

# A Qualitative Case Study on Reading Practices and Habits of High School Students

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## Abstract

Reading has been identified as an indicator of successful academic achievement. The present qualitative study explored reading literacy practices of Omani adolescent students. Three high school students participated in semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed four main factors that determined their reading practices: motivation to read, home literacy practices, students' reading rituals, and digital literacy practices. These four factors were discussed in light of other related topics which included reading interest and school reading activities as they influenced students' motivation to read, and parental involvement and availability of home library as examples of home literacy practices. Furthermore, students' reading rituals were discussed considering their quest for meaning, pre-reading preparation tasks, and preferred time of day to read, whereas the digital literacy factor encompassed the sub-topics of internet and mobile applications and the role of other devices provoking reading interest. Understanding the reading literacy practices of adolescent learners offers insights into how to develop effective strategies to improve those practices. These insights can subsequently aid educators and parents in their reading instruction and ability to be productively involved in their children's reading literacy development, respectively. Moreover, other students may learn from their peers' successful reading practices.

**Keywords:** interest, motivation, literacy, parental, digital

## 1. Introduction

The more students read, the better readers they become and this, reading proficiency, eventually leads to higher academic achievement and a more productive social life (Gambrell, 2015). Reading is central to a range of literacy practices demanded of university students (O'Shea, McKenna & Thomson, 2019). Adolescent students are at a critical age and identifying their literacy reading practices is vital to support their learning and future success. Even though parents who encourage their children to read are believed to positively influence these children's reading motivation and sustainability, research on this impact has been mainly restricted to parents' role in preschool and primary grades rather than in older grades (Klauda, 2009). In the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), students are often exposed to the language only within the classroom, sometimes for less than an hour a day. Such limited language practice in school would not probably aid students to be proficient users of the English language. As foreign language users, students need to be exposed to a rich and varied reading input especially to equip them with comprehension and other critical life skills.

Even though literacy in the era of new literacy studies diverged from the conventional way of thinking of it as reading and writing, reading still assumes an essential role in human literacy. Therefore, understanding the factors that assist adolescent learners of English to read whether in or outside their school will be of great value to deeply understand what can be considered good practices to learn from. The literature being reviewed calls for more focused research on students' reading at a critical age as adolescent years.

## 2. Literature Review

This section presents a review of pertaining literature related to the role of home literacy environment and motivation to read and social constructivism to theoretically situate the present research paper.

### 2.1 Home Literacy Environment

Baker, Sonnenschein, Serpell, and Scher (1996) mentioned that “although public schooling is designed to be equally effective for all children, in practice some socio-cultural groups have consistently fared better in the system than others” (p.70). Numerous factors probably contribute to the disparity in children's achievement, including children's home literacy environment and practices (Thompson, Mixon, & Serpell, 1996). Researchers started to focus on the characteristics of the home environment which include reading to or with children, availability of books at home, the frequency of visiting the library, parents holding constructive conversations with their children, and parents being role models for readers themselves (Baker et al., 1996) and access to digital technologies.

A strong predictor of reading achievement is the number of books owned by the families at home. Sinclair, McCleery, Koepsell, Zuckerman, and Stevenson (2018) indicated that previous studies on older children pointed out that the number of books available at home strongly predicts children's reading achievement. A national survey by Scholastic released in 2015 about students' reading habits listed several dynamics as the most powerful predictors of frequent reading for children aged between 6 and 17 years old, one of which is parents' frequency of reading. Rowe's (1991) exploratory study revealed that home reading activities significantly influence students' reading achievement and attitudes towards reading.

In a study to understand the relationship between parental literacy involvement and reading literacy of their children, Hemmerichs, Agirdag, and Kavadias (2017) found that there was a positive relationship between early parental involvement before primary school literacy activities and children's increased level of reading literacy. Parents who support their children's reading tend to know their reading preferences, set a role model for reading engagement, and help their children choose and get access to books (Merga & Roni, 2018). Parental involvement implies the paramount place of a role model to create a love for sustainable reading. Via an extensive review of pertinent literature, Klauda (2009) maintained that literature about parents' role in developing their adolescent children reading literacy is still limited in quantity.

Based on McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth's (1995) model of reading attitude and Guthrie and Wigfield's (2000) engagement model of reading, when parents per se engage in reading and create a promoting literacy environment, their children and adolescents are likely to engage in reading and to develop a positive attitude towards reading. A parent demonstrates intentional or unintentional reading support by buying books as an example of intentional support or frequently reading serving as both intentional and unintentional support (Klauda, 2009).

