

## READING HABITS AMONG STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITAS ATMA JAYA YOGYAKARTA

L. Bening Parwita Sukci<sup>1</sup>  
Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta  
bening.parwitasukci@uajy.ac.id  
Anna Fitriati<sup>2</sup>  
Universitas Sanata Dharma  
fitriati@usd.ac.id

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### Abstract

Some research results show that Indonesian people have low reading habits, rank 70 in the world according to PISA and rank 3 in ASEAN. On the other hand, reading habits help students improve their academic performance. This research tried to find out the reading habits among Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta students. A questionnaire using Google Form was employed to find the data. With the help of language lecturers, the questionnaire was distributed to 327 students from various study programs. From the data collected, it was found out that students only 38% have habits to read, 11% do not have reading habits and 51% do not know whether they have a reading habit or not since they only read when given a task. Furthermore, it was found that respondents only spend less than one-hour daily reading.

**Keywords:** reading habit, university students, Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta.

### INTRODUCTION

Antara, Indonesian News Agency (2024), represented by Aminudin Aziz during a hearing between Commission X of the House of Representatives (DPR) and acting head of the National Library (*Perpustakaan Nasional*), reported that Indonesia is still low in literacy. Furthermore, Aziz also quoted the 2022 data of Program for International Student Assessment, better known as PISA, Indonesia is in rank 70 out of 80 countries evaluated. This means that Indonesia is at the bottom 10 in reading literacy.

Reading skills are essential to support university students to succeed in their study since it helps them build their vocabulary, comprehension, imagination, and critical thinking (Ramadhani, Salija, & Sultan, 2023); (Siddig, 2022); (Paige, Rupley, & Ziglari, 2024). However, not all students enjoy reading activities, especially when the world is now dominated by abundant information available on the Internet. Students' interest has shifted from printed reading materials into online activities that provide them with abundant practical options to get information from their cell phones (Nurfaizah, Erniyati, & Pranata, 2024); (Wiranatha & Santosa, 2024) as the Internet provides immense options of materials in various forms. However, some researchers agree that the Internet reading is non-sequential, interactive, superficial and extensive but also decreases the focused and in-depth reading that students need to master in order to succeed in their academic performance (Loan, 2012); (Obaidullah & Rahman, 2018); (Lustyantie & Aprilia, 2020).

Strauss in the Washington Post (2016) quoted a report issued by John W. Miller, the president of Central Connecticut State University in New Britain in collaboration with Central Connecticut's Center for Public Policy and Social Research surveying the literacy level in 61

countries in the world from 2003 to 2014. In this report Indonesia is positioned in the 60<sup>th</sup> the second rank from the last, far below Singapore (36) and Malaysia (53) and right behind Thailand (59). Miller believed that literacy is a critical factor that contributes to the success of individuals and nations in knowledge-based economics. The rankings of the 61 countries were determined by using five categories: Libraries, Newspapers, Education System-Inputs, Education System-Outputs and Computer Availability.

Country	Rank	Country	Rank	Country	Rank
Finland	1	Malta	21	Romania	41
Norway	2	South Korea	22	Portugal	42
Iceland	3	Czech Republic	23	Brazil	43
Denmark	4	Ireland	24	Croatia	44
Sweden	5	Italy	25	Qatar	45
Switzerland	6	Austria	26	Costa Rica	46
United States	7	Russia	27	Argentina	47
Germany	8	Slovenia	28	Mauritius	48
Latvia	9	Hungary	29	Serbia	49
Netherlands	10	Slovak Republic	30	Turkey	50
Canada	11	Lithuania	31	Georgia	51
France	12	Japan	32	Tunisia	52
Luxembourg	13	Cyprus	33	Malaysia	53
Estonia	14	Bulgaria	34	Albania	54
New Zealand	15	Spain	35	Panama	55
Australia	16	Singapore	36	South Africa	56
United Kingdom	17	Chile	37	Colombia	57
Belgium	18	Mexico	38	Morocco	58
Israel	19	China	39	Thailand	59
Poland	20	Greece	40	Indonesia	60
				Botswana	61

**Figure 1.** Literacy Ranks of 61 Countries in the World (Strauss, 2016)

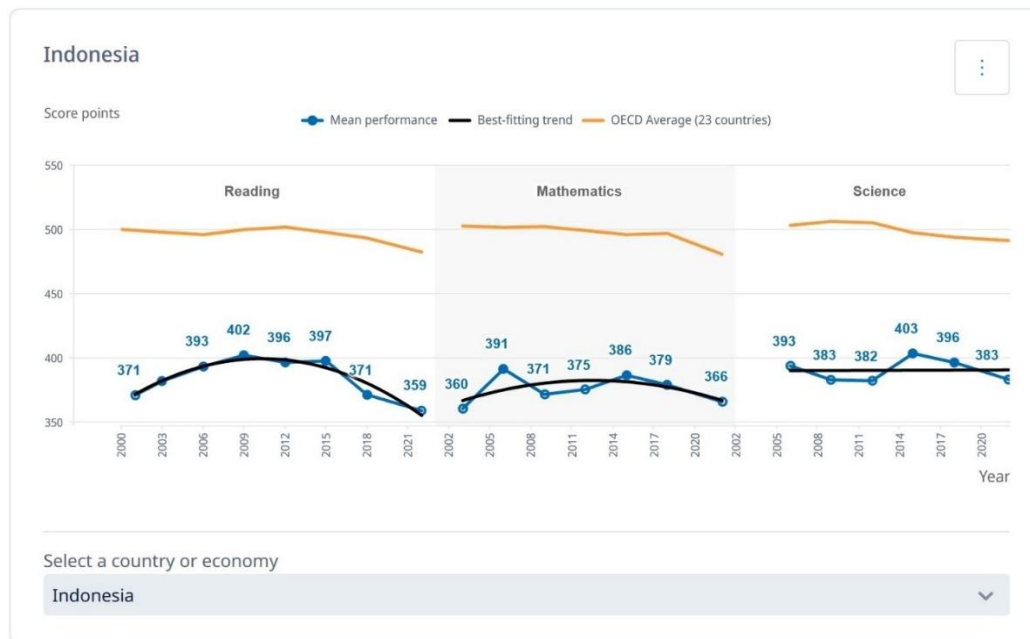
According to Anderson (2024) in his article titled “Ranked: Countries that Reads the Most Books, 2024”, among Southeast Asian countries (ASEAN), the country that reads the most is Singapore with 6.72 books, 155 hours annually, followed by Thailand with 6.37 books, 149 hours annually. Indonesia comes third with 5.91 books, 129 hours. Even though coming number three among ASEAN countries does not look so bad, but in the world rank Indonesia is in the 31<sup>st</sup> position compared to Singapore (14<sup>th</sup>) and Thailand (21<sup>st</sup>).

