



TECHNIUM
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

Vol. 24, 2021

**A new decade
for social changes**

www.techniumscience.com

ISSN 2668-7798



9 772668 779000

Reading engagement during the pandemic: The Case of Csu-Sanchez Mira (Cagayan, Philippines) students

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Abstract. With the sudden move away from school in many areas of the world, it is unclear if online education will persist post-pandemic, and how such a shift will impact the global education market. This study is aimed to discover the reading engagement of students during pandemic. The study made use of the descriptive research design using purposive sampling technique in order to determine the respondents of the study. A researcher made questionnaire was used as the main instrument. Result of the study revealed smartphone is the common gadget used by the students to access the internet. Most of them surf the net for 4-6 hours in order to acquire general knowledge found on social media. Online reading materials are read in different number of hours. English is the most preferred language. There is an underpinning reading engagement among the respondents. Moreover, it is also evident that made use of varied means to connect to the internet as they immersed themselves to online reading. Though it may sound the other way around, the students perceived that online reading is still a bearable experience. Thus, parents and other stakeholders should find ways to boost student reading engagement in order to maximize learning even in this time of pandemic.

Keywords. Reading, Pandemic, New Normal, Online, Students, Philippines

Introduction

With this abrupt change away from the classroom in many parts of the world, it is wondering whether the adoption of online learning would continue post-pandemic, and how such a shift will affect the global education market.

Even prior to COVID-19, there was rapid growth and acceptance of educational technology. Since COVID-19, there has been a substantial increase in use of language apps, virtual tutoring, video conferencing tools, and online learning applications. As a result, education has changed radically, with the notable rise of e-learning, in which teaching is done remotely and on digital platforms.

The pandemic not only increased the risk of death and sickness, but it also increased stress, anxiety, and depression among individuals (Wang et al., 2020). As a result, nearly 30 million quarantined university students went through an unforeseen and unplanned transition from conventional face-to-face learning to online learning from home. The combined psychological pressure induced by COVID-19 and the sudden shift in learning mode posed major difficulties for students, with significant consequences for university students' mental health (Cao et al., 2020). Student participation has been described as an obstacle as universities have migrated online in response to COVID-19 (Farooq et al., 2020). However, very little

research has been conducted to investigate the factors that affect student involvement in a pandemic.

As students have less contact with the physical classroom and with their teachers, it becomes paramount that doing academic readings and researches become less important to them. Strengthening student's engagement depends on access to more than just using the learning management system for course delivery. The number of Covid 19 cases gradually scale up increasing the risk of more lockdowns which reduces mobility and access of students to tangible sources of information. With this, a need to conduct a study on reading engagement of students is a must in order to determine and analyze their status to provide possible scaffold or aid in order to overcome this increasing problem.

Hence, to measure how students cope-up with the situation, this study will provide a substantial analysis emerging from the educational challenges as well as the educational opportunities of the students during and following the pandemic especially in reading academic materials.

Purpose of the study

In general, this study seeks to discover the reading engagement of students during pandemic. Specifically,

1. To determine the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Gender
 - 1.2 Age
 - 1.3 Place of residence
 - 1.4 Gadgets Used to Access the Internet
 - 1.5 Number of Hours (Daily) Spent for Online Activities
 - 1.6 Purpose of Surfing the Internet
 - 1.7 Type of Material Read Online;
2. To measure the online reading habits of the students during the pandemic;
3. To determine the Reading Preference, Reading Habits and Preferred Language used in the materials;
4. To ascertain the belief of the respondents on whether online reading soften or aggravate the psychological impact of ECQ of not at all.

Methods

Research Design

The study seeks to discover the reading engagement of students during pandemic. To attain such goal, the study made use of the Quantitative Research Design specifically Descriptive – Survey Research Design. In this research design, a researcher is solely interested in describing the situation or case under their research study. It is a theory-based design method which is created by gathering, analyzing, and presenting collected data. This allowed the researcher to provide insights into the why and how of research. This design served as an aid to the researcher in accomplishing the set objectives for the study.

Respondents and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling technique was used to determine the participants of the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling process in which "evaluated and the results are chosen by the researcher's decision." Researchers also assume that by exercising good judgement, they can obtain a representative sample, thus saving time and money" (Black, 2010). The respondents are students from Cagayan State University.

Research Instrument

A survey questionnaire was used to collect vital data for the study's completion. In this section, the researcher was guided by a survey questionnaire created by the himself. The research instrument is composed of two parts. The first part is on the profile of the respondents and the second part is on the reading engagement of students during pandemic.