Children and adolescents, nowadays, encounter different types of texts via their constant engagement with digital technologies (Ozturk & Ohi, 2018) particularly the mobile phone. Ozturk and Ohi (2018) reported that the children's usage of digital technologies, at home, contributes positively to their interest to read particularly during the early schooling years.

### 2.2 Motivation to Read

Based on their research findings, Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) recommended five ways to increase students' motivation to read; self-selection, attention to characteristics of books, personal interests, access to books, and active involvement of others.

Identifying what adolescents are reading or choosing to read is of particular importance because it can shed light on whether there exists a match or mismatch between what students' reading interests are and what the reading expectations in school are (Hopper, 2005). In a quasi-experimental study conducted by Hann (2018), choice of what to read was found to increase students' sense of autonomy which is intimately related to intrinsic motivation and successful learning (Littlewood, 1999). What makes a person get engaged in reading activities is the fact that reading a variety of texts instead of a single one is rather more interesting and motivating because reading a wide range of texts exposes readers to a variety of genres and topics.

A national survey released in 2015 about students' reading habits listed several dynamics as the most influential predictors of frequent reading for children aged between 6 and 17 years old. Frequent readers reported reading for enjoyment and noted that reading for fun is an important factor to develop their reading habits (Scholastic, 2015). Many researchers, such as Mokhtari, Reichard, and Gardner (2009) noted that there is a consensus among teachers, educators, and reading researchers that engaging students in recreational, or what is commonly labeled as free voluntary reading, and academic, which is school-related reading, is critically important for students' reading development and overall academic achievement. Therefore, students at all levels should be encouraged to engage in both types of reading.

Applegate and Applegate (2010) reported that motivated readers read more and attain high reading achievement than

their less motivated peers. It is widely believed that children who are motivated to read will spend more time reading (Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999). Research findings support the positive effect of increased reading on improving reading achievement (Mazzoni, Gambrell, & Korkeamaki, 1999; Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990) as well as the likelihood of becoming lifelong readers (Wang & Guthrie, 2004).

### *2.3 Adolescent Reading Literacy*

Early childhood and primary literacy studies have gained considerable attention from researchers and educators. However, the “field of adolescent and adult literacy has been long clamoring for light” (Stevens, 2008, p.70). Research points out that there is a decline in children's reading enjoyment as they progress through their school education. A concern is raised, thus, about how to maintain a child's motivation and engagement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Hence, the topic of adolescent achievement and literacy has recently gained significant interest from researchers and policymakers (Franzak, 2006).

Regular reading habits, indicated by Merga and Roni (2018), play a vital role in enabling both young people and adults to meet the ever-increasing literacy demands of contemporary society. In a nutshell, while it is essential to focus on early childhood reading particularly reading aloud, subsequent experiences that enhance the desire and motivation to read and thus contribute to the creation of a commitment to reading are of great significance to further investigate (Merga, 2017). The need to study adolescents' reading practices rises due to two prominent reasons. Firstly, it is widely believed that parents' involvement and support during adolescence decline resulting in a negative effect on adolescents' motivation, and achievement, and secondly peers come to play a pivotal role during this developmental period with the potential of both positive and negative consequences on motivation (Klauda, 2009).

### *2.4 Social Constructivist Perspective of Reading*

Reading does not occur in a vacuum neither it is merely a cognitive act. It takes place within a social context. Thus, reading is deemed as a social activity that “occurs in specific social contexts and can be influenced by key social agents such as parents” (Merga & Roni, 2018).

The present study is based on a social constructivist perspective that views learning as a situated practice occurring in a certain socio-cultural context (Rogoff, 1991). From this perspective, literacy is a function of social practices (Street & Lefstein, 2007). Literacy development, through the lens of a social constructive view, implies that motivation and attitudes toward reading are social constructs and thus meaningful reading only occurs in the social context (Hidi, 2001; Oldfather & Dahl, 1994). Based on this view, children's and adolescents' attitudes toward reading originate in the affective and socio-cognitive processes they experience as they engage in the social construction of meaning. Therefore, and based on the views of the social constructivism theories, the present study is an attempt to understand adolescent learners' practices in reading which take place in a social context: in and outside the school.

