

**NEWSPAPER READERSHIP ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF SINDH, JAMSHORO, PAKISTAN**

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ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the newspaper readership attitudes of social science students, enrolled in graduate (BS Part-IV) and postgraduate (MA Final) programs at the University of Sindh, Pakistan. The paper covers newspapers published in three languages i.e. Sindhi, Urdu, and English. The paper is focused on the students' preferences for a language and page. Proclivity for a particular newspaper and page preference propensities have been analyzed in terms of gender, age, mother tongue and students' field of study.

INTRODUCTION

Newspapers are read differently and to different extents. The habits of newspaper reading differ due to many reasons owing to weather conditions or newspaper distribution (Gustafsson & Weibull 1997). Further that the newspaper readership is measured by quantifying a particular indicator of the newspaper-reading activity (Malthouse & Calder 2002). Despite saying that the conceptual meaning of readership is not so obvious (Calder & Malthouse 2003), it has yet been measured with several critical questions. For instance, frequency, the number of days during the past week that one has read a newspaper; time spent reading the newspaper; versions of completion (e.g., noticed headlines, read some, read most); subscribing to a newspaper, reading at least once a week, reading every day; and exposure and attention to newspaper. Newspaper readership is said to be a construct, therefore, it should be researched through its various manifestations (Malthouse & Calder 2002).

It may be mentioned that Europe is regarded as a 'newspaper continent' in the context of highest newspaper readership and circulation in the world (Gustafsson & Weibull 1997; Lauf 2001). However, in South Asia if analyzed in the context of media research, newspaper readership research would be found scarce in

Pakistan. Moreover, in the USA it is found that during the last two decades newspaper reading was on the decline (Schoenbach, Lauf, McLead, & Scheufele 1999), and research figures mention that the time spent on reading newspapers has also been falling sharply (Raeymaeckers, Hoebeke & Hautekeete 2008). Therefore, newspapers were called as ‘endangered species’ (Schoenbach, *et. al.* 1999).

However, decrease in newspaper reading is studied as linked to diminished civic awareness and the decline of democratic values. On the contrary, spending more time reading is necessarily supposed as an activity of better educated and older people (Raeymaeckers 2002). In addition, intellectual ability is also said to be a key correlate of newspaper reading, as the bright minded tend to develop the reading habit earlier and selecting more serious content (Cobb 1986). And it is studied that when access to newspaper is made easy for young adults, they tend to read; because the young generation not only deem news as very important (Wolswinkel 2008), but also in their opinion, news is a basic social service which has to be available when you need it (Costera 2006). Besides, it is found that compared with watching television and listening radio, reading newspaper, particularly daily, enhances more political interest and knowledge, local political participation and a more integrated understanding of political issues. Therefore studying newspaper readership particularly of university students, who are studying in the subjects of social sciences, seems very significant.

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING

A cross-sectional survey of the students was conducted in the various departments of the faculty of social science, University of Sindh, Jamshoro. The survey included only those students who were final year students in the morning programs. A close-ended questionnaire consisting 12 questions was distributed on different days to the final year students through in-person delivery during the first semester examination 2012. During the questionnaire distribution and collection activity the invigilating teachers of the related departments helped the researchers who were available to answer queries regarding the questionnaire and to ensure the safe and secure collection of the completed questionnaires. A total of

572 students returned completed questionnaires. At the time of the survey according to the admission section of the University, the total number of enrolled students in the final classes of various departments in the faculty of social sciences was 876. Among them 472 were enrolled in B.S Part-IV, a four year degree, and 304 in M.A Final (Pass), a two year degree after having a bachelor degree. The data used in this paper were collected from a total ten departments. However, from the following six departments of the faculty of social sciences, due to different reasons, the data could not be collected: Department of Physical Education, Public Administration, General History, Pakistan Study and Woman Development Studies. The questionnaire was distributed in two parts with part one containing 8 questions about newspaper readership behavior and part two contained 4 questions related to demographic information about the student. All the questions about newspaper reading behavior were set to measure the nominal scale.

To condense data and facilitate cross tabulation analysis the above ten departments have been arbitrarily regrouped into three categories on the basis of their close relationship.

