



Inculcating Reading Habits among Secondary School Students

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Abstract Reading habits play important role in enhancing students' academic performance in schools. In order to achieve successful academic performance among students, parents must give more attention to monitor their children's education progress at home. This research has revealed the relationship between reading attitude and academic performance among Form 5 students in a secondary school in Malaysia. Moreover, the research attempts to examine whether reading attitude correlate to the academic performance and to discover thinking process for generating new knowledge through reading aspect. The research survey method using questionnaires were distributed to 105 Form 5 students. The results of the survey were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results indicated that the reading habits have a positive significant relationship to the academic performance. As a conclusion, school library should provide better facilities for students through purchasing the latest reading materials and creating information skill programs to enhance the reading interest among them.

Keywords academic performance, high-order thinking skills, home improvement, NILAM program, reading habits, reading materials, school library, teacher librarian

Introduction

In the new millennium, information can be accessed from various sources in both printed and non-printed through reading. It is a medium for the user to locate information more effectively through relevant content of reading materials. Reading is most suitable to seek knowledge more effectively. Reading habits must be inculcated from early age to ensure them fulfill several types of knowledge process. In order to develop reading habits practice, the student should have passion and "know-how" to read for enhancing knowledge and skills respectively.

Palani (2012) [1] defined reading habit as an essential and important aspect for creating a literate society in this world. It shapes the personality of individuals and it helps them to develop proper thinking methods, and creates new ideas. However, the developments in the mass media, had continued to influence interest in reading hard copy of literatures such as books, magazines and journals among others. On the other hand, all students especially in secondary school must integrate their knowledge skills with various sources to get new knowledge. It must be compulsory because the Ministry of Education has introduced "Higher Order Thinking Skills" which is platform to develop student process for thinking and solving problem through reading skills at the school.

Annamalai & Muniandy (2013) [2] mentioned that reading is a way to get better knowledge of one's own experiences and it can be an exciting journey to self-discovery. Reading transfers experiences to the individual so that the reader may expand one's horizons, identify, extend and intensify his or her interest and gain deeper understanding of the world [3]. In simple words, it is a process of interpreting printed and written words. In depth, it is an effective process of conscious learning that influences the accuracy of information, attitudes,



morals, beliefs, judgments and action of readers [4-5]. So, student must inculcate moral value through reading consistently through the National Philosophy of Education as below:

“Education in Malaysia is on-going efforts towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically balanced and harmonic, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation of large”

The Ministry of Education had introduced NILAM program to inculcate positive value through reading. NILAM stands for “Nilai Amalan Minat Membaca” to show that reading is very important among students to help them for improving reading skills towards High Order Thinking Skills activities during learning session at classroom. It can be done when NILAM program held for 30 minutes per week through Malay Language and English Language sessions by the supervision of the teachers in the library. Reading has also being used for leisure time as well as seeking knowledge in school.

According to Covert (2009) [6], leisure reading is the reading students do by choice, whether it is informational or for pleasure [7]. As students engage in leisure reading, they are spending time with a text because they want to. Students engage in this act of leisure reading on their own accord, not because their teachers assigned it to them [8]. At the same time, they can spend time on reading based on what they are read and preferred choice of relevant reading materials during learning at the school. In other words, reading habits had contributed on academic performance in school. The school administrator must play their role to equip various source of reading material and also create relevant program to student for enhancing knowledge through reading among students in school.