Lev Vygotsky, the father of sociocultural theory, believed that parents, peers, and the culture at large are responsible for developing reading. Vygotsky explains the role of social learning “every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual; first, between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child (intra-psychological)” (1978, p.57). Thus, if we apply this principle to reading, we can understand that to be a proficient reader, one has to be involved with the process of reading with others, be it parents or any caregivers, as a precondition to becoming a successful independent reader. With this thinking in mind, having a more knowledgeable other is a necessary pre-requisite for further development of reading.

## **3. Significance of the Study**

Considering the educational gains of reading whether for academic success or life-long learning, “extensive and intensive forms of reading cannot be neglected by high school students” (Akande & Oyedapo, 2018, p. 50). A review of literature carried out by Franzak (2006) revealed that there is a “lack of consensus on what constitutes proficiency in reading and what constitutes best practice for promoting proficiency” (p. 212). The value of identifying the practices of high achievers in English lies in the fact that other learners, especially struggling readers, can learn from the example set by good readers. Successful and effective practices, when identified, inspire others to benefit and learn from. Additionally, uncovering successful reading practices of avid readers can also inform teaching practices. In other words, teachers can boost the students' reading motivation and subsequently contribute to their overall success in the language by understanding their reading practices, habits and preferences. It is of an equal value to understand the reading literacy practices of such good English learners because this can provide insightful information to parents to learn about what acts represent best practices to employ with their children.

#### 4. Statement of Problem

Many studies contend that there is a decline in reading among middle and high school students (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). While reading experiences during the early years is formative to shaping an avid reader, “greater research attention on what occurs beyond this point is warranted due to the range of experiences that further shaped and strengthened the avid book reading habit” (Merga, 2017, p. 16). Exploring adolescents', and high school students, literacy preferences, habits, and practices widen our understanding of what can be effective reading, writing, and other forms of literacy practices and activities in the era of multi-literacies. Reading proficiency is intimately connected to maintaining a better and more productive social, civic, and academic life (Gambrell, 2015).

High academic standing in the English language, as a core subject, in high school, especially in grade twelve, is a determinant of future education paths in tertiary institutions. For example, Alliance for Excellent Education (2004) confirmed that 25% of young students who enter middle and high school struggle to read and comprehend their grade level textbooks and materials with other subject matters. Growing up in a reading-driven environment, especially at home has empirically proven to impact young individuals reading achievement. Identifying the environmental factors, be they home, school, or society at large, that shape an individual's reading literacy practices and habits constitutes an important need in literacy studies. Hence, the present study is an attempt to address the question:

What are the factors that determine Omani adolescent students' reading literacy practices in and out of school?

#### 5. Research Design

A qualitative approach was employed for the research design in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data to yield an in-depth understanding of the research problem. The following section describes the study participants, data collection tools and procedures, and finally data analysis.

##### 5.1 Participants

The researcher selected the snowball sampling technique to locate the targeted sample for the study. The first student was identified in light of the researcher's own experience, and the other two participants were recommended by the first participant. They were Omani girls who lived in Saham, a small city in the North Batinah governorate. The participants of the study were three high school students; two were in grade eleven and one was a grade ten student. Their ages were 16, 16, and 15 years old respectively. The three of them were learners of English as a foreign language and Arabic as their mother tongue. All of them scored A in the English language subject and were known for their exemplary academic records. The three students were called Shamsa, Aysha, and Naeema (pseudonyms).

The researcher maintained the participants' privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity by keeping their identities anonymous using pseudonyms and keeping their personal information secure unless used for research purposes only.

##### 5.2 Data Collection Tools and Procedures

This qualitative research study employed semi-structured interviews as a research instrument. It is believed that interviews allow for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and allow the interviewees to express their ideas in sufficient detail (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Questions for the interview were obtained after an intensive review of pertinent literature. Then, the initial version of it was double-checked with a scholar, an instructor in the field of language and literacy.

Semi-structured interviews are believed to produce in-depth information from the participants. They also prevent divergence from the core focus of the research purpose (Adams, 2015). The interviews were conducted in the house of one student over two days based on the preferred time of the students and their families. The interviews were conducted in Arabic to allow the students to talk with ease and amply express their thoughts since Arabic was their mother tongue. Each interview lasted for around fifteen minutes and the informants' and their parents' consent was obtained to audio record the interviews.

The collection of data went through several steps. Figure (1) depicts the stages that were followed from the beginning of developing the research instruments until yielding the desirable data for analysis.