Data Gathering Procedure

Since the study made use of descriptive – survey research design, a survey questionnaire was created based from the objectives of the study.

The questionnaire was converted into a google form for its online administration and ease of sharing. This was purposely done by the researcher since face-to-face distribution will not be permitted due to COVID 19 restrictions as proposed by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases Resolutions.

After the successful conversion of the questionnaire into that of a google form, the google form link was acquired. The link was forwarded to the respondents of the study. Before the respondent answered the google form, the researcher explained the confidentiality of any data which was recorded into the form based from his / her answer.

Statistical Analysis

The data were collected, categorized, classified and analyzed in accordance to the objectives or purpose of the study.

The respondent's profile was analyzed by frequency count and percentage.

Mean was used to determine measure the online reading habits, Reading Preference, Reading Habits and Preferred Language used in the materials, and belief of the respondents on whether online reading soften or aggravate the psychological impact of ECQ of not at all. It will be interpreted using the 4-point scale below:

Likert Scale for reading habits of the students during the ECQ

| Mean Range | Descriptive Value |
|-------------|-------------------|
| 3.51 – 4.00 | Very Often |
| 2.51 – 3.50 | Often |
| 1.51 – 2.50 | Sometimes |
| 1.00 – 1.50 | Never |

Likert Scale for the belief of the respondents on psychological impact of ECQ

| Mean Range | Descriptive Value |
|-------------|-------------------|
| 3.51 – 4.00 | Strongly Disagree |
| 2.51 – 3.50 | Agree |
| 1.51 – 2.50 | Disagree |
| 1.00 – 1.50 | Strongly Disagree |

Results and discussion

Gender

Figure 1 reveals that majority of the respondents are female. Of the 163 respondents, 109 or 67 percent are female and 54 or 33 percent are male. This means that the pool of respondents is female dominated.

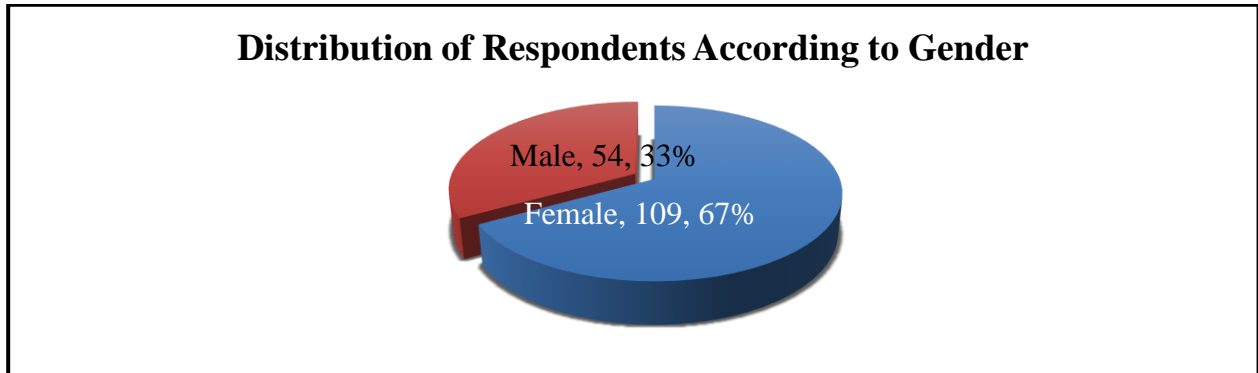


Figure 1. Profile of respondents according to their Gender

Age

Figure shows that all of the respondents are in the age range of 18 – 64 years old. This accounts to 100 percent of the overall number of respondents. Further, this implies that the respondents are a mixture of young, adult and old individuals.