Background of the Study

Reading habits must inculcate positive value not only for students but also for the people who love to seek knowledge continuously in daily life. For reader, it helps them to identify paradigm shift of knowledge and it will generate new idea for developing reading as basis for seeking information with various aspects in life. In fact on this matter, content of reading material must be relevant to student especially to improve their academic performance in school. A review of the previous literature has been made to further explore the determinant that influence the authors about reading habits in their studies. This is very important how the student can be utilized reading material at the school library to achieve better performance in examination more effectively. Hollis (2002) [9] in his study found that majority of the respondents (84%) shared their thoughts on how adults could get young people interested in reading. Perhaps it is time we started listening. Research has shown that young people need to feel engaged with the texts they are reading. Allowing young adolescents to choose their own texts is one way of ensuring they will choose, and stay with texts that engage their interest. Unfortunately, part of the dilemma that teachers face is that “what some adolescent’s find worth reading ... is not valued in the curriculum” [10]. While looking to another perspective, Badariah *et al* (2011) [11] argued that research when reported the views reading motivation and strategy among 245 undergraduate students at MARA University of Technology in Terengganu campus quantitatively. The study found that the students characterized themselves as motivated readers having moderate scores, which reflected that they have a moderate level of self-efficacy. In other words, respondents thought that they would be moderately successful in their reading. Thus if their expectations for the reading tasks is of a moderate mode, then this would show that their willingness to expend efforts is only of average range or level because they believe partially in their success in the task. They tend to have some perseverance in their reading. Thus, when the respondents are faced with difficult texts/tasks, they would still persist doing the task until the end and they would not stop or evade doing the task. Thus, this would indicate that the students believe that they are competent enough and are efficacious at reading. This would result in them being engaged in any reading tasks, even the difficult ones. They would also not avoid challenging reading activities. For Work-avoidance category, it reflected that the students have some desire to try readings that are difficult. It means the students unable to find an effort for understanding their reading



process. It also makes an impact to differentiate understanding the content of reading towards learning process at the school.

A study by Professor Atan Long in 1984 taken from Haslinda *et al.* [12] reported that the reading interests and habits of Malaysians are still considered very low. Libraries were also not fully utilized. Among the reasons given are: insufficient time (59 %), the presence of other more important tasks (11 %) and difficult to get reading material (10 %). Similar results are also found by Pandian (1997) [13], in a study commission by the National Library of Malaysia, carried out a survey by Frank Small and Associates (1996) [14] with a sample of 60,441 respondents, it was reported that the literacy rate has slightly decreased to 92 percent from 93 percent in 1996. The most challenging must be faced by school administrator is limited finance to purchase new reading materials from supplier. This is a main factor why school student can't be highly achieved in NILAM program with constraint in allocation money to purchase best quality of reading materials in the school library. It has been contributed to teacher librarian for promoting reading program at the school more effectively. In this study some determinants that influence author intention to foster reading habits among secondary school students have been revealed such below:

- a) **Reading habits and attitude:** Based on the findings, most of them are enjoy reading, they do not think reading is boring and they also feels that reading is important even though they do not read enough and do not consider themselves as a good reader. The authors felt most students have good interest in reading aspects for looking good understanding what they have read.
- b) **School resource center and reading program:** From the survey, the findings indicated most student well-known of the school resource center services from their friends and teachers and also aware the implementation of NILAM program at the school. NILAM program can be achieved through students participative actively with positive involvement from school administrator support.

Based on the previous study it is clearly identified that most students have been problem to identify the suitable reading materials towards attitude at the school library. It was happened when school administrator unable to equip fully reading sources because lack of allocation money to manage school library more effectively. According to Abeyrathna and Zainab (2004) [15], they indicated that students were not very happy with the library collection especially for leisure reading. There was a discrepancy between what was available and what was actually desired. A suggested approach was to periodically borrow thematic book collections from the public library for teaching and reading needs. This approach would help the financially less able students to obtain a wider selection of reading materials. The main factor why they not happy with reading material allocation at library because:

- a) Few students are able to understand the library classification
- b) Most students are concerned to read for examination purpose
- c) The role of teacher librarian to promote reading activities in school curriculum
- d) Most students are preferred to read newspaper and magazine at the school library

Abeyrathna and Zainab (2004) [15] also identified that only 4% of students visited the school library every day and 35% indicated never using the school library. About 32% indicated visiting the school library regularly 2-3 days a week or once a week. More male students visited the library ever day but more female students visited either between 2-3 days or once per week. Most of the students visited the school library for learning purposes, either to look for reference materials (38%) or do their homework (28%). Only 27% used the library to read magazines and newspapers. Other purposes the students indicated include, to borrow books (23%) and to rest or chat with friends (13%). A small percentage of the students used the school library to borrow books (2-3 books or 1 book per week). Slightly more than half (57%) did not borrow anything from the school library. Nearly all students found the library a good place to study. More females (34%) than male (15.6%) borrowed books.