The Information and Politics Group: It is inclusive of the departments of International Relations, Mass Communication, Political Science and Library and Information Science.

The Human and Society Group: It is inclusive of the departments of Psychology, Sociology and Social work.

The Study and Development Group: It is inclusive of the departments of Economics, Pakistan Study Centre and Sindh Development Study Centre.

FINDINGS**Demographic Description of the Sample****Table-1****COMPOSITION OF PARTICIPANTS BY DEMOGRAPHIC
VARIABLES (N and %)**

	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	441	(80.3)
Female	108	(19.7)
Mother language		
Sindhi	392	(69.6)
Urdu	92	(16.3)
Siraiki	49	(8.7)
Other	30	(5.3)
Age Group		
Up to 21 years	80	(15.4)
21-23 years	296	(56.9)
Over 23 years	144	(27.7)
Departments		
International Relations	40	(07.0)
Psychology	32	(05.6)
Political Science	25	(04.4)
Social Work	64	(11.2)
Mass Communication	92	(16.1)
Sindh Development Studies Centre	40	(07.0)
Economics	109	(19.1)
Sociology	78	(13.7)
Library and Information Science	36	(06.3)
Pakistan Study Centre	55	(09.6)

It has been identified that socio-demographic variables i.e. gender and education have an important effect on the news media use (Cauwenberge, Haenens & Hans 2010). In this study, among the 549 respondents there are 441 male students (80.3%) and 108

(19.7%) female students. The majority of the students (69.6) spoke the Sindhi language. The second highest proportion (16.3%) of Urdu and 8.7% are Siraiki language. Whereas, the remaining number of students 30 (5.3%) spoke other various languages: Hindko (0.5%), Balouchi (1.2%), Pushto (1.1%), Arabic (0.4%), Punjabi (1.1%), Brahvi (0.7%), and Marwari (0.4%). Regarding age it is found that in all European member countries age has become the strongest predictor for the daily use of newspapers as a source of political information (Lauf, 2001). In the US it was studied that everyday reading has depended primarily on age – older the readers are, more their possibility of reading a newspaper every day is. Similarly, in Germany as well, being old was also much more significant for daily reading (Schoenback, Lauf, McLeod & Scheufele 1999). So the survey participating students in this study who mentioned their age (520) ranged from minimum 20 years to maximum 43 years old; whereas their mean age was calculated 23.13 years old. Age group wise, the majority (56.9%) were between 21 and 23 year old students, 144 (27.7%) were more than 23 years old, and the remaining 80 (15.4%) were up to 21 years old students. Moreover, it is mentioned that there is a close relationship between literacy rate and newspaper readership (Kuo 1978). So all the survey participants in this study were final year students for M.A and B.S Part-IV year degrees in the ten various departments of the Social Science Faculty, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan. In this way, out of the total of 571, 109 (19.1%) were in the Department of Economics, 92 (16.1%) in the Department of Mass Communication, 78 (13.7%) in the Department of Sociology, 64 (11.2%) in the Department of Social Work, 55 (9.6%) in the Pakistan Study Centre, 40 (7.0%) in the Department of International Relations, 40 (7.0%) in the Sindh Development Study Centre, 36 (6.3%) in the Department of Library and Information Science, 32 (5.6%) in the Department of Psychology, and 25 (4.4%) in the Department of Political Science.

Newspaper Reading Behavior

Table-2
COMPOSITION OF PARTICIPANTS BY NEWSPAPER
READERSHIP VARIABLES (N and %)

	Number	Percentage %
Newspaper readership		
Yes	404	(70.6)
No	3	(.5)
Sometimes	165	(28.8)
Newspaper language		
Sindhi	319	(61.3)
Urdu	110	(21.2)
English	91	(17.5)
Page preference		
Front page	441	(80.0)
Back page	27	(4.9)
Internal pages	83	(15.1)