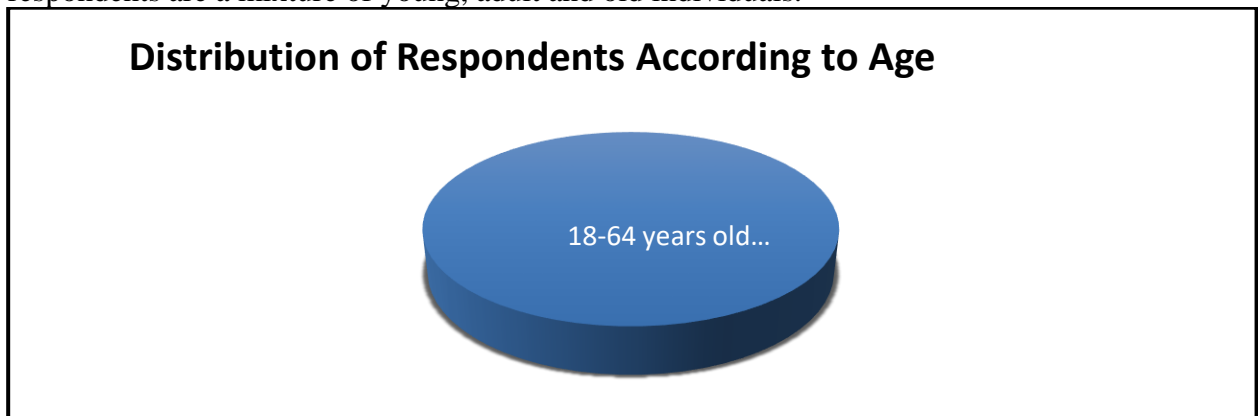


Figure 2. Profile of respondents according to their Age

Place of Residence

For the distribution according to place of residence, Figure 3 presents that there are 50 or 31 percent from Sanchez Mira, 30 or 18 percent from Pamplona, 28 or 17 percent form Claveria, 27 or 16 percent from Apayao, 10 or 6 percent from Abulug, 6 or 4 percent from Sta. Praxedes, 4 or 2 percent from Ilocos Norte, 2 or 1 percent from Ballesteros and Calayan, and 1 or 1 percent from Camalaniugan, Alcala, Gonzaga and Maryland, USA. Thus, respondents reside in different municipalities, across different provinces and even a respondent outside the country. Moreover, Sanchez Mira is the most common place of residence among the respondents.

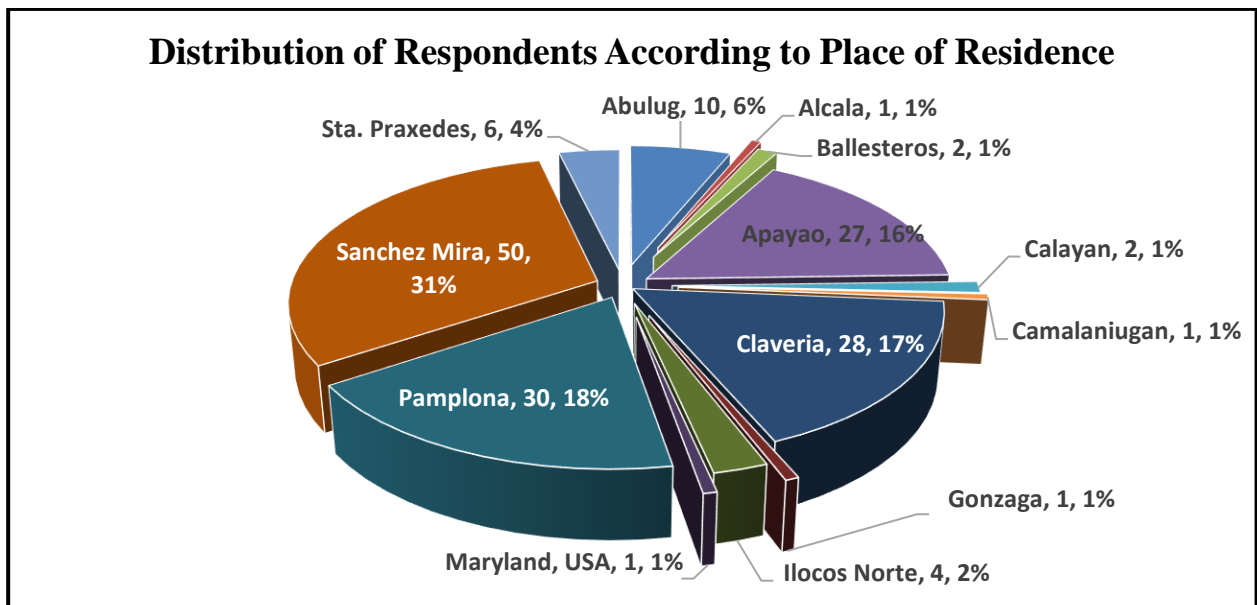


Figure 3. Profile of respondents according to their Place of Residence

Gadgets Used to Access the Internet

Figure 4 shows the gadgets used by the respondents to access the internet. There are about 163 respondents who use smartphone, 49 respondents also use laptops, 12 respondents use computer and 6 respondents use tablet. This implies that almost all of the respondents possess a smartphone that they can easily connect to the internet.