**Table 1.** Southeast Asian Countries Reading Habit Rank (Anderson., 2024)

NO.	Southeast Asian Country	Books	Hours
1	Singapore	6,72	155
2	Thailand	6,37	149
3	Indonesia	5,91	129
4	Philippines	5,59	123
5	Vietnam	5,54	123
6	Malaysia	5,47	122

7	Cambodia	3,52	78
8	Myanmar	3,28	74
9	Brunei Darussalam	2,59	60
10	Lao People Democratic Republic	No entry	

Program of International Student Assessment known as PISA tested 15-year-old students in 23 different countries on reading, mathematics and science. In its 2023 report (PISA, 2023), Indonesian students performed poorly in reading since the score is below level 2 from 2000 to 2021 which is far below OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) average as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Academic Performance Tests on Reading, Mathematics and Science (PISA, 2023)

Some researchers found that reading habits assist students in their comprehension achievement (Resta, Amalia, & Amrina, 2023); (Sartika, Afifah, & Anggraini, 2020); (Attiyat, 2019); (Huijun & Rafizah, 2014). Okwilagwe as cited by Balan, Katenga and Simon (2019) stated that reading literature helps students develop their critical thinking skills such as analyzing the characters and events, creating setting, imagining the scenes, evaluating their understanding, and solving problems. Balan et.al. state further that while reading literature, students are invited to understand, question, interpret, predict, define the words and the writer's message. These skills that student get from their reading habits help them to achieve better in their academic performance (Wani & Ismail, 2024); (Amin & Bakhsh, 2021); (Nazhari, Delfi, & K, 2016); (Wang, Zhu, & Zhang, 2022); (Taylor, 2023). In addition, Huijun and Rafizah (2014) found that reading habit helps students navigate and succeed in the contemporary world which is rich of information that forces them to choose.

With such important roles in supporting students' achievements in their study, it is interesting to find out the reading habits among students in Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta, such as how many students really have reading habits, what materials they read, the types of reading they choose, and when they read and the resources of their reading materials.

## METHOD

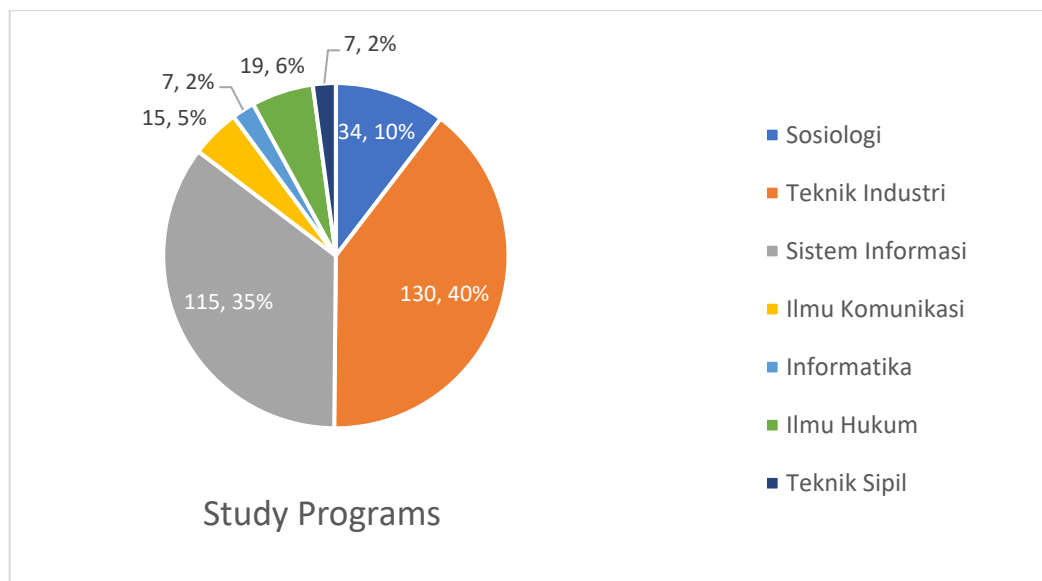
A questionnaire was developed to gather some necessary data about students' backgrounds, reading habits and situations that affected their reading habits. There were 18

questions that needed approximately 10-15 minutes to answer. One question is to collect their names that function to make sure that there are no identical students answering the questionnaire twice. Two questions were to collect students' demographic data, such as their study programs, and places of origins and there were 16 questions given related to their reading habits.

The google form was chosen to deliver the questionnaire as it is practical and does not need paper to distribute to respondents. Furthermore, it provided practicality to process the data since the answers in the google form could directly be converted into Microsoft Excel file.

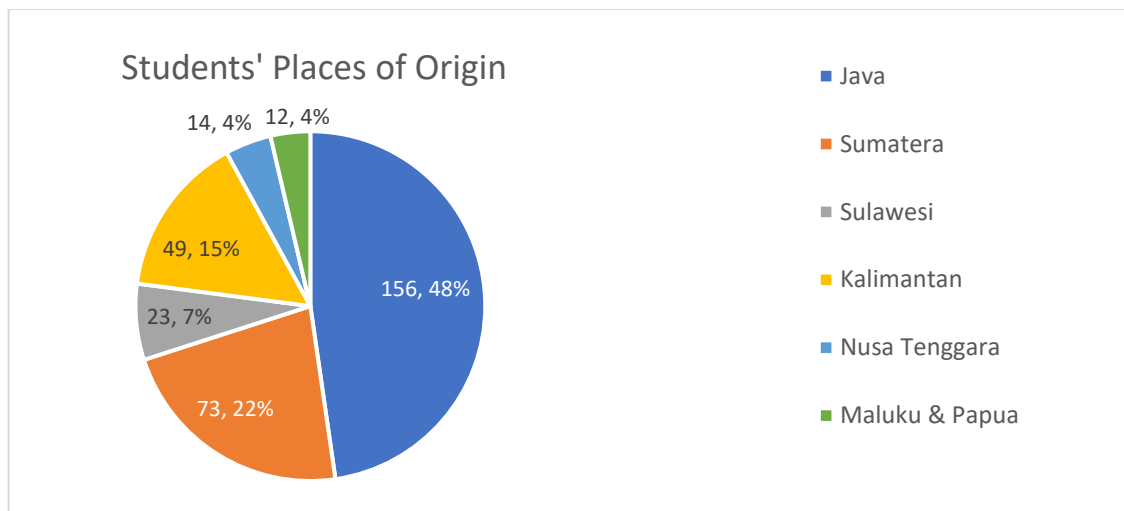
This research collected data by using purposive sampling. Questionnaires were distributed to students in Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta. Some language lecturers were contacted to help send their students as the respondents. Invitations were posted on the university announcement boards to encourage students to join as respondents. The invitation to join as respondents was open for five weekdays from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2025. Within the time set, 327 students responded to the questionnaire.

