

**DECODING THE NEWSPRINT: AN EXPLORATION OF NEWSPAPER READING
HABITS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS**

Dr. N. Giri Assistant Professor Department of Commerce Nallamuthu Gounder Mahalingam
College Pollachi

Ms. B. Pavithra Ph.D Research Scholar PG & Research Department of Commerce Nallamuthu
Gounder Mahalingam College Pollachi

Abstract

The research examined newspaper reading habits among college students, analyzing factors influencing their consumption of print and digital newspapers. This study involved 50 participants and employed a survey methodology utilizing primary and secondary data. The findings revealed that most students read newspapers occasionally, primarily through individual subscriptions or libraries. The preferred sections were Sports, Local news, and Education, with a balanced preference for Tamil and English newspapers. This study concluded that age, gender, academic stream, area of residence, marital status, family type, and family income did not significantly influence newspaper reading habits. This research offers valuable insights for academia and the newspaper industry, emphasizing the need to understand and cater to the evolving preferences of college students in the digital age.

Keywords:

Newspaper, Reading, College students, Information

Introduction

Traditionally a cornerstone of journalism and a primary information source, newspapers offer an essential platform for disseminating news, opinions, and diverse content. They play a significant role in daily life across all age demographics. However, in an era dominated by digital media and the internet, the reading habits of university students are witnessing a paradigm shift. This research investigates the newspaper reading habits among university students, examining the factors influencing their consumption of print and digital newspapers. In an era marked by information saturation and the swift expansion of digital platforms, it is crucial to understand university students' evolving preferences and behaviors regarding newspaper consumption. The university phase is a critical period in an individual's life, characterized by pursuing advanced education and personal growth. During this phase, students often establish habits and make decisions that may endure throughout their lives. Therefore, how university students engage with newspapers has significant implications for the newspaper industry and the broader media landscape. The media landscape has substantially transformed in recent years, driven by technological advancements, evolving consumer behaviors, and a continuous influx of digital content. University students, known for their adaptability and openness to new technologies, are at the forefront of this evolving media environment. Consequently, their newspaper reading habits provide a valuable perspective to examine the broader dynamics of media consumption.

Benefits of Reading on Paper Over Screen Reading (Monitors and Mobile Screens)

- 1. Better Comprehension:** Research suggests that comprehension is six to eight times better with physical books than e-readers. This is because print reading is visually less demanding than digital text and provides spatial and tactile cues to help readers process words on a page.
- 2. Improved Retention:** Physical books help readers absorb and recall content more effectively. Studies have found that students missed details when reading on screens and that digital reading impairs comprehension, particularly for longer, more complex texts.
- 3. Less Distraction:** Print reading offers an immersive experience free from the distractions of social media scrolling, advertisements, and email notifications that often hinder memory retention.
- 4. Enhanced Focus:** Print reading is kind of like meditation — focusing our attention on something still. This focus can be beneficial for our cognitive health.

5. **Physical Interaction:** The act of turning pages creates an “index” in the brain, mapping what we read visually to a particular page. This tactile interaction can enhance the reading experience and aid in information retention.

Despite the prevalence of technology, many people still prefer print books to e-readers.

Review of Literature

Majumder et al. (2013) conducted a study titled “Newspaper Reading Habits of Private University Students: A Case Study on World University of Bangladesh.” The primary aim of this research was to formulate potential recommendations to enhance the convenience of newspaper reading. The study’s findings revealed that the students preferred sports news, indicating their inclination toward this genre. The primary motivation behind their newspaper reading habit was to augment their knowledge base. This study highlights the importance of understanding the reading preferences of university students, which can guide the creation of more engaging and informative content, thereby promoting a more enriching reading experience. It also highlights the potential of sports news for knowledge acquisition among university students. This insight could be instrumental in shaping future content creation and dissemination strategies in the newspaper industry.

Gaur et al. (2018) conducted a research study titled “Newspaper Reading Habit Among Students of Degree Colleges in Haryana: A Study.” The primary objective of this research was to identify the newspaper sections most frequently read by the students. The study’s findings revealed that most students regularly engage in newspaper reading as a part of their daily routine. The primary motivation driving this habit was identified as knowledge acquisition. This study highlights the importance of newspapers as a valuable source of information for students, contributing significantly to their learning process. It also highlights the need for newspapers to cater to the interests and preferences of this demographic to maintain and enhance readership. The insights gained from this study could be instrumental in shaping content strategies for newspapers, ensuring they remain relevant and engaging for the student population.