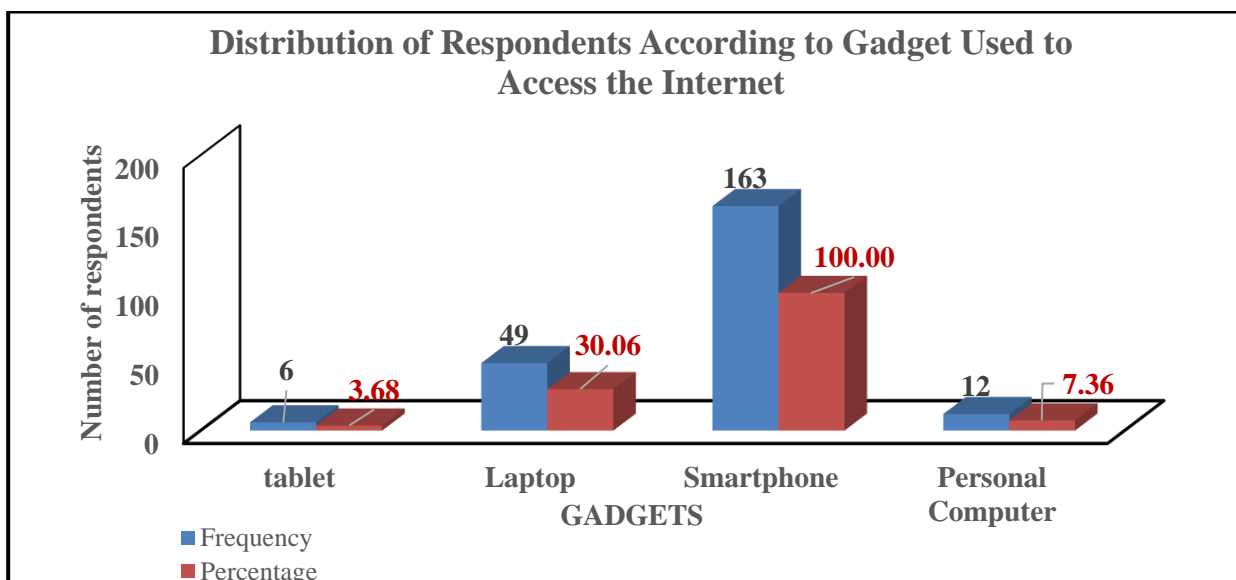


Figure 4. Profile of respondents according to Gadget Used to Access the Internet

2. To determine the reading preference, reading habits and preferred language used in the materials

Number of Hours (Daily) Spent for Online Activities

Figure 5 reveals that 56 or 36 percent of the respondents spend 4-6 hours for online activities. Others spend about 1-3 hours and or more than 6 hours which accounts to 50 or 33

percent and 47 or 31 percent respectively. Moreover, the average time spent by the respondents is 2.88 or almost 3 hours a day. This implies that the respondents are spending tremendous amount of time going online just to work on online activities.

According to Kemp (2019) Per internet user spends more than 6.5 hours a day online, for a total of more than 100 days a year. The result might be lower compared to the year 2018 but it is expected to rise for the coming years.

In the study conducted by Boza and Conde (2015) that students spend 3 – 7 hours working using the internet to complete designated tasks.

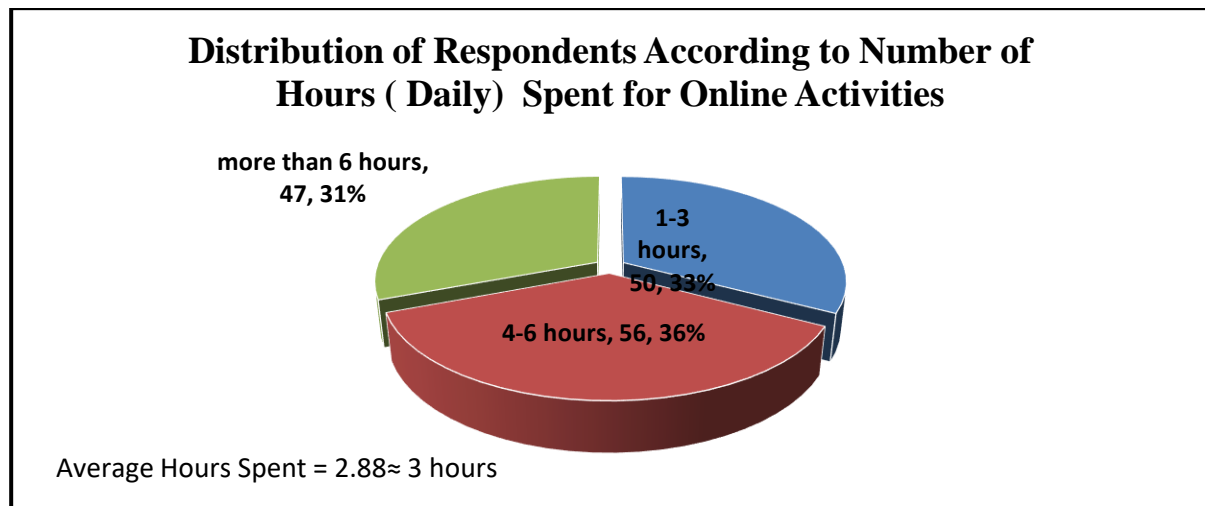


Figure 5. Profile of respondents according to Number of Hours Spent for Online Activities