Shaharom and Salasiah (2002) [16] indicated that prerequisite for the progress of a civilization is through civilizing science. This is because the cultural knowledge to grow consistently and simultaneously created a glorious society. According to the Islamic scholar Ibn Khaldun through his work "Al-Muqaddimah" he said that the strength of knowledge not only be a complement to the conditions and physical strength but also give meaning to the people and the community at large. Thus, through reading we can explore more in-depth



knowledge in accordance with the government's desire to improve the mastery of individual holistically in line with the National Education Philosophy.

Based on this finding, teacher librarian must be creative to develop relevant reading program among students at school. It gave added value for them to enhance their knowledge skill towards academic performance more successfully. In addition, students must have critical thinking to give better opinion in any issue regarding what they are acquiring information through reading process. According to Nagaratnam *et al* (2012) [17], students by Gen Y faced challenge the new evolution through reading habits in higher institution to examine stress factor and reading habits among of them. Based on their finding, most students have preferred used newspaper and online magazine as medium to overcome stress factor and it will be affected on their academic performance at the higher institution. However, this research has only focused on stress factor among students and it also contributed among students attitude to undergone reading habits is the process for getting knowledge.

Instead on the studies, student attitude has inspired positive value to inculcate reading habits as a way of method to acquire knowledge continuously. It can be done through Walberg & Tsai (1985) [18] has taken from Annamalai and Muniandy (2013) [2], they stated that factors contributing to a positive attitude among students as below:

- a) Believing that reading is important
- b) Enjoying reading
- c) Having a high self-concept as a reader
- d) Having a home environment where verbal interaction takes place regularly

In fact of that, reading habits need more patient and sacrifices among student to seek knowledge more systematically in order for them by using "High Order Thinking Skills" to apply process of understanding of reading. The medium of reading has changed from printed into electronic digital materials. Student must fulfill various skills to adapt new technology and it might help them to locate an information more successfully and widely as long as searching material through electronic material is ease of use and flexible among of them. According to Jafre (2011) [19], he stated that the habit of reading is an essential life skill. Reading is not limited to increase in knowledge but it also builds maturity and character, sharpens thinking, and widens awareness in social, economic, political, and environmental issues. Reading is not a process that is inculcated over night; it takes effort and hard work. Inculcating a reading habit pays off handsomely in our lives either directly or indirectly. In a nutshell, the review of the previous study has shown us some of the identified factor that will influence reading habits among students, students and selecting reading material as medium towards academic performance. The funding and article processing charge has become as the main barrier for identifying the reading time, amount of book that they read and also motivation among students.

Libraries have a fundamental role in managing the reading materials through engaged relevant activities for information literacy needs. This is because the library is a warehouse of knowledge where there is a wealth of knowledge that can be found there. In Malaysia there are about 10,000 libraries with different types of functions such as:

1. Academic library
2. Special library
3. Public library
4. Community library
5. School library

Overall, the library provided appropriate allocation for the purchase of materials and improves the quality of library service. In addition, the ease of access to information should be provided to enable users for obtaining information more effectively. The library must provide appropriate services through the following methods:

1. To provide selected reading materials appropriate for the needs of readers through basic and acquisition program designed.
2. To organize the library collections and retrieval system provides validity of information more effectively.



3. To encourage the use of library materials through library loan service, reference, reprographic, the supply publishing systems, the Internet, by post or clustering loans and other additional service activities from time to time.
4. To disseminate the latest information available at the library to a particular user in the latest knowledge in science can be explored through Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) system.
5. To hold orientation sessions for library users to guide library users about an easy way to get the material resources in the library.
6. To provide physical facilities among readers and researchers to access information based on their fields more systematically [20].

Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive design research. A quantitative approach was used to gather the data by distribution of questionnaire to respondents. The samples were chosen from 5 students studying at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Dato' Sedia Raja, Rembau, Negeri Sembilan. In this study, 105 questionnaires have been distributed randomly, completely answered and replied. This study employed a structured questionnaire to obtain the respondent's feedback on the frequency of reading activity by the students in the secondary school. The questionnaire was divided into 4 sections in which each section focus on specific areas.