Figure 3 below shows that respondents came from seven of 14 study programs in the university. The two biggest groups consist of 130 students or 40% from the Industrial Engineering Study Program, 115 or 35% from the Information System. The third biggest is from Sociology with 34 students (10%). While the rest came from four different study programs: Informatics 7 (2%), Civil Engineering 7 (2%), Communication 15 (5%), and Law 19 (6%).



**Figure 3.** Students' Study Programs

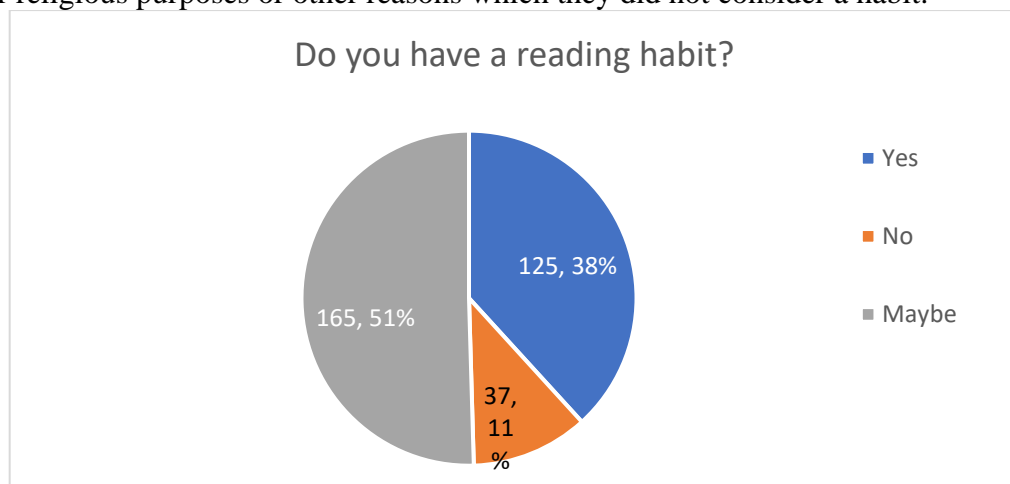
Students responding to the questionnaire came from various places in Indonesia. 156 students (48%) came from towns and cities in Java Island. The second biggest group came from Sumatera (73 students or 22%). Kalimantan is in the third position with 49 students (15%) followed by Sulawesi with 23 students (7%). The smallest groups are Nusa Tenggara Islands with 14 students (4%) followed by Maluku Islands and Papua with 12 students (4%). The places of origins might influence students reading habits since it is so much easier to access bookstores or libraries in cities/towns in Java than other parts of Indonesia.



**Figure 4.** Students' Place of Origin

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

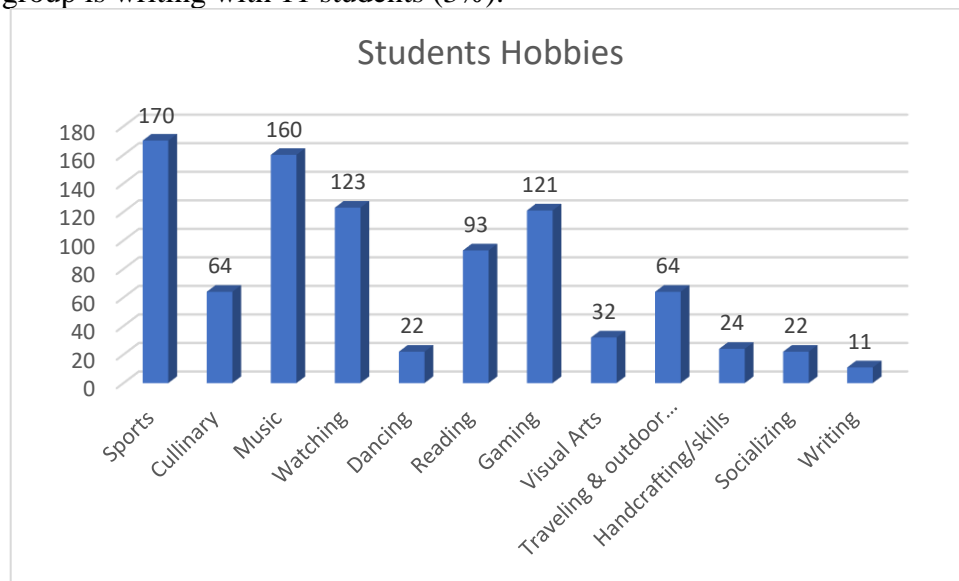
As seen in Figure 5 below, out of 327 respondents, 125 students (38%) stated that they had a reading habit while only 37 students (11%) stated that they did not. The biggest group with 165 students (50%) stated that they are not sure. This could happen since they might read occasionally for various purposes, such as completing a task given by their teacher/lecturer, reading for religious purposes or other reasons which they did not consider a habit.



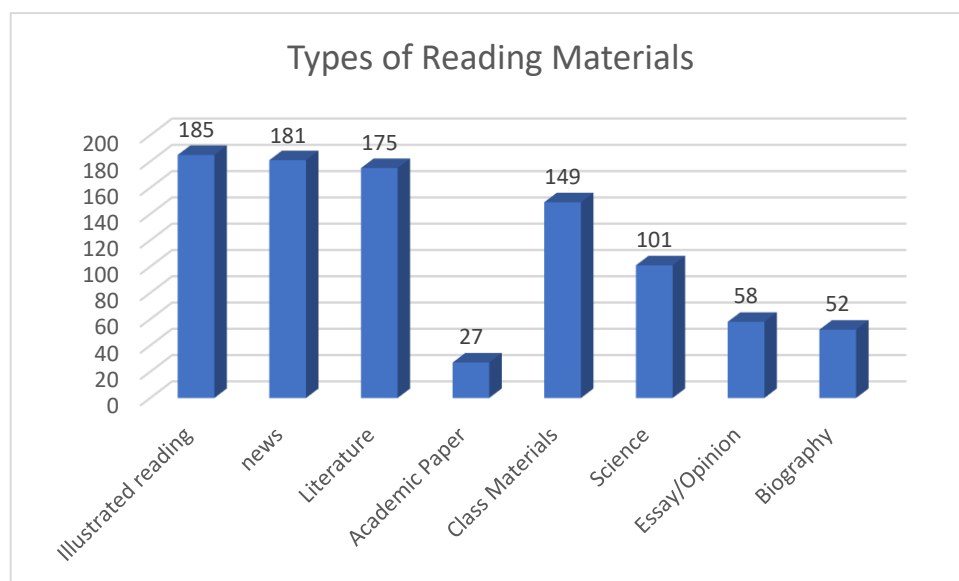
**Figure 5.** Do you have a reading habit?