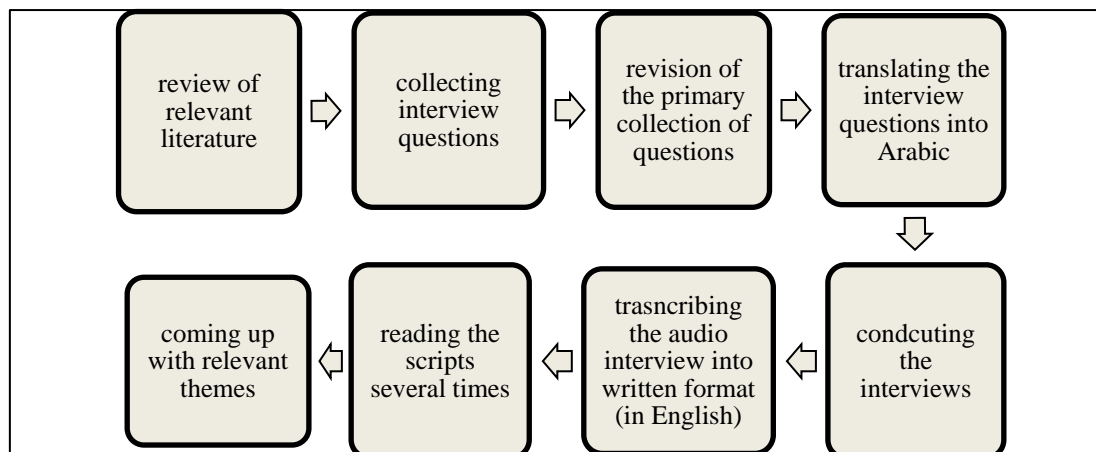


Figure 1. Stages followed to develop and collect the research data

### 5.3 Data Analysis

After conducting the interviews, the researcher listened to the recorded scripts more than once and then transcribed them into an English-written script with the aid of computer software called *Inscribe* in which the researcher was able to play the audio and write the script in the same window of the software. It allowed the researcher to rewind, pause, and forward the audio recordings accurately and easily. The researcher, then, read each written script several times to look for emerging themes relevant to in- or out-school reading literacy practices. Subsequently, sub-topics were listed under each theme. Figure (2) illustrates the themes and the associated topics under each one of them.

## 6. Findings and Discussion

The interviews, with the three students, uncovered four factors that determined their reading practices. These were motivation to read, home literacy practices, students' reading rituals, and digital reading practices. These four factors are further explained via some related topics. Figure (2) shows the factors determining students' reading practices.

### 6.1 Motivation to Read

Reading is driven by a motive. People read for several reasons. The study participants emphasized the role of interest as a major reason that makes them read. Others, particularly school students, develop a thrust for reading as a result of the direct impact of their school reading activities. To make adolescents proficient readers and writers, educators must tap into what motivates them (Doepker & Ortlieb, 2011). In this vein, the findings of Edmunds and Bauserman's (2006) study revealed that personal interest has been mentioned very frequently to indicate what influenced children's reading motivation.

#### 6.1.1 Interest

Reading texts operates within a vast range of genres since people differ in their preferences. Doepker and Ortlieb (2011) explained that it is natural that adolescents are inclined towards specific topics or fads. When these students were asked about the type of materials they prefer to read, their responses varied reflecting their interests and choice. One of the students mentioned that she enjoyed reading "novels about suspense or mystery...[the ones] that the ending is different from the beginning" (Shamsa, interview). Another interesting response from this participant, Shamsa, was her explanation of why she enjoys reading. She stated that: "Because I get engaged with the book...I see that the book talks to me a lot", while Naeema said she preferred books about "personal development" and "how to improve your English" sort of books. Various elements come into play to get learners hooked on their reading. The key to developing highly motivated readers is to provide high-interest reading texts and moderately challenging tasks (Gambrell, 2015). Educators must then strive to find out the personal interests of their students especially if they are teaching adolescents. Reading materials that are of personal interest to learners can pave the way toward deeper levels of understanding since they captivate their readers.

The third participant mentioned that novels were her best option for reading especially detective and crime novels. She explained that she enjoyed reading a lot because of "the feeling [she] gets from reading" and she added that "being involved in the events" is another reason why she liked reading. This explained why she preferred novels more than other sorts of genres. Shamsa had books such as novels in her home library. When she was asked who selected books for the library, she replied that it was her mother and herself. The sort of materials found in her home

library reflected the sort of reading materials she preferred and enjoyed reading. Once again, personal interest was the driving force behind the choice of books to have at the home library.