Section A focuses on the demographic information of the students, Section B on the reading attitudes and home improvement of the students on reading. Whereas, Section C on the school library use among students, Section D focuses on the acquired reading habits and interests by the students and finally Section E focuses on reading habits towards academic performance.

Findings

Table 1: Demographic Information

Item	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	44	41.9
Female	61	58.1
Stream		
Arts	77	73.3
Science	28	26.7
Guardian Occupation		
Others	35	33.3
Businessman	19	18.1
Clerk	13	12.1
Officer	13	12.1
Unemployed	10	9.5
Pensioner	8	7.6
Teacher	7	6.7
Reading Material Preferred		
Online Reading	47	44.8
Magazine	21	20.0
Newspaper	19	18.1
Book	18	17.1
Frequently Hour Spent		
Less than hour	45	42.9
1 – 3 hours	45	42.9
4 – 6 hours	10	9.5
More than 6 hours	5	4.8

The distribution of respondents by gender shows that 61 or 58.1% are female and 44 or 41.9% are male. The table also indicates that 26.7% of the respondents were from science stream and another 73.3% were arts stream students. Respondent's guardian occupation shows that the majority of guardian worked in other sector with weightage 35 (33.3%). Most of them worked as driver, own worker and also working at industrial area. It was



followed by businessman with 19 respondents (18.1%), clerk and officer with same weightage 13 respondents (12.4%), unemployed with 10 respondents (9.5%), pensioner with 8 respondents (7.6%) and officer with 7 respondents (6.7%). Meanwhile, most of the respondents 47 (44.8%) preferred to use online reading for access information. Then followed by magazine with 21 respondents (20.0%), book with 19 respondents (18.1%) and newspaper with 18 respondents (17.1%).

The finding shows that most of the respondents, 47 (44.8%) preferred to use online reading for access of information, followed by magazine with 21 respondents (20.0%), book with 19 respondents (18.1%) and newspaper with 18 respondents (17.1%). Meanwhile, majority of respondents spent less than hour from 45 respondents (42.9%) and then followed by 45 respondents (42.9%) were spent 1-3 hours for reading, 10 respondents (9.5%) were spent 4-6 hours reading and another 5 respondents (4.8%) spent more than 6 hours for reading activities.

Reading Attitudes

The questionnaire consists of questions on reading attitudes towards academic performance among students in secondary school. In this section, questions were asked pertaining to time spent for reading in a day as illustrated in Table 2. The finding shows that 59.0% were agreed that they enjoy reading. However, there were students (1%) who disagreed about enjoying reading. The findings also showed that the highest percentage (49.5%) of the respondents agreed that they read daily or almost every day. The findings indicated that (46.7%) of the respondents agreed that they spend not less than 2 hours daily, whereas, students who had moderate spend not less than 2 hours were 21% of respondents. The rest of them were chose disagreed that represented 9.5% of respondents and only 1% strongly disagreed of respondents have not spent not less than 2 hours reading.

Table 2: Reading Attitudes

S. No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Quite Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I enjoy reading	29 (27.6%)	62 (59.0%)	13 (12.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)
2.	I read every day or almost every day.	20 (19.0%)	52 (49.5%)	24 (22.9%)	8 (7.6%)	1 (1.0%)
3.	I will spend not less than 2 hours for reading in a day.	23 (21.9%)	49 (46.7%)	22 (21.0%)	10 (9.5%)	1 (1.0%)
4.	I read enough and I am a good reader.	33 (31.4%)	42 (40.0%)	23 (21.9%)	6 (5.7%)	1 (1.0%)
5.	Reading is important.	75 (71.4%)	26 (24.8%)	4 (3.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
6.	Reading is more for girls than boys.	59 (56.2%)	29 (27.6%)	11 (10.5%)	2 (1.9%)	4 (3.8%)

The finding shows that the attitude of the students in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Dato' Sedia Raja towards reading. They enjoy reading and they also feel that reading is important even though they do not read enough and do not consider themselves as a good reader. The respondents also feel that reading is equally important for both girls and boys.