It is interesting to compare students' hobbies in their daily lives. It is an open question so that respondents can write their answers freely. The answers, then, were classified into 12 groups as shown in Figure 5. The most popular hobby among students is sports with 170 answers (52%). It covers jogging, martial arts, football, volleyball, basketball, etc. The second position is for music with 160 answers (49%) that covers listening to music, singing, playing music instruments, writing songs, etc. Following in the third position is watching with 123 answers (38%). Watching includes watching movies, drama series, sports games, YouTube, TikTok, streaming, television, etc. The fourth position belongs to gaming with 121 students (37%). Reading is in the fifth position with 93 students (28%) followed by two groups in the sixth position: culinary and traveling/outdoor adventure both with 64 students (20%). This is followed by much smaller groups of other hobbies, such as visual arts (32 students; 10%),

handcrafting/skills (24 students; 7%), dancing and socializing each has 22 students (6%) and the smallest group is writing with 11 students (3%).



**Figure 6. Students' Hobbies**

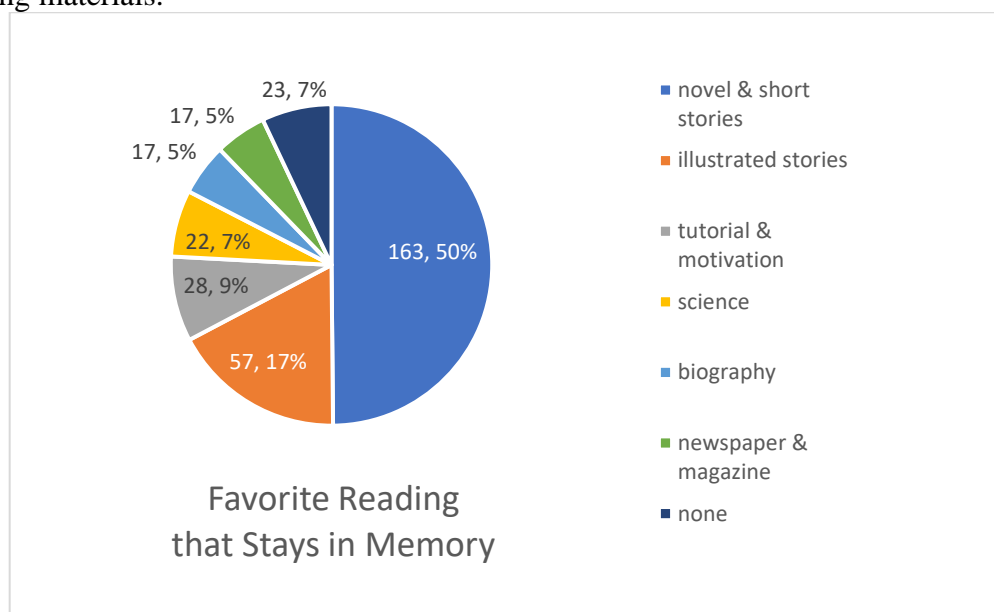


**Figure 7. Types of Reading**

Figure 7 above shows the types of materials they choose to read. Illustrated materials, which cover comics, manga, and other illustrated materials, capture 185 students (57%) since they are simple, full of pictures, which might be colorful, and fun to read. Students mentioned that it does not take long and too much effort to finish reading illustrated materials. The second position is news chosen by 181 respondents (55%) since it is considered relevant to know what happens in this fast-changing world. The next is literature that covers poetry, short stories, and novels chosen by 175 students (54%). Class materials come fourth in the list with 149 students (46%) followed by science with 101 students (31%) reading it. The rest is for essay or opinion chosen by 58 students (18%) shared with biography (52 students or 16%) and academic paper for 27 students (8%).

However, there are some interesting facts that emerge from this discussion. There were 21 students (6%) who read only comics, 12 students (3.6%) read comics and class materials

only, while 152 students (46%) read comics and others. On the other hand, there are 9 students (2.7%) who only read news and 172 students (52.6%) read news and other reading materials. 18 students (5.5%) only read literature, and 157 students (48%) read literature combined with other reading materials.

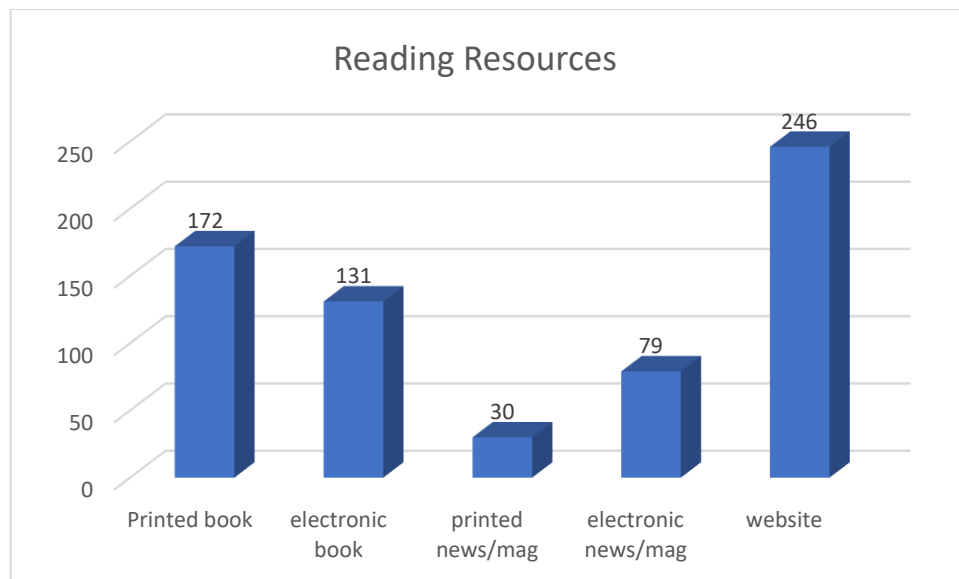


**Figure 8.** Favorite Reading that Stays in Memory

Figure 8 above depicts what title of reading material that has become their favorite reading. The respondents' answers were, then, classified into 7 groups as shown in the chart. The most popular type of reading that stays in the students' memory is novels and short stories with 163 students (50%), followed by illustrated materials chosen by 57 students (17%). The third position is for tutorial and motivation books, read by 28 students (9%) followed by science with 22 students (7%) while biography shared the fifth position with newspaper & magazine chosen by 17 students (5%). However, there are 23 students (7%) who did not have any memorable titles of reading.