### 6.1.2 School Reading Activities

The three study participants contended the significant role school in general and teachers, in particular, played in honing their reading proficiency. Teachers, as the participants indicated, usually encouraged them to read and to take part in extra-curricular activities. Shamsa and Naeema mentioned that they had the chance to participate in writing contests that required them to extensively read beforehand. In the interview, Shamsa mentioned, “I remember I took part in the Indian school contest several times which required me to read a lot in English about a single topic”. A similar remark was expressed by Naeema when she said “I did participate in writing. To write well, I had to read several materials”. The third student mentioned her participation in school morning assembly programs as an example of extra-curricular reading activities.

Added to that, teachers provided the students with extra reading materials as a way to elevate their reading and to also raise their level of motivation toward reading. Naeema said: “my teacher gives us story books, encourages us to read, and asks us about them”. Likewise, Shamsa stated that “there are some teachers who bring books to read and share with [her] some nice books that she [the teacher] has already read and recommends them for reading”. The same student, on the other hand, mentioned that “school does not allow us to read different books. It is true that we read school textbooks, but it is not considered as reading but just as a duty (assignment)”. Akande and Oyedapo (2018) recommend that schools should establish reading clubs in collaboration with English language teachers and school librarians.

### 6.2 Home Literacy Practices

The role that family literacy practices play has been stressed by large research studies. From the interviews, the students illustrated the major role of home reading practices and how these practices shaped their reading interests, love for reading, and value of reading to improve their English language achievement.

#### 6.2.1 Parental Involvement

When the question “who encourages you to read?” was posed, the three students pointed to their families, especially their mothers. This finding corresponds with Merga’s (2017) finding that 63% of her study participants stated that their mothers had the most significant role in teaching them reading. One of the students, of the present study, said

*my father is not someone who reads a lot, but he encourages me to read a lot...but my mother encourages me to read because she is a reader and because...she can read a lot and because she has gone through such an experience [reading] and thus she shares it with us (Shamsa, interview).*

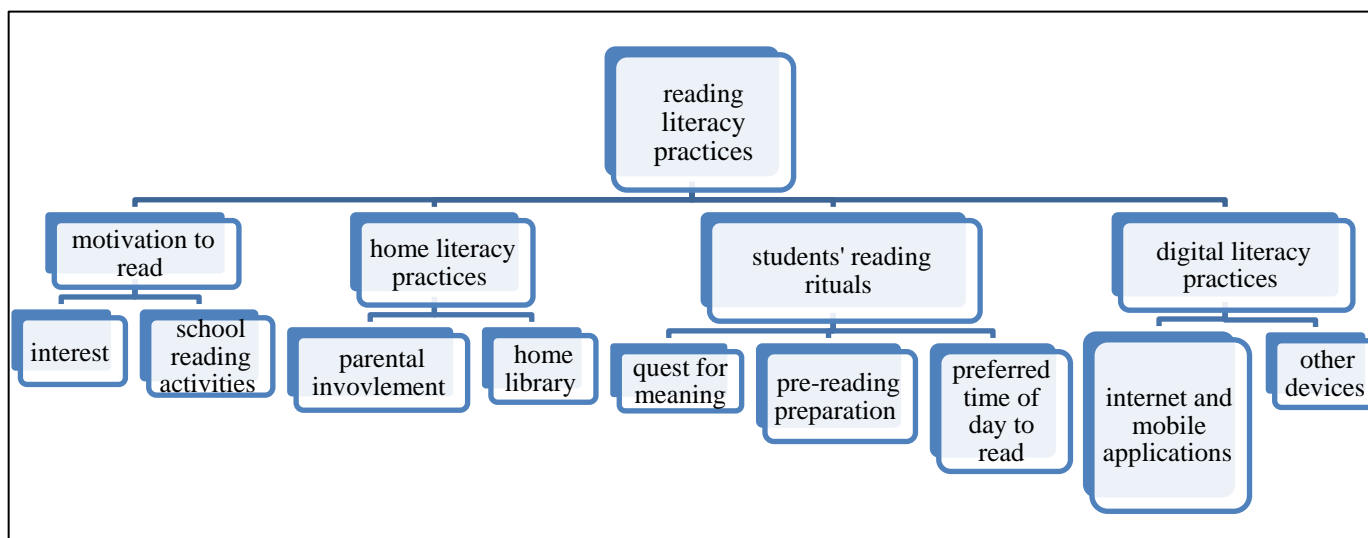


Figure 2. Factors determining students' reading practices

Merga and Roni (2018) believe that parents' reading habits impact their children. They express this notion by stating that “a continual demonstration of habitual reading by parents can form a long-lasting impression for the children to imitate as they progress in their lives” (p. 219). Similarly, several respondents in Merga's (2017) study were inspired to