The results in Table-2 show that the majority of the participants (70.6) read a newspaper. Further, in Sindh province newspapers are published in Sindhi, Urdu and English languages. In this way the majority of the participants (61.3%) revealed that they read newspapers of Sindhi language. Whereas, the second highest proportion (21.2%) read newspapers of Urdu language and the remaining 17% participants read English language newspapers. About page preference in previous study it is found that the front page is one of the key predictors of readership for all kinds of content; and front page stories have a greater readership than those which are on the other pages (Maxwell 1987). So similarly it was found in this study that the majority (80.0%) first prefers to read the front page of the newspaper. Whereas, the second highest proportion (15.1%) first prefer to read internal pages and the remaining proportion of 4.9% first read a back page. In this way it was summarily found that a typical final year student in the faculty of social sciences at the University of Sindh is newspaper reader and mainly reads Sindhi language newspaper while preferring first to read the front page of the newspaper.

Table-3
DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BY NEWSPAPER
READERSHIP AND GENDER (N and %)

	Male	Female	Total
Reading newspaper*			
Yes	328 (74.4)	62 (57.4)	390 (71.0)
No	1 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)
Sometimes	112 (25.4)	46 (42.6)	158 (28.8)
Total	441 (100)	108 (100)	549 (100)
Newspaper language[†]			
Sindhi	268 (66.8)	38 (36.9)	306 (60.7)
Urdu	63 (15.7)	46 (44.7)	109 (21.6)
English	70 (17.5)	19 (18.4)	89 (17.7)
Total	401 (100)	103 (100)	504 (100)
Page preference			
Front page	349 (81.9)	77 (73.3)	426 (80.2)
Back page	21 (4.9)	6 (5.7)	27 (5.1)
Internal page	56 (13.1)	22 (21.0)	78 (14.7)
Total	426 (100)	105 (100)	531 (100)

* $\chi^2 = 12.67, p < 0.002, df = 2$; [†] $\chi^2 = 43.90, p < 0.000, df = 2$.

Further, in gender context newspaper readership on average was found higher among male participants (74.4%) than the female participants (57.4%). Whereas, among those participants who read newspaper sometimes, the proportion of females (42.6%) on average was higher than male (25.4%). It vindicates Lauf (2001) that the decline of readership among women is faster than among men. With regard to newspaper language, it was observed that on average Sindhi language newspapers are read more by male participants (66.8%) than females (36.9%). Urdu language newspapers in contrast are read more by females (44.7%) than males (15.7%), whereas, in the readership of English language newspapers, there was little difference among males (17.5%) and females (18.4%). Finally in page preference, the front page on average is first preferred more by males (81.9%) than females (73.3%). On the contrary preferring first to back page and internal pages the proportions of females (5.7% and 21.0% respectively)

were bigger than males (4.9% and 13.1% respectively). In this way the findings are summarized that on average newspaper readership is higher among male students. And Sindhi language newspapers are read more by male; in contrast Urdu language newspapers are read more by female students. Whereas, it was found surprising that the newspapers of the English language also are slightly read more by females than males.

Table-4
DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BY NEWSPAPER
READERSHIP AND MOTHER LANGUAGE (N and %)

	Sindhi	Urdu	Siraiki	Other	Total
Reading newspaper*					
Yes	294 (75.0)	50 (54.3)	36 (73.5)	20 (66.7)	400 (71.0)
No	1 (0.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)
Sometimes	97 (24.7)	42 (45.7)	13 (26.5)	10 (33.3)	162 (28.8)
Total	392 (100)	92 (100)	49 (100)	30 (100)	563 (100)
Newspaper language[†]					
Sindhi	269 (74.9)	7 (8.2)	33 (76.7)	7 (25.9)	316 (61.5)
Urdu	31 (8.6)	63 (74.1)	2 (4.7)	14 (51.9)	110 (21.4)
English	59 (16.4)	15 (17.6)	8 (18.6)	6 (22.2)	88 (17.1)
Total	359 (100)	85 (100)	43 (100)	27 (100)	514 (100)
Page preference					
Front page	304 (79.6)	75 (86.2)	38 (80.9)	21 (72.4)	438 (80.4)
Back page	23 (6.0)	3 (3.4)	0 (0.0)	1 (3.4)	27 (5.0)
Internal page	55 (14.4)	9 (10.3)	9 (19.1)	7 (24.1)	80 (14.7)
Total	382 (100)	87 (100)	47 (100)	29 (100)	545 (100)

* $\chi^2 = 16.65, p < 0.011, df = 6$; [†] $\chi^2 = 21.57, p < 0.000, df = 6$.