Purpose of Surfing the Internet

It can be gleaned in Figure 6 the purpose of students in surfing the internet. Out of 163 respondents, 102 or 62.58 percent use the internet to gain general knowledge, 40 or 24.54 percent use the internet in locating specific information, 19 or 11.66 percent use it for entertainment and pleasure, 2 or 1.23 percent use it for buying away time, and 1 or 0.61 percent use it for webinar and submit reports and or educational aide. This implies that the students are making good use of the internet in order for them to gain functional knowledge.

Apuke and Iyendo (2018) found out that students access the internet for academic purposes. This is mainly focused on acquiring important information to answer uncertainties. The said finding shows a 96.4 percent of the total number of student respondents.

Singh et al. (2013) discovered that students who take a concentrated approach delve deeply into the topic and mainly use the internet for academic purposes. These students do not waste time because they control their time well, and narrow their search areas only to possible sources of informative data.

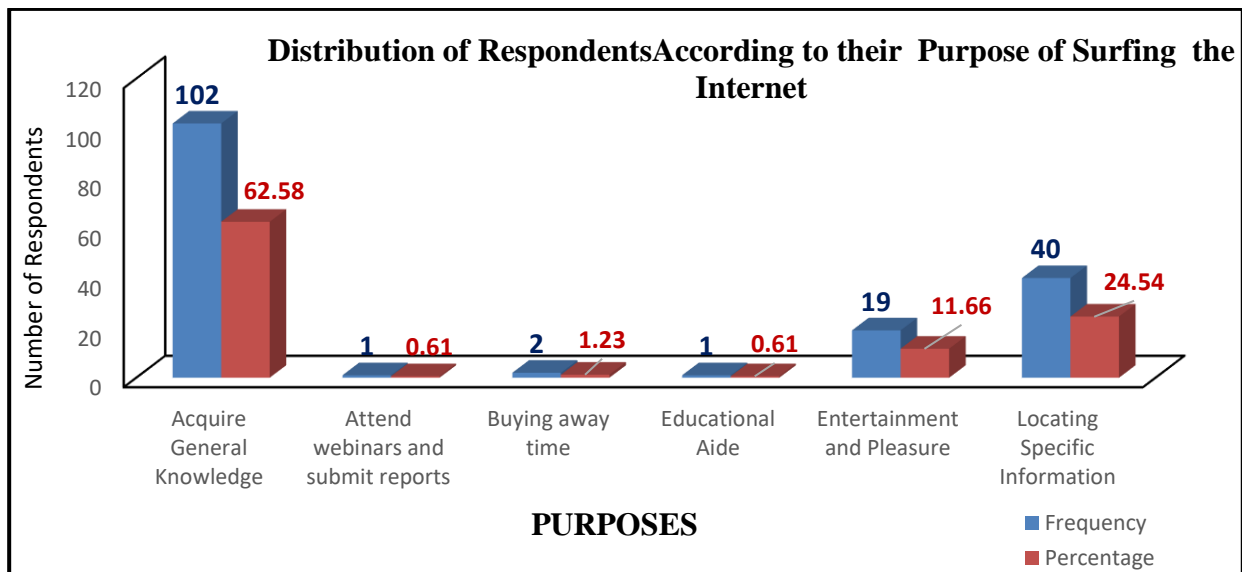


Figure 6. Profile of respondents according to their Purpose of Surfing the Internet

Type of Material Read Online

Table 7 shows the type of material read online by the students. There are 142 or 87.12 percent accounts to social networking sites, 95 or 58.28 percent accounts to webpages and websites, 54 or 33.13 percent accounts to E – books, 47 or 28.82 percent accounts to blogs, 40 or 24.54 percent accounts to E- newspaper and 1 or 0.61 percent accounts to google, YouTube, updates on work related, and novels and Japanese manga. This finding shows that social networking sites dominated the list of potential type of material read online. It can be associated to the fact that students spend greater amount of time in these online platforms.