read by observing an avid reader who could be a parent, a relative, or just any influential figure in the child's life. Based on the self-determination theory, when children realize that their parents and/or other influential figures in their lives value and support reading activities, they feel that reading is a worthwhile endeavor (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Reading practices of the parents transfer to their children. For example, Doepker and Ortlieb (2011) explain that the reading interests of young people stem from the influence of parents, friends, and culture at large. Developing the habit of reading is contagious. That is, if the parents or caregivers themselves are readers, then their kids will eventually become readers. This was evident in the three students being interviewed. Their parents, particularly their mothers, were good readers. For instance, Naeema indicated that her mother frequently read books such as the improve-your-English sort of books and the ones that were intended for personal development. Interestingly, this student preferred the same sort of reading materials that her mother reads.

Previous studies stress the role of intrinsic motivation that makes learners eager to learn without any influence from external forces. One of the study participants indicated that she was intrinsically motivated toward reading. She emphasized her mother's encouragement to read as the second motivating factor.

When asked about "who provides books to the home library?", Shamsa replied, "my mother brings them". Parents' involvement in their children's reading can take the form of providing books to their home library. It can also be understood that parents and their children hold ongoing conversations about books to read and buy. Merga and Roni (2018) point out that students get benefits from "talking about books and sharing book recommendations with their parents" (p. 219).

Hence, it can be inferred that "students show a better ability to read and learn when their parents are involved in their education and when the parents themselves value reading," leading to the contention that "student learning is most effective when it is the result of a partnership among the school, teachers, parents and the community" (OECD, 2012, p. 13). A similar notion is expressed by Clark and Hawkins (2010) that "Young people who see their mother and their father read a lot tend to hold more positive attitudes towards reading than young people who do not see their parents read" (p. 22).

#### 6.2.2 Home Library

All three participants confirmed that they had home libraries. Books in the home libraries were mostly provided by the mothers of those students. The sort of books available in the home libraries mirrored students' reading interests. For example, Naeema, when describing her home library said that: "it has encyclopedias, novels...many books about self-human development and books about improving the English language", which she also considered her reading preferences. "It [the home library] has books which I love and the ones that are close to my heart" (Naeema, interview).

In Shamsa's home library, one can find such books as novels and Arabic language-related books. This student mentioned that her home library "has books related to Arabic language grammar, literature. It also contains Arabic and English stories. Moreover, there are books about human development and any novels whether translated from English to Arabic or from Spanish to Arabic and others" (Shamsa, interview). Aysha declared that there was a small library at her home where she kept all the books she bought or borrowed.

The three girls visited the same library, which was located in a nearby town. They used to go to the library for the same purpose; to buy books. This can be understood in light of the absence of the culture of public libraries in Oman. Public libraries that are located outside schools, mosques, and tertiary educational institutions are rarely found in Oman. This explains why these girls go to libraries to buy books and not to sit and read there. With this line, Akande and Oyedapo (2018) recommended that countries' policymakers should consider building modern libraries equipped with 21<sup>st</sup>-century technological facilities and stocked with a wide range of reading materials. Merga (2017) believed that making books accessible denotes the value of books and reading.

According to McKenna et al.'s (1995) model of reading attitude, the indirect influence of a child's reading by setting up a home library that contains books and magazines of interest to the child results in the child's actually reading such materials and this subsequently promotes their attitude toward reading. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) illustrate that creating an accessible literacy environment at home, by providing quality books that match their children's reading abilities and interests, not only facilitates the act of reading but makes children realize that they can obtain knowledge and enjoyment from reading itself.

#### 6.3 Students' Reading Rituals

People very often follow certain rituals when they engage in reading. The study participants uncovered their reading

habits which may contribute to their overall reading achievement and interest in reading. Via the interviews, three major rituals can be detected: a quest for meaning, pre-reading preparation, and time for reading.

### 6.3.1 Quest for Meaning

During their quest for meaning, these students described their ways to find meaning in what they read. For example, Aysha, Naeema, and Shamsa looked for the English meaning of words whenever they encountered difficult words. They did so via consulting other books and by searching using the world wide web. The three of them preferred to look for information related to any concept they found unfamiliar in the English language. Thus, they did not usually resort to their mother tongue to find the Arabic equivalents.