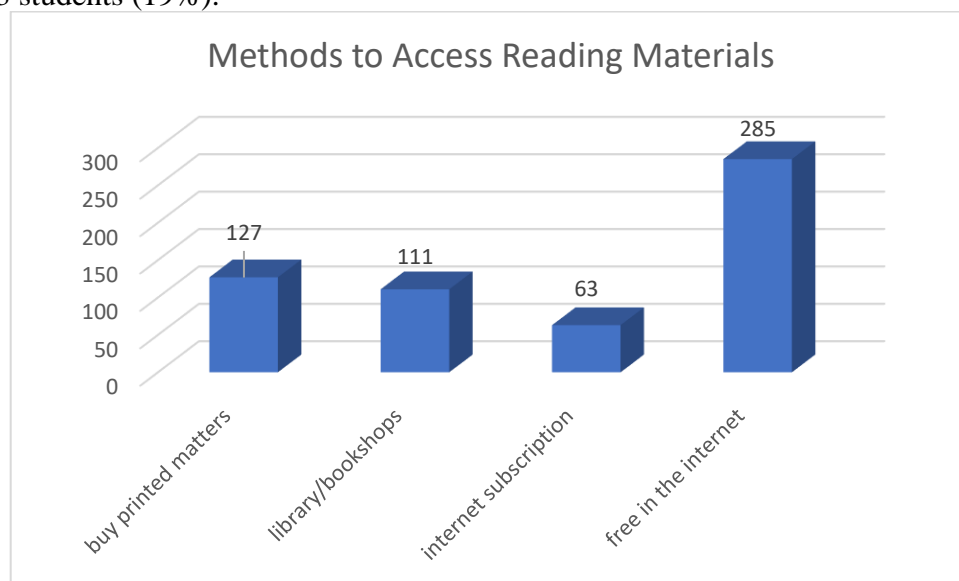
Figure 9 below shows the resources that provide students with their choice of reading materials. A popular resource among students is the website, chosen by 246 students (75%). This is followed by printed books with 172 students (52.6%) and electronic books with 131 students (40%). Another resource is electronic newspapers and magazines with 79 students (24%), and the last one is printed newspapers and magazines with 30 students (9%). Electronic resources are more popular since the students, belonging to generation Z, have been familiar with the Internet since they were young. Besides, it is considered as more practical since they can access it anywhere and anytime from their cell phones or tablets. The use of printed books is still high especially because many of the books do not have the digital version.





**Figure 9. Reading Resources**

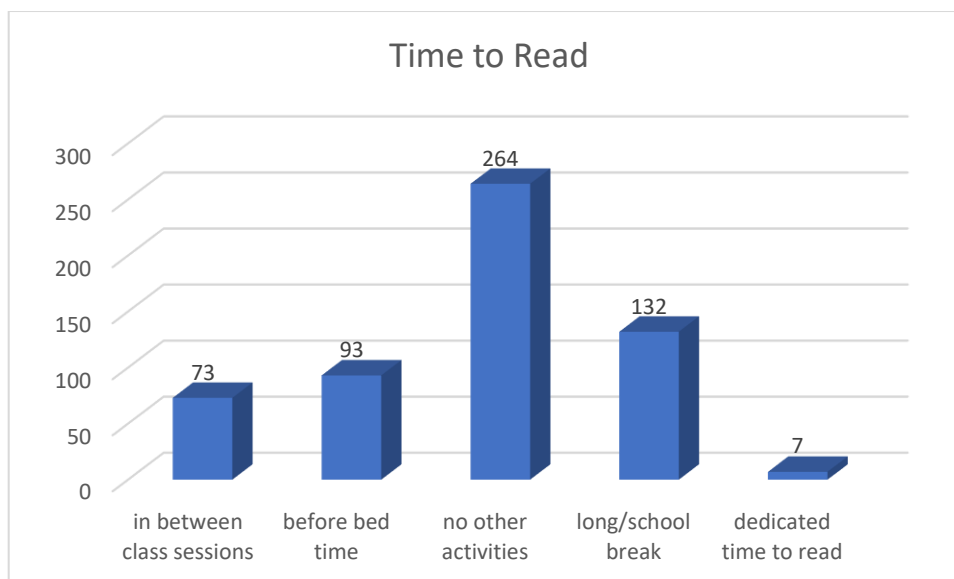
Figure 10 below shows that there are various methods on how students access their reading materials. The most popular method is by using free resources on the Internet which was chosen by 285 students (87%). The second method is to buy printed books, newspapers and magazines, chosen by 127 students (39%). 111 students (34%) chose to read in the library or bookshop. The lowest of all is subscribing reading materials on the Internet which was chosen by 63 students (19%).