Halder (2020) conducted a research study titled “A Study on the Newspaper Reading Habits of Post-Graduate Students at West Bengal State University.” This research aimed to explore the newspaper reading habits and specific reading interests of postgraduate students at West Bengal State University. The study’s findings revealed that newspapers serve as a source of relaxation amidst the students’ busy lives. This study highlights the importance of newspapers as a source of information and a means of relaxation for students. It highlights the multifaceted role of newspapers in postgraduate students’ lives, serving educational and recreational purposes. These insights could be instrumental in shaping content strategies for newspapers, ensuring they cater to the diverse needs and preferences of the student population.

Dhiman et al. (2021) conducted a research study titled “Newspaper Reading Habits Among UG and PG Students of Kurukshetra University: A Case Study.” This research aimed to ascertain the motivations and objectives behind the students’ newspaper reading habits. The study’s findings revealed that newspapers are crucial in enhancing students’ reading habits, keeping them abreast of current affairs, and expanding their knowledge and general awareness. This study highlights the importance of newspapers as a valuable tool for fostering a reading culture among students, keeping them informed about global events, and contributing to their overall intellectual growth. It also highlights the role of newspapers in shaping informed and aware individuals, thereby playing a significant role in students’ educational journey.

Tilak (2021) embarked on a study titled “Inculcating the Habit of Reading Newspapers Among College Students and Understanding Its Influence on Content They Prefer”. The primary objective of this research was to comprehend the advantages that college students derive from reading newspapers. The study’s findings underscored the integral role newspapers play in fostering the holistic development of students. It highlighted how newspapers broaden students’ knowledge base, enhance their reading skills, and enrich their vocabulary. This research underscores the importance of cultivating the newspaper reading habit among college students, as it keeps them informed and aids in their intellectual growth and language proficiency.

Objectives of the Study

1. To scrutinize the newspaper reading habits of college students.
2. To investigate the specific newspapers favored by college students.
3. To examine the newspaper sections most read by college students.

Research Methodology

This research is an empirical investigation employing a survey methodology. It utilizes both primary and secondary data collection methods to gather comprehensive insights. The primary data is obtained directly from college students using a meticulously designed questionnaire. A sample size of 50 participants was selected using a convenience sampling method, which allows for the easy accessibility and proximity of the participants. Conversely, the secondary data is gleaned from various sources, including magazines and academic journals, which provide a broader context and support the findings from the primary data. Statistical tools such as simple percentage analysis, Chi-square tests, and Garrett ranking are employed to analyze the collected data. These tools enable a thorough examination of the data, facilitating the identification of patterns, relationships, and trends in the newspaper reading habits of college students. This robust methodology ensures the study's findings are reliable and representative of the target population.

Limitations of the Study

- The validity of the information gathered in this study is contingent upon the accuracy of the responses provided by the participants.
- The study's scope is somewhat constrained due to the limited sample size. This may affect the generalizability of the findings to a larger population.

Analysis and Interpretation

Efforts have been undertaken to discern the participants' socio-economic profile and evaluate their newspaper reading habits. This evaluation was conducted using simple percentage analysis, a statistical tool that provides a straightforward and easily understandable data representation. The results derived from this analysis offer valuable insights into the participants' newspaper reading behaviors concerning their socio-economic backgrounds. These findings are subsequently summarized in the ensuing paragraphs, providing a comprehensive overview of the study's outcomes. This approach ensures a thorough understanding of the interplay between socio-economic factors and newspaper reading habits among the participants.

Table 1
Socio-Economic Profile of the Students

Particulars	No.of. Respondents (N=50)	Percentage to Total
Age (In Years)		
18-20	24	48
21-23	26	52
Gender		
Male	21	42
Female	29	58
Stream		
Arts and Humanities	24	48
Science	26	52
Area of residence		
Rural	31	62
Semi-urban	13	26
Urban	06	20

Particulars	No.of. Respondents (N=50)	Percentage to Total
Marital Status		
Married	20	40
Unmarried	30	60
Family type		
Joint	20	40
Nuclear	30	60
Family Income (Per Month)		
Upto ₹25,000	21	42
₹25,001- ₹ 50,000	20	40
₹50,001-₹ 60,000	04	08
Above ₹60,000	05	10

Table 1 presents a demographic profile and specific characteristics of the 50 respondents involved in the study.