Meaning-making in a writing activity is largely dependent upon reading that takes place beforehand and along the process of writing. When preparing an essay, particularly to take part in a language contest, Shamsa recalled that she had to read extensively even though

*it [the Indian school competition] is only about one single topic but it needs to be read about from several websites, to ask and also to read various books to get the necessary and sufficient information to be able to write about the topic (Shamsa, interview).*

During their quest for meaning, while being engaged in reading, Aysha and Shamsa pronounced that they read some translated versions of originally English novels or stories or the ones that were written in Arabic but then translated into English. Aysha noted that she read “stories, English versions of detective stories that [she has] already read in Arabic before”. Similarly, Shamsa listed the kind of books found in her home library and she mentioned that there were “many novels whether translated from English to Arabic or from Spanish to Arabic”. One can understand that translation acted as a gate toward reading, and thus language was never an obstacle when willingness and motivation to read were present.

Sharing what they read with others was not uncommon among these learners. Aysha tended to talk about her readings with her aunt but preferred to resort to other sources when she sought answers to questions raised from her readings. Naeema, as well, talked about her readings with other friends and her siblings. She justified her sharing as “in this way [she] benefits and others as well” (Naeema, interview). Her sharing was confined to ideas and recommendations but not questions, just like Aysha. The notion of sharing held a different meaning with Shamsa. She said, “I prefer books in that the writer shares his ideas with me”. She understood sharing ideas as a dialogue between her and the writers' ideas. It can be explained in light of the transactional theory of Louise Rosenblatt (Alvermann, Unrau & Ruddell, 2013) who views reading as a transaction process of ideas between the reader, the writer, and the text. Through the lens of these learners' views of sharing reading, it became obvious that reading was a social practice in which the readers discussed and talked about their ideas with others and sought further knowledge from other sources.

### 6.3.2 Pre-reading Preparation

All three students were immersed in similar activities whenever they had a reading lesson. They tended to get themselves ready for any reading lesson by reading the text at home. They also exerted their effort to understand and look for the meaning of unknown words. For example, Aysha indicated that whenever she had a reading lesson, she “reads the text two or three times [until she] understands it very well”. If she encountered any unfamiliar words, she looked for their meaning in English. In the same vein, Shamsa reported:

*First, I read the lesson at home. Then I check if there are any problematic words. I try to look for their meanings in...English language. I also try to find which part of speech is the word...also via my reading of the lesson, some concepts seem to be new to me, so I read about them and learn more about those concepts (Shamsa, interview).*

A large body of studies investigated the effectiveness of various pre-reading activities on developing reading comprehension (e.g. Alemi & Ebadi, 2010; Azizifar, Roshani, Gowhary & Jamalinesari, 2015; Faruk & Mahmud, 2014; Moghaddam & Mahmoudi, 2016; Salehi & Abbaszadeh, 2017). These studies, among others, proved that pre-reading activities have a positive impact on learners' reading comprehension. Such activities include pre-reading questions and vocabulary definitions (Azizifar et al., 2015), class discussion and vocabulary definitions (Salehi & Abbaszadeh, 2017), movie-watching, vocabulary presentation, and pre-reading summarization (Moghaddam & Mahmoudi, 2016), pre-reading discussion sessions (Faruk & Mahmud, 2014), and pictorial context, pre-questioning, and vocabulary pre-teaching (Alemi & Ebadi, 2010).

### 6.3.3 Time for Reading

According to Sharma, Van Hoof, and Ramsay (2019), “Reading is an activity that requires resources, and time is a



critical resource in that process” (p.2). Interestingly, all the participants preferred reading before going to bed as their best time for reading. Naeema mentioned that at night, “it becomes quiet, and one can concentrate and engage in reading”. Along the same line, Shamsa explained that she did not read except during the nighttime “because it is a comfortable time and time for quietness. So, it is a good time for reading”.

All three regretted that there was no specific time for reading at school and this impeded them from spending time reading in the learning resource center at school. It can be understood that adolescents need ample time to read in school. Ivey and Broadus (2001) suggested that students need significant amounts of time provided in school if the goal is to create students who become personally engaged in reading. If schools allow for voluntary reading time, numerous benefits can be accomplished. Schools specifying a time for reading help “adolescents become motivated to read for pleasure, they read materials that are relevant to their lives, they read for personal pleasure, and they read aesthetically” (Doepker & Ortlieb, 2011, p.5).