**Figure 10. Methods to Access Reading Materials**

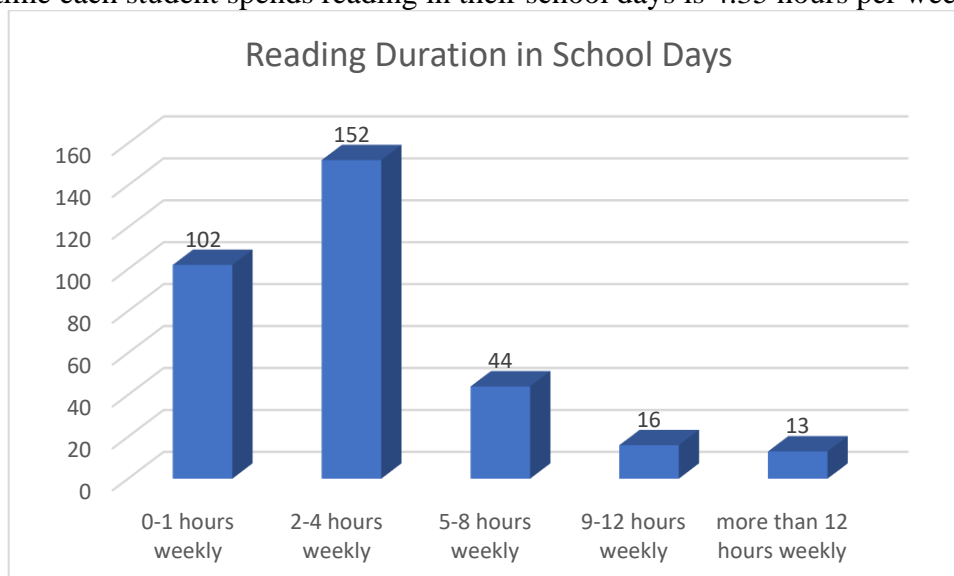
The students' reading habits also cover when the time they read as shown in Figure 11 below. The biggest group consists of 264 students (81%) who read when they have no activities to do. 132 students (40%) stated that they read during school breaks when they have longer time to relax. 93 students (28%) read before bedtime and 73 students (22%) read in between class sessions. Only seven students (2%) have dedicated time to reading.





**Figure 11.** Time to Read

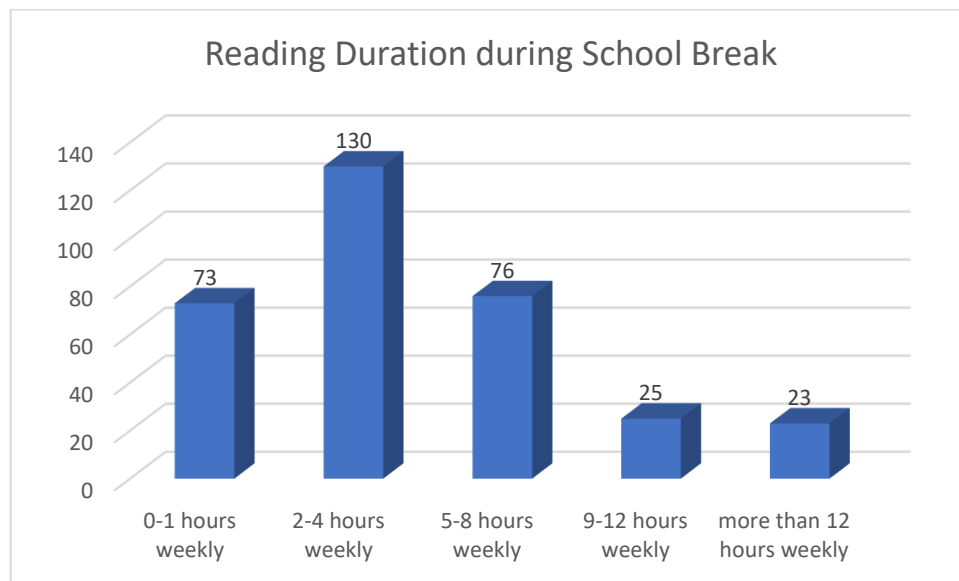
Students' reading habits are also evaluated based on the length of time they read in school days. Figure 12 below shows that in school days, students who spend 2-4 hours weekly reach up to 152 (46%) followed by up to one hour weekly 102 (31%). In the third rank, 44 students (13%) read between 5 to 8 hours weekly, 16 students read 9-12 hours weekly and the lowest is 13 students (4%) read for more than 12 hours weekly. Based on this, if we roughly calculate the maximum time to read weekly, the overall reading time is 1,423 hours. It means the average time each student spends reading in their school days is 4.35 hours per week.



**Figure 12.** Reading Duration in School Days

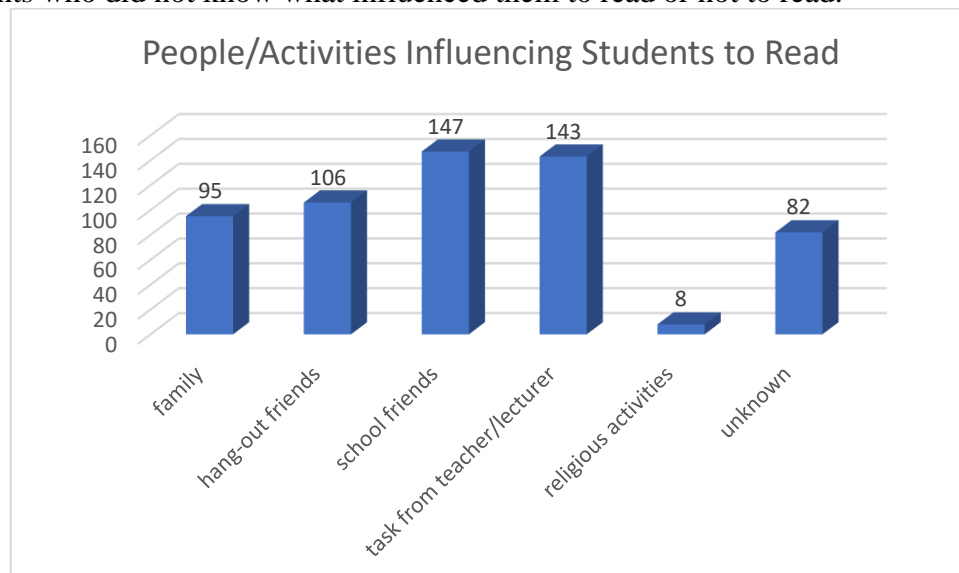
During school breaks at the end of semesters, students have more free time. However, the longer free time available does not invite students to spend more time reading exponentially as shown in Figure 13. It turns out that the biggest group consists of 130 students (40%) reading for 2-4 hours weekly followed by 73 students (22%) reading 0-1 hours weekly. 76 students (23%) read 5-8 hours weekly and 25 students (8%) read for 9-12 hours weekly. 23 students (7%) spend more than 12 hours reading weekly. Based on this, if we calculate the maximum time to read weekly, the overall reading time is 1800 hours which means that each student

spends more than 5.5 hours weekly. This means that the average weekly reading duration during their school break is 1.2 hours longer than during school days.



