



## THE EFFECT OF NON-ACADEMIC BOOK READING HABITS ON STUDENT CREATIVITY

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**Abstract:** The influence of reading non-academic books on students' creative abilities has become an increasingly interesting topic in educational research. This study aims to explore how the habit of reading non-academic materials contributes to the enhancement of creativity among university students. Using the literature review method, this study synthesized findings from previous research to examine the relationship between reading frequency, types of books read, and the resulting creative outcomes. The analysis revealed that engaging with diverse genres of non-academic literature, such as fiction, biographies and essays, can foster imagination, divergent thinking and problem-solving abilities. In addition, the research also highlighted the role of reading as a leisure activity that stimulates cognitive flexibility and broadens perspectives. The findings suggest that incorporating non-academic reading into the educational framework can support students' creative development. However, limitations in existing research call for further empirical research to strengthen the theoretical foundation.

### INTRODUCTION

Creativity is increasingly recognized as an essential competency for students in the 21st century, as it equips them with the ability to innovate and solve complex problems. The habit of reading non-academic books, often called “reading for pleasure”, has been shown to encourage divergent thinking and expand cognitive flexibility, both of which are crucial for the development of creativity. According to Zulaikah et al. (2023), digital and traditional reading habits significantly affect students' knowledge acquisition and imaginative capacity. Non-academic books, such as fiction or biographies, expose students to diverse narratives and ideas, allowing them to think outside of rigid academic frameworks. Reading broadens perspectives and stimulates cognitive processes essential for creativity. The pleasure of reading encourages psychological absorption and divergent thinking, as highlighted by Miall and Kuiken (2002). This habit not only enhances critical thinking skills, as noted by Fadilah et al. (2020), but also enriches students' ability to ideate and synthesize unique concepts. By immersing themselves in various genres, students can develop new approaches to problem solving and innovative

thinking. Despite the proven benefits, Indonesian students show low engagement in non-academic reading. According to a 2017 National Library study, the average Indonesian reads only 3-4 books per year, and the country's literacy ranking is among the lowest in the world (Rahmi et al., 2023). This lack of engagement inhibits students from learning.



Figure 1. One example of non-academic book evidence.

Non-academic reading, often referred to as pleasure reading, is an activity that contributes significantly to cognitive and creative development. This type of reading involves interacting with texts outside of academic demands, such as fiction, essays, and biographies, which opens up opportunities for readers to explore diverse narratives and perspectives. Anggraini et al. (2020) showed that reading habits also improve critical thinking skills, which is the foundation of creativity. By thinking critically, students can face complex problems with innovative solutions. Reading for pleasure directly influences creativity by stimulating imagination and cognitive flexibility. Hawkins (2013) supports this by showing that students who regularly engage in pleasure reading have a higher tolerance for complexity and openness to new experiences. Such cognitive skills are essential for fostering creativity in both academic and professional contexts.

However, in Indonesia, low literacy levels pose a challenge in building a reading culture. Research shows that students spend less than an hour per day reading on average, which limits

their ability to explore diverse ideas and perspectives (Rahmi et al., 2023). However, initiatives such as the Buku Sekolah Elektronik (BSE) program that provides free access to digital books attempt to address the lack of reading resources. However, Zulaikah et al. (2023) assert that such programs need to include non-academic reading materials to optimize their potential to enhance creativity. The emergence of digital reading formats, such as e-books, has also changed reading habits. Zulaikah et al. (2023) reported that digital platforms offer convenience and accessibility, allowing students to explore more diverse reading materials. However, Rahmi et al. (2023) cautioned that fragmented digital consumption can negatively impact focus, which is an essential component for the continuous development of creativity. These findings emphasize the importance of structured and purposeful reading habits to promote creativity.

Higher education institutions have an important role to play in integrating non-academic reading into the curriculum. Hawkins (2013) and Anggraini et al. (2020) highlight the importance of such initiatives, pointing out that reading habits contribute to the development of critical and creative thinking skills. By encouraging students to engage with diverse texts, universities can equip them with the cognitive tools necessary to face the challenges of an increasingly complex world.

Overall, this literature confirms the significant impact of non-academic reading on creativity and its potential as an educational tool. However, there are still gaps in the integration of this practice into educational frameworks, especially in Indonesia. Future research and policy should focus on promoting pleasure reading as a way to foster holistic student development.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The approach used in this study is a quantitative approach with a survey method. This study aims to analyze the relationship between the habit of reading non-academic books and the level of creativity of students. The research design used is a cross-sectional design, where data is collected at one specific time to provide an overview of students' reading habits and creativity. The population in this study were all undergraduate students from various study programs at the university that became the research location. The sampling technique used stratified random sampling to ensure representation from various academic backgrounds. The research sample amounted to 14 people, which was selected based on the calculation of the sample size using the Krejcie and Morgan table (Sugiyono, 2011).