Home Improvement

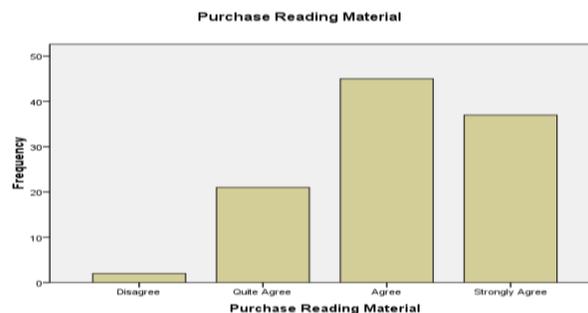


Figure 1: Purchase Reading Material



Home improvement plays a very important role in improving reading habits among their children needs in education. It is important for parents to give positive support to them for enhancing learning process at the school. From the survey, majority of the respondents, 45 (42.9%) agreed that parent had allocated reading material for learning purpose, followed by 37 (35.2%) respondents strongly agreed, 21 (20.0%) respondents quite agreed and 2 (1.9%) respondents strongly disagreed to this statement.

School Library Use

Teacher librarian must play their role for promoting and guiding the students for using library more effectively. The finding shows that 35 (33.3%) respondents were agreed that library staff have awareness to organize reading materials more effectively, followed by 32 (30.5%) respondents were quite agreed, 29 (27.6%) respondents were strongly agreed, 6 (5.7%) respondents were disagree and 3 (2.9%) respondents were strongly disagree to this statement.

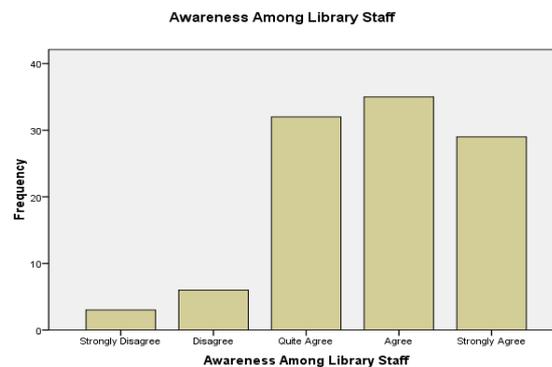


Figure 2: Awareness among Library Staff

Acquired Reading Habits and Interests

Reading is important among people especially for students at school. Reading is also a part of learning in life. It helps to educate people in many ways. From reading students can explore many ways to gain their knowledge respectively. The figure shows that 49 (46.7%) respondents were agreed that they were preferred to read for gaining new knowledge, followed by 44 (41.9%) respondents were strongly agreed, 10 (9.5%) respondents were quite agreed and 2 (1.9%) respondents were disagree to this statement.

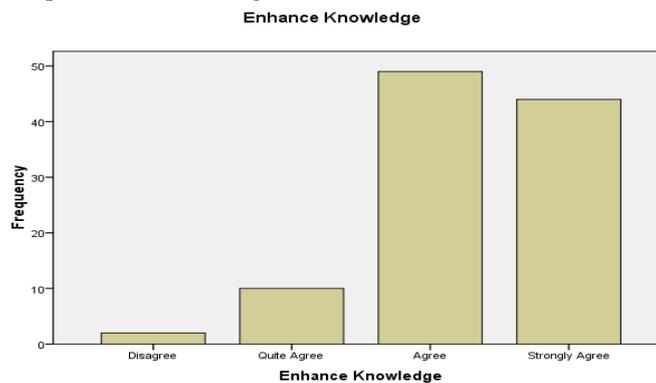


Figure 3: Enhance Knowledge

Academic Performance

Reading can contribute towards academic performance among student for enhancing success in examination. The figure shows that 57 (54.3%) respondents agreed that they are able to improve better quality performance in examination, followed by 26 (24.8%) respondents strongly agreed and 21 (21.0%) respondents quite agreed to this statement.



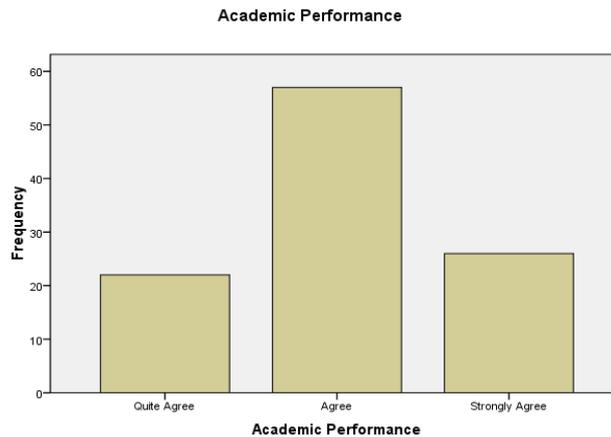


Figure 4: Quality Performance

The figure shows that most of the respondents have awareness and agreed that reading habits can be achieved through participation from all parties such as school administrator and Teachers' and Parents Association (PIBG) to create better program to enhance better quality in academic performance.