- Age:** The respondents are relatively evenly distributed across two age groups, with 48% (24 students) in the 18-20 age group and 52% (26 students) in the 21-23 age group.
- Gender:** The sample has more female students (58% or 29 students) than male students (42% or 21).
- Stream:** The students are evenly split between Arts and Humanities and Science streams, with each comprising 48% (24 students) and 52% (26 students) of the sample, respectively.
- Area of Residence:** A majority of the students (62% or 31 students) reside in rural areas, while 26% (13 students) live in semi-urban areas and 12% (6 students) in urban areas.
- Marital Status:** 60% (30 students) of the respondents are unmarried, while 40% (20) are married.
- Family Type:** The sample is evenly split between students from joint families and nuclear families, with each group comprising 40% (20 students) and 60% (30 students) of the sample, respectively.
- Family Income:** Most students come from families with a monthly income of up to ₹25,000 (42% or 21 students) or between ₹25,001 and ₹50,000 (40% or 20 students). Only a small proportion of students come from families with a monthly income of ₹50,001-₹60,000 (8% or four students) or above ₹60,000 (10% or five students).

Table 2
Newspaper Reading Behavior

Habit of Reading Newspaper		
Yes	15	30
Sometimes	35	70
Source of Getting Newspaper		
Individual subscription	21	42
Library	14	28
Laptop/PC	01	02
Mobiles	14	28
Time Spent for Reading Newspaper a Day		
Less than 30 minutes	34	68
30 minutes to 1 hour	15	30
More than 1 hour	01	02
Section of Newspaper Do You Like to Read		
Frontpage	09	18
Sports	11	22
Local news	10	20
Education	10	20
Business	04	08

Editorial columns	04	08
Articles related to my interest	02	04
Language of Newspaper Like to Read		
Tamil	14	28
English	14	28
Both	22	44
Number of Newspaper Read Daily		
1	36	72
2	13	26
Above 3	01	02

Table 2 presents an overview of the newspaper reading habits of the 50 respondents involved in the study.

- Habit of Reading Newspaper:** 30% (15 students) of the respondents read newspapers regularly, while a majority, 70% (35 students), read newspapers occasionally.
- Source of Getting Newspaper:** 42% (21 students) have individual subscriptions, 28% (14 students) access newspapers through libraries, 28% (14 students) read newspapers on their mobiles, and a small fraction, 2% (1 student), uses a laptop/PC.
- Time Spent for Reading Newspaper a Day:** Most students, 68% (34 students), spend less than 30 minutes a day reading newspapers. 30% (15 students) spend between 30 minutes to 1 hour, and only 2% (1 student) spend more than 1 hour.
- Section of Newspaper Do You Like to Read:** The most popular sections among the students are Sports (22% or 11 students), Local news (20% or ten students), and Education (20% or 10 students). Fewer students prefer the Front page (18% or nine students), Business (8% or four students), Editorial columns (8% or four students), and articles related to their interests (4% or two students).
- Language of Newspaper Like to Read:** The students are almost evenly split between preferring Tamil (28% or 14 students) and English (28% or 14 students), with a slight majority (44% or 22 students) preferring to read newspapers in both languages.
- Number of Newspapers Read Daily:** 72% (36) of students read one newspaper daily. 26% (13 students) read two newspapers, and a small fraction, 2% (1 student), reads more than three newspapers daily.

Table 3
Garrett Ranking

Newspaper	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	Total	Score	Rank
The Hindu(English)	1001	1008	972	45	36	23	3085	61.70	1
The Indian Express	1078	1260	216	225	216	23	3018	60.36	2
The Hindu(Tamil)	1078	945	324	450	144	23	2964	59.28	3
Daily Thanthi	847	693	702	315	108	115	2780	55.60	4
Dina Malar	1155	630	324	180	396	92	2777	55.54	5
Times of India	-	756	864	810	72	46	2548	50.96	6

Table 3 presents a ranking of newspapers based on scores obtained through a survey. The scores (R1 to R6) represent different criteria or aspects evaluated in the study. The total score and rank are calculated based on these individual scores.

- The Hindu (English):** This newspaper has the highest total score of 3085, resulting in a final score of 61.70 and securing the 1st rank.
- Dina Malar:** With a total score of 2777, this newspaper has a final score of 55.54, placing it at the 5th rank.
- The Indian Express:** This newspaper secured the 2nd rank with a total score of 3018 and a final score of 60.36.
- Daily Thanthi:** This newspaper ranks 4th with a total score of 2780 and a final score of 55.60.
- Times of India:** With a total score of 2548, this newspaper's lowest final score is 50.96, placing it at the 6th rank.