According to Manjunatha (2013), 80 percent of students devote a significant amount of time and effort to using social networking sites on a regular basis. The majority of Indian students (62.6 percent) spent up to 10 hours a week on social networking sites, and apparently 17.5 percent of students spent more than 10 hours per week. Walsh et al. (2013) discovered that female first-year college students spend nearly 12 hours a day on social media.

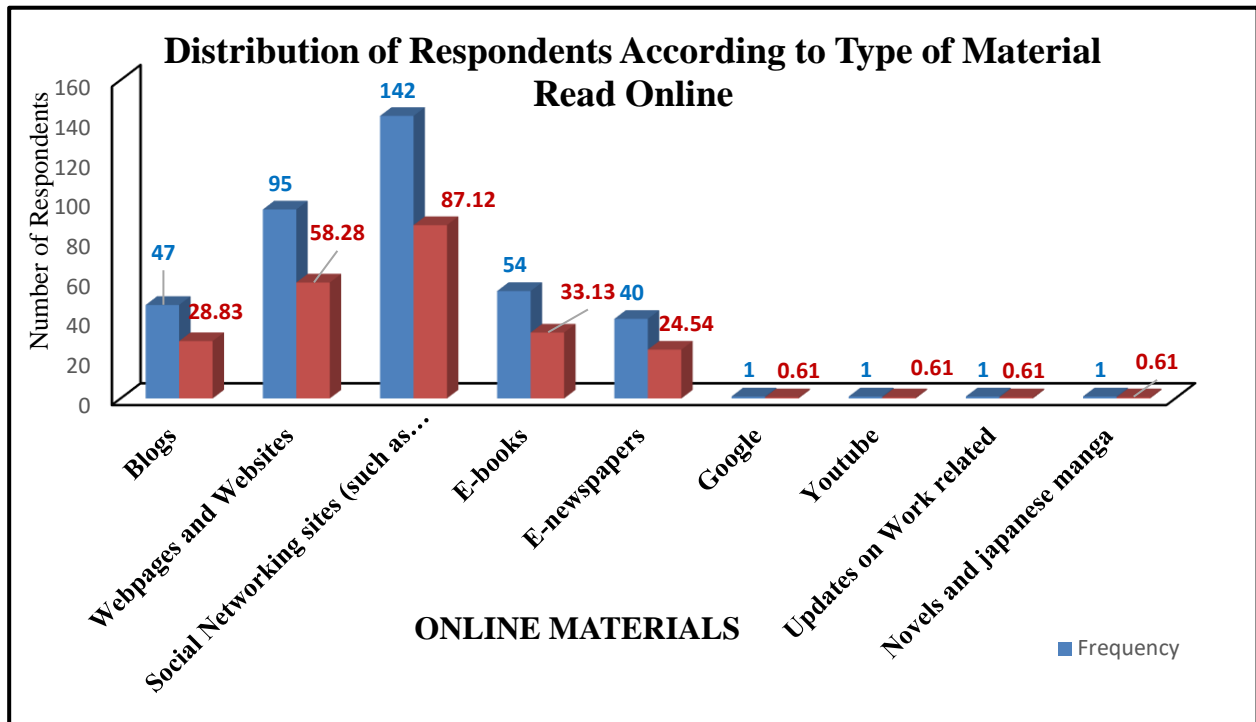


Figure 7. Profile of respondents according to Type of Material Read Online

Online Reading E-Books Daily

For the hours spend on online reading e-Books daily, Figure 8 presents that out of 142 respondents, 73 or 45 percent spend about 1-3 hours, 51 or 31 percent spend about less than an hour, 15 or 9 percent spend about 4-6 hours, and 4 or 3 percent spend more than 6 hours. 20 or 12 percent of the respondents answered that the item is not applicable to them. It can be observed from the given data that students spend an average number of hours reading e – books online.

This finding can be associated with the result of the study of Akpokodje, and Ukwuoma (2016) wherein about 20 respondents read e- books online on a daily basis for an average of 2-3 hours. Further they use these e – books for research and study purposes.