Discussion

The findings revealed that respondents seem to have little awareness based on the importance of reading habits which had contributed towards academic performance among them. Furthermore, the respondents appeared to have relatively lack of reading materials and untrained teacher librarian to manage and organize resource management more systematically. There also seemed to be little in the way of provision of training to assist students in information competence. While some orientation activities were provided for students at the beginning of their school session, these students are still experiencing difficulty finding materials for doing revision and there appear to be no structured approach to the provision of information skills training by teacher librarian at the school resource center. Teacher librarian should enhance his/her knowledge about library skills and needs to engage more programs to the students. Students need support in evaluating the resources they locate as well as appropriate search and resource discovery skills.

Most school resource centers provide information skills training programs for students to enhancing knowledge in information searching. The school library needs to provide an extensive training program for students. Beginning with the orientation and done by teacher librarian as a role to educate students for using all facilities in the library. They include:

- I. Tours
- II. Training sessions
 - Discovering Library
 - Enhancing book review
 - Mastering information searching
- III. Information skills for students

Most school library assist students to locate and use appropriate materials and provide links to reading lists through the library catalogues. The Teachers' Activity Center should have an initiative to provide relevant training to all teacher librarian regarding job specification and it also contributed towards teacher specialist who conducted and well-organized at the school library. Liaison officer are frequently appointed to work with particular school to establish points of contact and to ensure appropriate communication about requirements and resource provision. Other than that, parents must give their moral support to inculcate their children makes a reading is good activity not only for academic purpose but also giving new dimension in the world of knowledge respectively.

The school library needs to improve their service to assist their users that range from outlining loan conditions to accessing services remotely. Increasingly, the school library can be done when all parties have involved



ensuring library can be managed with relevant task and responsibility. School library require an easily accessible for student closely because library is a center for getting knowledge widely.

Recommendation

This section provides several recommendations for further research originated from the findings of this study as follows:

- Although this research employed the survey approach that be sure of principally on quantitative data for statistical generalization, the results could not be generalizable to the entire population as other students who study at the school are not contained within the study. Therefore, it is hoped that a future research could extend beyond this range to comprise a wide range of students from another schools in order to investigate their interest on reading habits towards academic performance at the school.
- In this research, researchers have chosen Form 5 students to analyze which represented a small sample size due to time limitation and resource problems encountered by the researchers. Hence, it is recommended that a further research could include all students on a larger sample for the purpose of result generalization.
- Study on effectiveness of library activity in school libraries are needed in order to improve the knowledge skills that had been collaborated between Teachers' Activity Center and also participation from Educational Technology Division to identify the information needs in reading aspect more effectively.
- Besides students, teachers and school staff can also be involved in the research. This further research should be carried out to examine the level of reading attitude, usage, effectiveness and perceived information needs of students as well as teachers.

Conclusion

The study has shown the impact of reading habits among Form 5 students in a secondary school in Malaysia. The study has revealed limited library experience, usage and awareness among the respondents especially on reading activities. The study has contributed to the reading attitude, parent participation on reading to their children and also the role of teacher librarian for implementing relevant program to the students.

Lifelong learning and continuing professional developments are synonymous and a part of today's workplace. Hence, there is a need for school students to increasing reading level according information discovery through high-order thinking skills learning at the classroom. The student must have knowledge to develop information skills that will enable them to identify, evaluate and use information effectively. Wider awareness needs among students to be made of the library's services and resources to them and school staff. Liaison Officer from Teachers' Activity Center and teacher librarians need to acknowledge that they both have the role to play in developing students' information skills. The researchers hope that the findings of this study will contribute positively towards the excellent in organizing reading activities in the country.

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