During breaks and long holidays, these three girls tended to read more as there was no school, hence they preferred to invest their free time in reading. As Aysha mentioned, “I do read a lot but only during my free time”. Likewise, Shamsa stated that during the holidays, “I try to read a book within a week, but some books don’t require a week to be covered, two days would be sufficient”.

#### 6.4 Digital Literacy

Digital literacy refers to a vast range of devices, programs, and applications that operate with or without an internet connection. Mobile phones embrace all sorts of applications that can be installed on them, and which attract all people around the world including teenagers.

Also, television and other electronic devices still play a role in developing and shaping one's literacy practices. In today's digital era, adolescents are not only using books for reading and writing but also, they are experiencing digital literacies (Doepker & Ortlieb, 2011). Noted by McManis and Gunnewig (2012), the interactive nature of multimedia digital technologies stimulates users' sensory systems by providing instant feedback on input and thus offers possible learning opportunities.

##### 6.4.1 Internet and Mobile Application

Nowadays, individuals of all ages are obsessed with mobile phones with the infinite applications that can be installed on them. The teenagers being interviewed reported that they all owned a mobile phone which had an impact on their reading practices. One of them reported that she had an account on numerous social media applications such as Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook.

Hopper (2005) noted that the internet constitutes a rich source for locating relevant and interesting information about books because they allow the possibility of exchanging ideas about books. Shamsa expressed a similar idea when asked about whether her accounts on social media encouraged her to read, her reply was “I follow some writers...in Twitter...some accounts write briefs about some books, so I like to follow them” (Shamsa, interview). Globally, as asserted by Dike, Okpala, and Babarinde (2013), and Akande and Oyedapo (2018), students use social media extensively and this may adversely affect their reading habits.

Naeema also mentioned that “there are many books that [she came] across in social media and then [she] bought them”. The third student, Aysha, did not have social media accounts as indicated during the interview, but she had a reading application installed on her mobile phone. Ozturk and Ohi (2018) argued that digital technologies can assist children to become engaged readers and are likely to provide valuable support for those who experience reading difficulties.

##### 6.4.2 Other Devices

Two of the students reported that they rarely watched television, and they devalued it in comparison to the benefits they got from reading. However, Aysha, the third student, expressed a different view regarding television. She explained that “the major thing that improved [her] language is watching English movies” on television. Naeema made use of her iPad and mobile phone as well for reading e-books.

Students surveyed in Mokhtari et al. (2009)'s study reported that watching television was a very popular activity among them. However, they perceived that time spent watching television reduced the time they spent on reading in both domains of reading: recreational and academic purposes. This corresponded with Shamsa's and Naeema's attitudes toward watching television. Shamsa did not watch television very frequently because she did not find what amazed her on TV compared to reading books. Watching television did not replace reading books and thus reading took priority here. Another possible explanation for this attitude towards television watching could stem from

parents' upbringing and own behaviors. In other words, parents themselves devalued watching television by investing more time in reading, a conclusion that correlated with what Adetunji and Oladapo (2007) found. Shamsa reported that she did not play video games very often and thought that such games did not improve her reading nor added any value to her learning of the English language.

## 7. Conclusion

The present study employed in-depth semi-structured interviewing with three adolescent students to find out the characteristics of their reading practices and thus to consider them as models to learn from. Further investigation, in the area of reading literacy, could yield valuable data via the use of different data collection tools or triangulation of tools such as interviewing their parents and respective teachers coupled with observing them in the classroom. Studies about motivation particularly in reading can assist educators, teachers, and other concerned parties in curriculum development to understand what motivates and/or discourages students' reading.

Since choice and interest play a critical role in honing the motivation to read, it becomes essential to survey, at a large scale, what teenagers like or prefer to read. Such a study needs to consider variables such as gender, school grade level, and socio-economic status of families. Since adolescents are using digital literacies in their daily life, particularly at home, educators should find ways to incorporate technology and the various forms of digital devices in their classrooms. In so doing, teachers optimize adolescents' literacy learning as well as boost their academic achievement (Doepker & Ortlieb, 2011).

One of the conclusions that can be drawn from this study is that adolescent learners view reading as a social practice. This is evident from students' inclination to share their reading materials with others, discuss topics related to what they were reading, and seek recommendations from others on what to read. Also, the interplay between social and environmental factors was responsible to shape one's attitude and beliefs toward reading. That is, if an individual grows up in an environment that cherishes reading as in parent's involvement in their children's reading activities, then s/he will value reading for its various purposes. Finally, these reading literacy practices collectively were responsible for developing those adolescent learners' reading comprehension and overall English language proficiency.

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