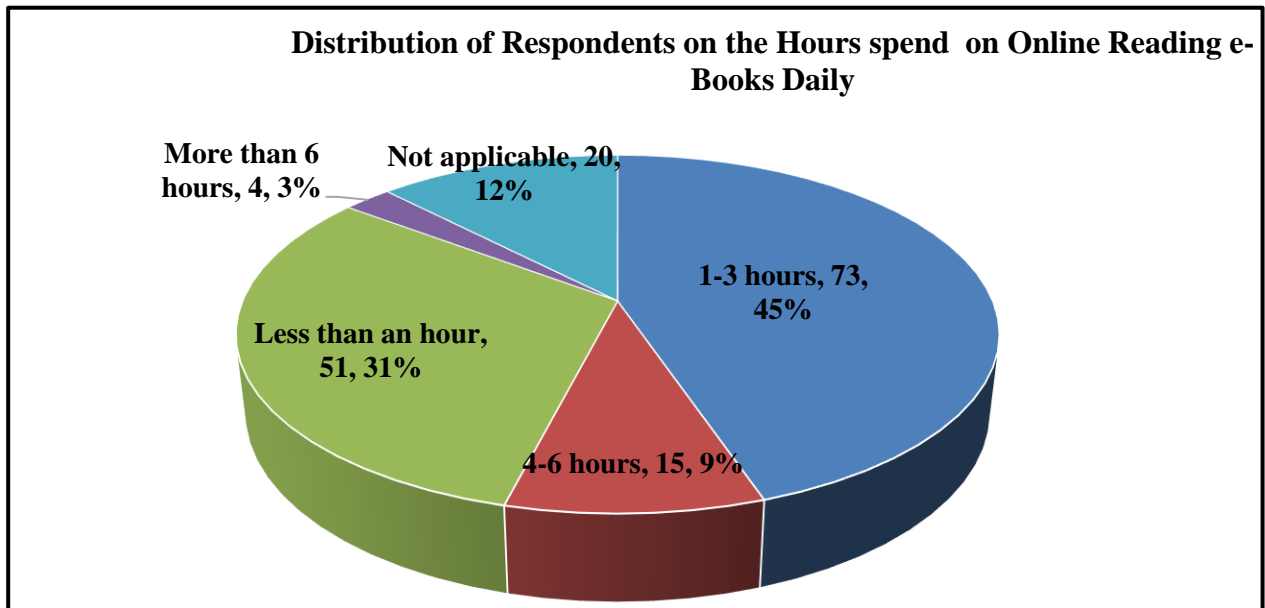


Figure 8. Profile of respondents on the Hours spend on Online Reading E-Books Daily

Online Reading E-Newspapers Daily

It can be seen in Figure 9 that majority of the respondents which is 89 or 55 percent read online newspaper for less than an hour. Others do such activity for 1 – 3 hours, 4,6 hours and more than 6 hours with frequency and percentages of 40 or 24 percent, 5 or 3 percent and 1 or 1 percent respectively. On the other hand, there are about 28 or 17 percent who chose that the item is not applicable to them. This finding clearly shows that the respondents are giving ample time to read online newspaper.

The result stated above is on a contrary with the report of Cassbusiness (2017) where in online readers aged 18 to 34 spend less than one minute a day on the newspaper websites and applications for just a total of 43 seconds.