**Figure 13.** Time Spent to Read during School Break

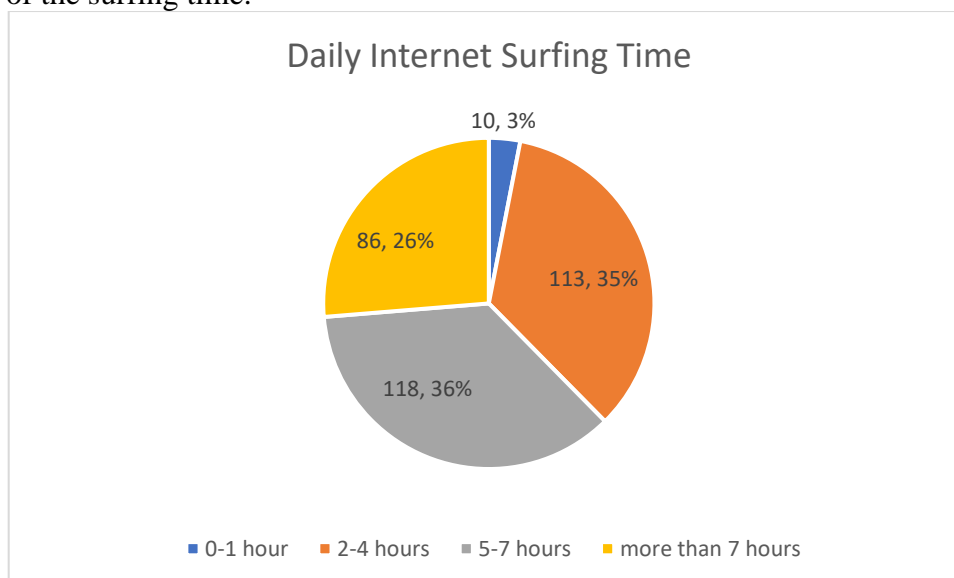
Figure 14 below shows how students acquired their reading habits. The highest rank is 147 students (45%) were influenced by their school friends followed closely by 143 students (44%) getting tasks from teachers and lecturers that forced them to read. The third position belongs to hang-out friends with 106 students (32%) by exchanging books or visiting bookstores together. Influence from family members also helps students to develop a reading habit, this is chosen by 95 students (29%). 8 students acquired their reading habits from religious activities like reading the Quran for Moslems or Bible for Christians. However, there are 82 students who did not know what influenced them to read or not to read.



**Figure 14.** People/Activities Influencing Students to Read

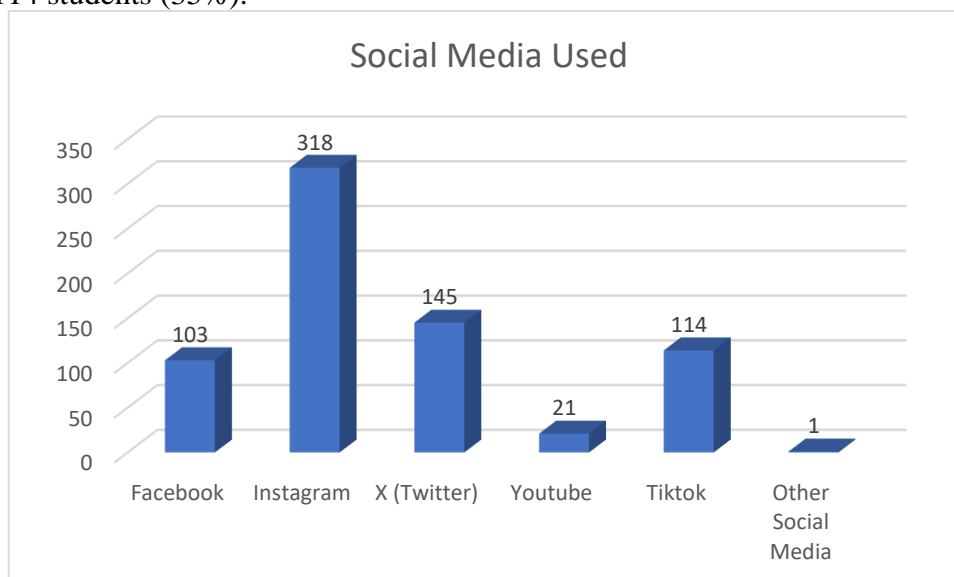
Antara (2024) stated that although Indonesia is labelled as a low-literacy society, it is one of the most active social media users in the world. Below, Figure 15 shows how much time students spend surfing the Internet. The biggest group (118; 36%) is those who spend 5-7 hours surfing, the second group (113; 35%) spend 2-4 hours daily. The third group spend more than

seven hours on the Internet (86; 26%), and the smallest group consists of 10 students (3%) who spend an hour or less. If we calculate the maximum time of surfing 1,976 hours daily or 13,832 hours weekly which means that on average each student spends more than 6 hours/daily or 42 hours/weekly surfing on the Internet while the average time for reading is only 5.5 hours/week or only 13% of the surfing time.



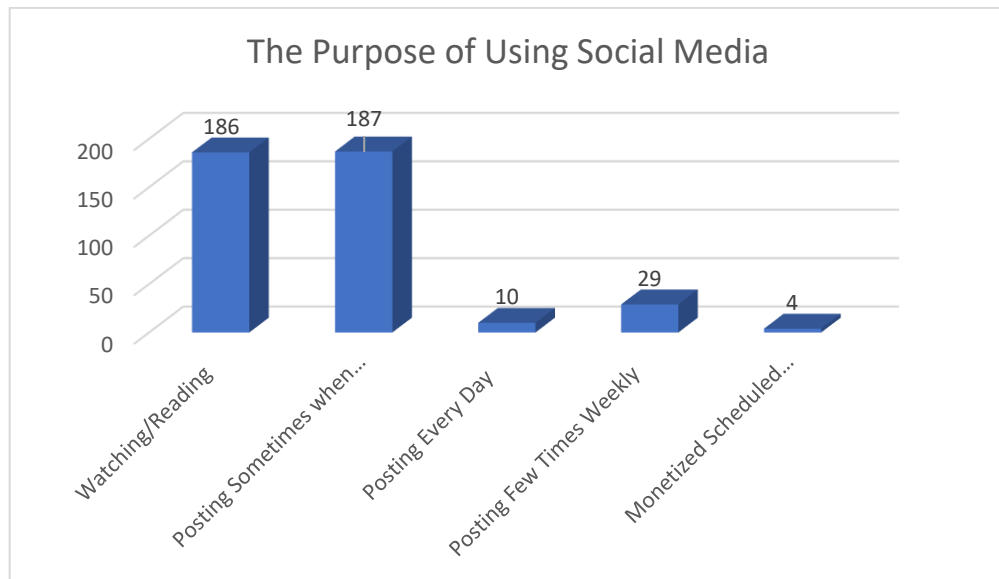
**Figure 15.** Time dedicated to Surfing on the Internet

Their selection of social media brings interesting details as shown in Figure 16 below. 318 students (97%) using Instagram make the largest group followed by X or Twitter, with 145 students (44%). Third place goes to 103 students who use Facebook, while Tiktok comes in fourth with 114 students (35%).