Table-4 shows in the context of ethno-linguistic factor that compared with Urdu (54.3%) and other (66.7%) various languages speaking students, on average the proportion of Sindhi (75.0%) and Siraiki (73.5%) speaking students was higher in reading newspapers. Whereas in contrast between those who read newspapers sometimes the proportions of Urdu (45.7%) and other various languages (33.3%) was higher than Sindhi (24.7%) and Siraiki (26.5%) speaking. Further the findings mention that Sindhi language newspapers are read more by Sindhi (74.9%) and Siraiki (76.7%) speaking students, Urdu language newspapers are read more by Urdu (74.1%) and non-Sindhi (51.9%) speaking students. Such results support the idea of Kuo (1978) that the media system is one of the powerful institutions of language maintenance, therefore, populations at certain levels of sentimental will show its attachment to media contents which are in their own ethnic languages.

As far as English language newspapers are concerned, on average they are read more by those who speak other various languages (22.2%), and read least by Sindhi language speaking (16.4%) students. In page preference it was observed that first reading front page is preferred most by Urdu speaking (86.2%) and preferred least by Sindhi speaking (79.6%). In this way, first read back page is preferred most by Sindhi speaking (6.0%) and preferred not by Siraiki speaking (0.0%); whereas the first reading to internal pages is preferred most by those who speak other various languages (24.1%) and preferred least by Urdu speaking (10.3%) students.

Table-5
DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BY NEWSPAPER
READERSHIP AND AGE (N and %)

	Up to 21 years	21-23 years	Over 23 years	Total
Reading newspaper				
Yes	57 (71.2)	204 (68.9)	102 (70.8)	363 (69.8)
No	0 (0.0)	1 (0.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)

Sometimes	23 (28.8)	91 (30.7)	42 (29.2)	156 (30.0)
Total	80 (100)	296 (100)	144 (100)	520 (100)
Newspaper language				
Sindhi	53 (67.9)	168 (62.9)	73 (56.6)	294 (62.0)
Urdu	12 (15.4)	56 (21.0)	32 (24.8)	100 (21.1)
English	13 (16.7)	43 (16.1)	24 (18.6)	80 (16.9)
Total	78 (100)	267 (100)	129 (100)	474 (100)
Page preference				
Front page	66 (83.5)	234 (81.2)	107 (77.5)	407 (80.6)
Back page	1 (1.3)	16 (5.6)	7 (5.1)	24 (4.8)
Internal page	12 (15.2)	38 (13.2)	24 (17.4)	74 (14.7)
Total	79 (100)	288 (100)	138 (100)	505 (100)

In age context the highest proportion of newspaper readership was found among those who were up to 21 years old (71.2%) than those who were above 21 years old. Moreover the readership of Sindhi language newspapers was highest among those who were 21 years older (67.9) than those who were between 21 to 23 years old (62.9%) or above 23 years old (56.6%). And the readership of Urdu and English language newspapers was highest among those who were over 23 years old (24.8% and 18.6% respectively). In page preference the front page is preferred most by those who were up to 21 years old (83.5%) and the back page of the newspaper is preferred more by those who were between 21 to 23 years old (5.6%). Whereas, 'first reading to internal pages' is preferred most by those students who were more than 23 years old (17.4%).

The results analyzed in the context of subject-groups, as given in Table-6, show that on average the highest newspaper readership is found among the students of 'human and society' group (73.1%), and the lowest among 'information and politics' group (66.8%). Moreover, it was observed that Sindhi language newspapers are read mostly by the students of 'study and development' group (65.6%) and read least by 'information and politics' group (53.7%). Urdu language newspapers are read mostly by 'information and politics' group (29.4%) and read least by 'human and society' group (16.0%). Whereas the English language newspapers are read mostly by 'human and society' group (18.2%) and read least by 'study and development' group (16.7%). Finally, about page preference it was found that on the average front page is preferred most by 'information and politics' group (84.9%) and preferred least by 'study and Development' group (72.8%). Whereas, back page of the newspaper is preferred first most by 'study and development' group (7.6%) and preferred least by 'information and politics' group (2.2%). The internal page is first preferred mostly by 'study and development' group (19.6%) and preferred least by 'information and politics' group (12.9%).