6. **The Hindu (Tamil)**: This newspaper secured the 3rd rank with a total score of 2964 and a final score of 59.28.

Garrett ranking is applied to rank the newspaper that they prefer to read. The Hindu (English) newspaper ranked First, The Indian Express ranked Second, and The Hindu (Tamil) ranked Third, followed by Daily Thanthi, Dina Malar, and Times of India.

Table 4 Chi-Square

Variables	Chi-square value	D.F	Table value @5% level
Age	2.449	1	3.841
Gender	3.701	1	3.841
Stream	2.449	1	3.841
Area of residence	1.487	2	5.991
Marital status	0.331	4	5.991
Family type	1.071	1	3.841
Family income (per month)	4.286	3	7.815

Table 4 presents the results of Chi-square tests conducted on various variables. The Chi-square value measures the difference between observed and expected frequencies. The degrees of freedom (D.F) is the number of values in the final calculation that are free to vary. The table value at the 5% level is the critical value for the Chi-square test at a 5% significance level.

1. **Age**: The Chi-square value (2.449) is less than the table value (3.841) at the 5% level, indicating that the student's age does not significantly affect their newspaper reading habits.
2. **Gender**: The Chi-square value (3.701) is slightly less than the table value (3.841) at the 5% level, suggesting that gender does not significantly impact newspaper reading habits.
3. **Stream**: Similar to age, the stream of study does not significantly influence newspaper reading habits as the Chi-square value (2.449) is less than the table value (3.841).
4. **Area of Residence**: The area of residence does not significantly affect newspaper reading habits, with a Chi-square value (1.487) less than the table value (5.991).
5. **Marital Status**: The Chi-square value (0.331) is much less than the table value (5.991), indicating that marital status does not significantly influence newspaper reading habits.
6. **Family Type**: The Chi-square value (1.071) is less than the table value (3.841), suggesting that the type of family (joint or nuclear) does not significantly affect newspaper reading habits.
7. **Family Income (Per Month)**: The Chi-square value (4.286) is less than the table value (7.815), indicating that family income does not significantly influence newspaper reading habits.

Findings

The study reveals that the majority of students, 70%, read newspapers occasionally. Individual subscriptions and libraries are the primary sources of newspapers for 42% and 28% of students, respectively. Most students, 68%, spend less than 30 minutes reading newspapers daily. The most popular sections among the students are Sports (22%), Local news (20%), and Education (20%). The students show a balanced preference for Tamil and English newspapers, with 28% preferring each language and a slight majority, 44%, preferring to read newspapers in both languages. Most students, 72%, read one newspaper daily.

Regarding newspaper preference, 'The Hindu (English)' is the most preferred newspaper among the students, securing the first rank. 'The Indian Express' and 'The Hindu (Tamil)' follow, securing the second and third ranks, respectively. 'Times of India' ranks last in terms of preference.

The Chi-square test results indicate that none of the variables—age, gender, academic stream, area of residence, marital status, family type, and family income—significantly influence the students' newspaper reading habits.

These findings provide valuable insights for both academia and the newspaper industry. They highlight the importance of understanding the evolving newspaper reading habits among college students in the contemporary digital age. They also highlight the need for newspapers to cater to the diverse preferences of this demographic to maintain and enhance readership.

Recommendations

- **Promote Newspaper Reading in College Libraries:** College libraries should actively encourage newspaper reading by creating dedicated reading spaces, organizing newspaper-related events, and offering workshops on media literacy and critical reading.
- **Enhance Digital Accessibility:** Newspapers should prioritize their digital presence, ensuring user-friendly websites and mobile applications that cater to college students' preferences.
- **Diversify Content:** To attract a wider readership, newspapers should diversify their content, incorporating topics relevant to college students' interests, such as career development, technology, and social issues.
- **Interactive Features:** Incorporating interactive features, such as polls, quizzes, and comment sections, can enhance engagement and foster a sense of community among student readers.
- **Collaborate with Educational Institutions:** Newspapers can collaborate with colleges and universities to offer student subscriptions, internships, and workshops, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship.

Conclusion

The study highlights the dynamic nature of newspaper reading habits among college students in the digital era. While traditional newspapers remain relevant, there is a growing preference for digital access and diverse content. The findings highlight the need for newspapers to adapt and innovate to maintain and enhance readership among this demographic. By implementing the recommendations outlined above, newspapers can ensure their continued relevance and contribute to college students' intellectual growth and informed citizenship.

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