues. A global education course for junior and senior high school students can be offered to encourage the students to read global topics related to current global events, world history, and global educational, health, political and technological systems. Global topics should be also integrated in the history, geography, literature and social studies curricula. The students read about the latest developments in world events, post a summary of what they have read in a blog, and discuss what they have read in an individual or class blog (Al-Jarf, 2022a; Al-Jarf, 2022b; Al-Jarf 2020, Al-Jarf, 2020f; Al-Jarf, 2015; Al-Jarf, 2011; Al-Jarf, 2004Aa;-Al-Jarf, 2003a; Al-Jarf, 2003b).

Finally, to help improve students' reading habits and attitudes, this study recommends that a national survey on students' reading habits be conducted to document current reading trends among the students, especially in the use of digital materials, to identify the factors that affect students reading habits and attitudes, to identify the changes that occur in their reading interests and habits, and to develop appropriate plans for promoting their reading skills to achieve the desired educational goals and develop a nation of readers. Teachers should receive training in intensive and extensive reading instruction, digital resources and reading technologies to play a more significant role in motivating students to read.

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ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6255-1305>

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