The data collection technique used a survey questionnaire that was divided into three main sections:

1. Demographic data, including information on age, gender, study program, and academic year.
2. Reading Habits, including reading frequency, reading duration, and types of non-academic books read.
3. Creativity Assessment, using a 1-5 Likert scale to measure the impact of reading on creativity, such as divergent thinking, ideation, and problem solving.

After the questionnaires were distributed, the data obtained were analyzed using descriptive and inferential data analysis techniques. Descriptive analysis resulted in the distribution of maximum, minimum, mean, and standard deviation values, while inferential analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis. The analysis includes:

1. Pearson correlation to measure the relationship between reading habits and creativity.
2. Simple Linear Regression to assess the extent to which reading habits contribute to creativity.

Before the data was analyzed, a prerequisite test of analysis was conducted, namely the normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25 software, which ensures the accuracy of statistical calculations and interpretations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data gathered, the results demonstrate the influence of non-academic book reading habits on student creativity. The findings are presented in terms of key aspects analyzed through the questionnaire.

Description : Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD).

No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
1.	Does reading non-academic books help you come up with new ideas for assignments/projects?	31%	46%	23%	0%	0%	100%
2.	Does reading non-academic books help you come up with new ideas for assignments/projects?	23%	46%	23%	8%	0%	100%
3.	Frequency of reading non-academic books (1-2 times per month, 3-4 times, etc.)	46%	31%	15%	8%	0%	100%

4.	Types of books read (fiction, motivational, other)	62%	31%	8%	0%	0%	100%
5.	Reading duration per session (less than 30 minutes, 30 minutes-1 hour, etc.)	54%	31%	15%	0%	0%	100%

Table 1 . Non-Academic Book Reading Questionnaire Results and Impact on Creativity

The findings of this study show that most respondents have a habit of reading non-academic books regularly, although with varying frequencies. A total of 46% stated that they read one to two times per month, followed by 31% who read three to four times, and 15% who read more than five times per month. Meanwhile, 8% of respondents stated that they never read non-academic books. Regarding the type of book, fiction was the most popular category, chosen by 62% of respondents, followed by self-help and motivational books (31%), and 8% chose other types of books.

The duration of reading sessions varied, with 54% spending less than 30 minutes, 31% reading for 30 minutes to an hour, and 15% reading for one to two hours per session. In terms of the impact of reading on creativity, 77% of respondents agreed that reading non-academic books helped them generate new ideas for assignments or projects, with 31% strongly agreeing and 46% agreeing. Similarly, 69% believed that reading non-academic books improved their problem-solving abilities, with 23% strongly agreeing and 46% agreeing.

## Discussion

The findings suggest that the habit of reading non-academic books has a positive influence on students' creativity, especially in generating new ideas for tasks and improving problem-solving ability. Most respondents acknowledged that reading such books helps them think creatively and find innovative solutions.

The preference for fiction among the respondents highlights the role of imaginative stories in stimulating creativity and expanding thought processes. Fiction often presents scenarios that challenge readers to think beyond conventional approaches. Meanwhile, self-help and motivational books seem to offer practical benefits, enhancing self-development and equipping readers with problem-solving strategies. Although the duration of reading sessions varied, with the majority reading for less than 30 minutes, the results suggest that the quality of the reading material may be more important than the time spent. Even with shorter reading

durations, students reported meaningful benefits, underscoring the importance of consistent reading habits regardless of time constraints.

Overall, although the frequency and duration of reading non-academic books varied, the majority of respondents felt that this activity was beneficial in enhancing their creativity. The results of this study emphasize that even limited reading engagement can contribute to idea generation and problem-solving ability.

However, this study is limited by the small sample size of 13 respondents, which may limit the generalizability of the results. Further research with a larger sample and more comprehensive analysis is recommended to explore the relationship between reading habits and creativity in more depth.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION**

This study reveals that non-academic reading habits significantly contribute to fostering students' creativity. The study identified that most students engage with fiction books and motivational books, which play different roles in enhancing creativity. Fiction books encourage imaginative thinking by presenting diverse narratives and scenarios, while motivational books provide insights and practical strategies for solving problems. Despite the varying duration of reading sessions, these findings emphasize that the quality and relevance of reading material is more important than the time spent, as even short, consistent reading sessions can yield positive results. Non-academic reading also supports students in generating new ideas for assignments and projects as well as improving their problem-solving abilities, highlighting the importance of reading as part of the learning process. However, the findings of this study are limited by the small sample size of 13 respondents, which affects the generalizability of the results. Future research should include a larger and more diverse sample to validate and extend these findings.

To maximize the non-academic benefits of reading, educators and institutions should encourage students to develop regular reading habits across a variety of genres. Providing access to curated reading materials and integrating non-academic reading into educational frameworks can enrich students' critical thinking and creativity. It is also recommended that students balance their reading habits with reflective practices to fully utilize the insights gained from their reading. Ultimately, non-academic reading offers significant potential for personal and academic growth, equipping students with the cognitive tools necessary to navigate complex challenges in both educational and professional contexts.



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