Table-6
DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BY SUBJECT-GROUPS
AND NEWSPAPER READERSHIP (N and %)

	Information and politics	Human and Society	Study and Development	Total
Reading Newspaper				
Yes	129 (66.8)	207 (73.1)	68 (71.6)	404 (70.8)
No	2 (1.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.4)
Sometimes	62 (32.1)	76 (26.9)	27 (28.4)	165 (28.9)
Total	193 (100)	283 (100)	95 (100)	571 (100)

Newspaper Language*				
Sindhi	95 (53.7)	165 (65.2)	59 (65.6)	319 (61.3)
Urdu	52 (29.4)	42 (16.6)	16 (17.8)	110 (21.2)
English	30 (16.9)	46 (18.2)	15 (16.7)	91 (17.5)
Total	177 (100)	253 (100)	15 (100)	91 (100)
Page Preference				
Front page	158 (84.9)	216 (79.1)	67 (72.8)	441 (80.0)
Back page	4 (2.2)	16 (5.9)	7 (7.6)	27 (4.9)
Internal page	24 (12.9)	41 (15.0)	18 (19.6)	83 (15.1)
Total	186 (100)	41 (100)	18 (100)	83 (100)

* $\chi^2 = 11.33, p < 0.02, df = 4$.

CONCLUSION

It was found out of the survey that newspaper reading attitude and behavior on various parameters. It is considered an activity of better educated people, and when it is made feasible for young adults, they are inclined to read the dailies. Moreover, newspaper readership compared with TV watching and radio listening enhances more to political interest and cognition, therefore, newspaper readership among university students seems significant.

Particularly, in the context of this research attempt, it was observed the majority of the participants (80.3%) were male. And the first two major ethnicities they belong to were Sindhi (69.6%) and Urdu speaking (16.3%). About age, a strong predictor for daily use of the newspapers, it was found that the participants of this sample ranged from 20 to 43 years old. Whereas, their mean age was 23.13 years; and the majority proportion (56.9%) of them was between 21 to 23 years old students enrolled in the final year class

for the degree of M.A and B.S Part-IV year in various disciplines of the faculty of social sciences.

The findings further mention that the majority (70.6%) of the students reads newspapers. And compared with Urdu and English most of them (61.3%) read Sindhi language newspapers. Similar to previous studies that front page stories have a greater readership than other pages, this study also found that the majority (80.0%) prefers to read first the front page of a newspaper. Moreover on average male students read more than female students; and it was also found that Sindhi language newspapers are read more by male students, and Urdu language newspapers are read more by female students. Whereas, English language newspapers being read almost equally by both male and female students. Similarly further it was found that front page is preferred more by male and female preferred more to back page and internal pages.

Linguistically compared with Urdu and other various languages speaking students, newspaper readership was found higher among Sindhi students. Moreover, Sindhi language newspapers are read more by Sindhis and Urdu language newspapers are more by urbanite non-Sindhi speakers. That finding supports the previously studied idea that the population at a certain level will show their sentimental attachment to the media content which are in their own ethnic languages. Additionally on average first reading front page is preferred more by Urdu speaking and first reading back is preferred more by Sindhi and Siraiki speaking students. Finally the other main findings were that the highest readership was among the students studying the subjects related to 'human and society'. Whereas it was observed that Sindhi language newspapers are read most by those who were studying the subjects related to 'study and development'. However, Urdu language newspapers are to read most by those who were studying the subjects related to 'information and politics', and English language newspapers are read most by those who were studying subjects related to 'human and society'. Simultaneously the findings mention that reading first front page is preferred most by those studying subjects related to 'information and politics'; whereas reading first back page of the newspaper was preferred most by those who were studying the subjects related to 'study and development'.

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