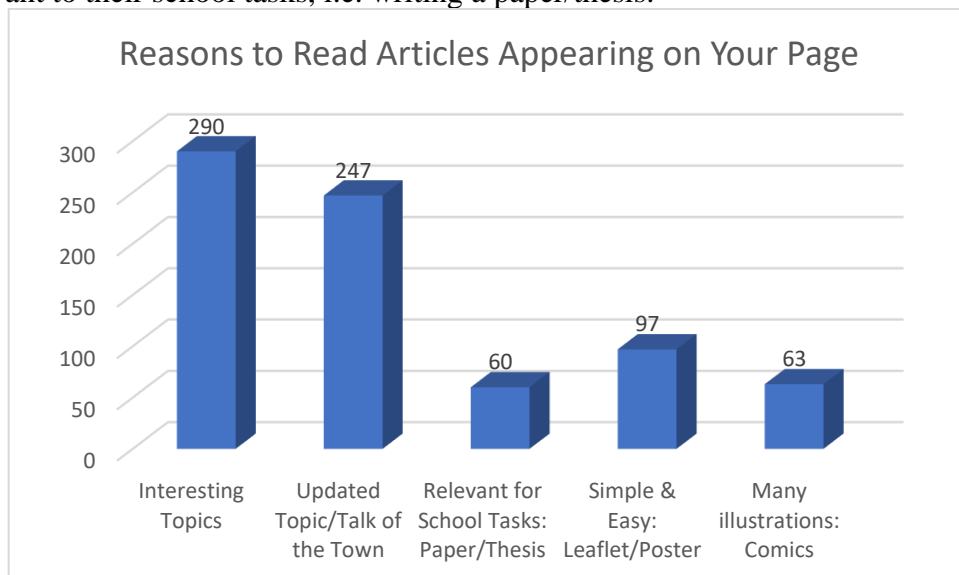
**Figure 16.** Social Media

Figure 17 depicts what students do with their social media. The highest rank is chosen by 187 students (57%) who sometimes post interesting or necessary information followed by 186 students (57%) who watch or read interesting or important information appearing on their page. 29 students (9%) chose to post information a few times weekly which is flowed by a group consisting of 10 students (3%) who would post information every day. And the smallest group is for students who post regularly to earn money (4 students; 1%).



**Figure 17.** The Use of Social Media

When asked whether they would read an article that appears on their page, students have various reasons to read the article. The highest rank is for those students (290; 89%) who would read if it were interesting for them. The second rank is held by 247 students (76%) who read if the topic is updated and has become the talk of the town. These two highest ranks are followed by 97 students (30%) who would read if the information was simple and easy to read such as leaflets and posters. 63 students (19%) would read if the materials have a lot of illustrations, such as comics and manga. The smallest proportion is for those who read if the topic is relevant to their school tasks, i.e. writing a paper/thesis.

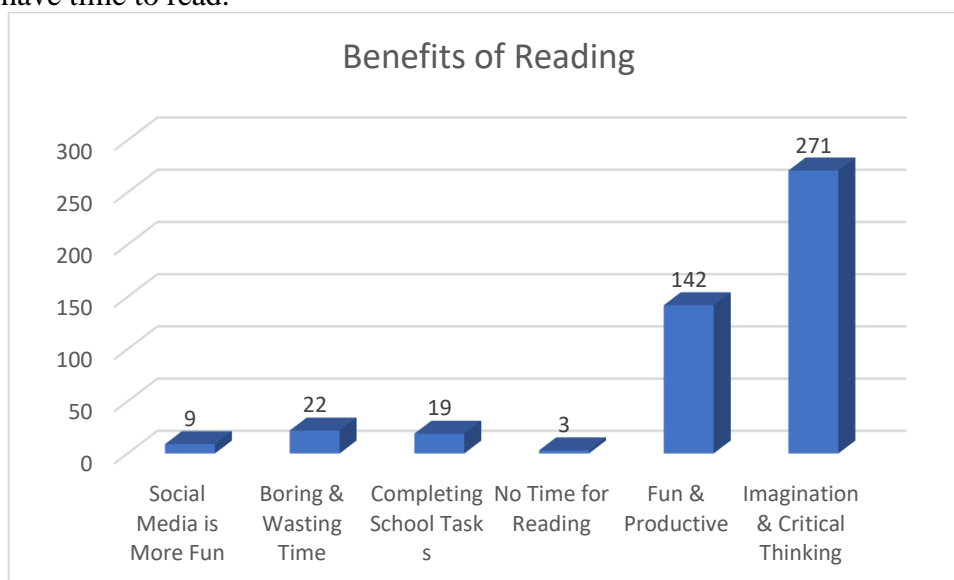


**Figure 18.** When an Article Appear on Your Page, you would read if ....

As shown in Antara (2024) quoting UNESCO it is stated that even though Indonesia has the second biggest number of libraries, after India, only 0.001 percent of the population has reading interests. With 178,723 libraries spread across Indonesia with some mobile libraries available in the forms of cars or boats to reach rural areas, the accessibility to use a

library might not be the issue. Then, it is necessary to find the reasons for young people not to read and solve the problems accordingly.

Figure 19 below shows that 271 students (83%) believed that reading allows them to use their imagination and develop their critical thinking and 142 students (43%) feel that reading is fun and productive. Besides, 19 students (6%) thought that reading helps them in completing their school tasks such as writing papers or the final thesis. On the other hand, there are 22 students (7%) who thought that reading is boring and wasting time, nine students (3%) did not read since social media is more fun for them and three students did not read at all as they did not have time to read.



**Figure 19. Benefits of Reading**

## CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that: UAJY students' reading habit is low since only 38% of students have reading as a habit, a student spends 4.3 hours weekly reading during school days and 5.5 hours weekly during school breaks which means that each student reads less than one hour daily. 81% respondents only read when they do not have anything to do and only 2% have a dedicated time to read daily. However, most of the respondents (83%) agree that reading habits help them to improve their imagination and critical thinking while 43% consider reading as fun and productive.

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