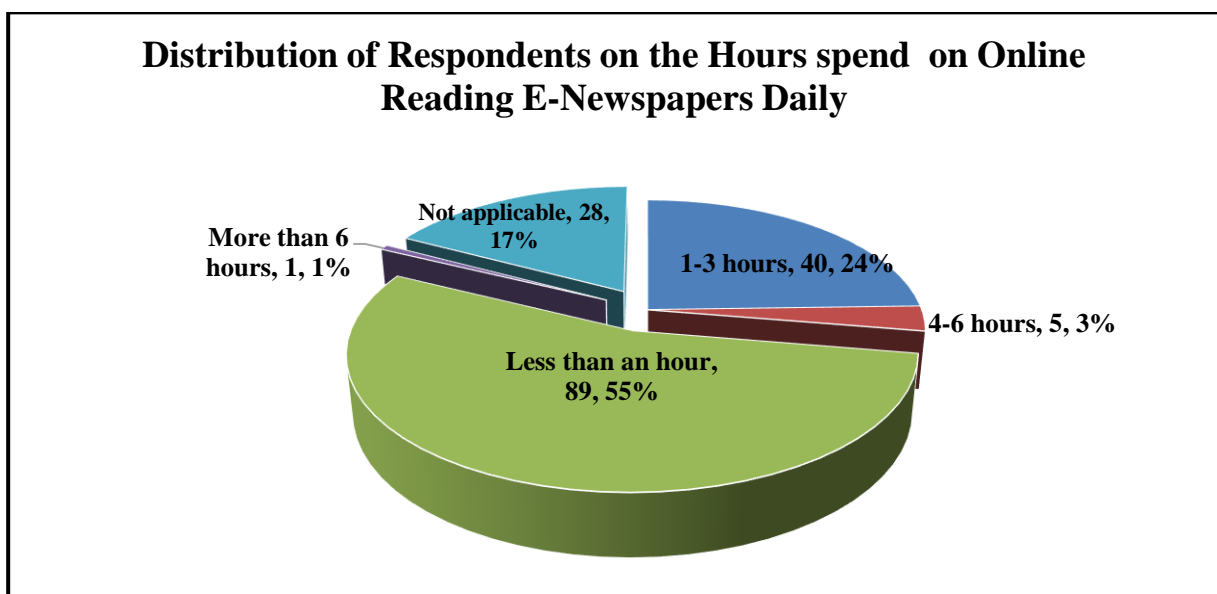


Figure 9. Profile of respondents on the Hours spend on Online Reading E-Newspapers Daily

Online Reading Blogs, Webpages and Websites Daily

Figure 10 reveals that the respondents spend 1-3 hours reading blogs, webpages and websites daily. Others do the same action for less than an hour (57 or 35%), 4 – 6 hours (24 or 15%) and more than 6 hours (2 or 1 %). On the contrary, 3 of the respondents find the survey question not applicable to them.

The finding above mentioned can be associated to the finding of Sanchez (2021) in which the country, the daily average time spent on the internet for those polled was roughly 10.6 hours. Further, Tangtaranee et. al., (2017) also revealed in their study that most of the students spend 6-8 hours a day on the Internet reading in various websites.

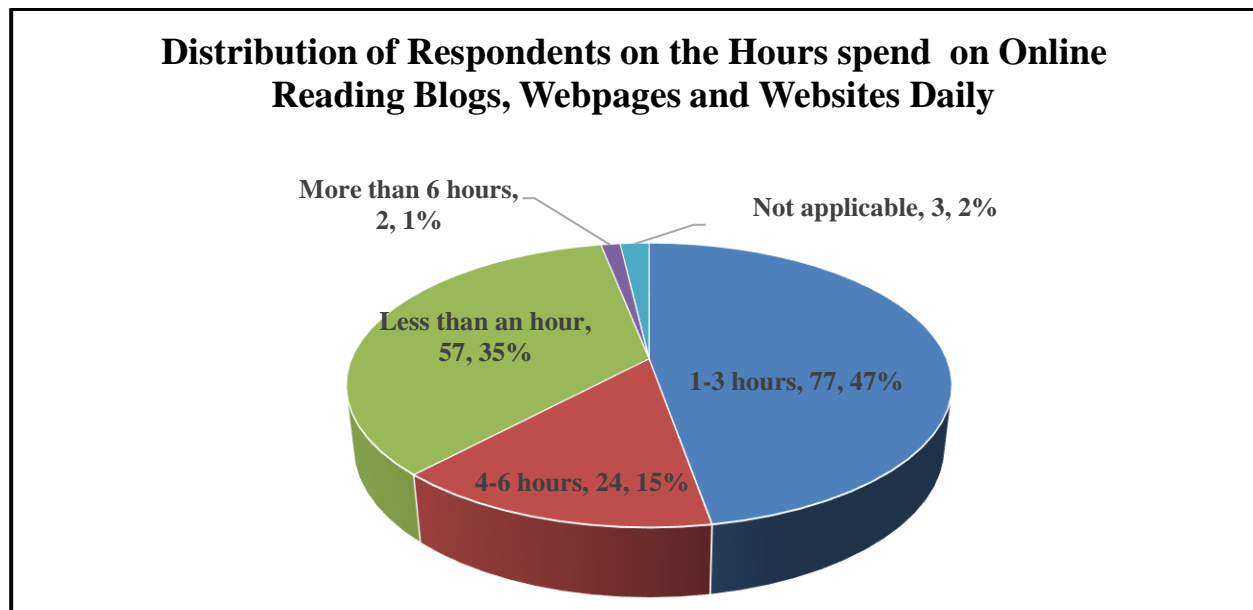


Figure 10. Profile of respondents on the Hours spend on Online Reading Online Reading Blogs, Webpages and Websites Daily

Online Reading Tweets, Facebook Posts or Posts in other Social Networking Sites Daily

It can be gleaned in Figure 11 that half of the respondents are reading social media posts for about 1-3 hours. There are also respondents that do the same activity for less than an hour (31 or 19%), 4 – 6 hours (27 or 17%), and more than 6 hours (22 or 13 %). Two respondents or 1 percent of the whole population considered the item as not applicable. This finding shows a significant amount of time being spent by students reading and browsing social media posts in various sites.

According to Broadband Search (2020) people spend an average of 144 minutes or equivalent to 2 hours and 24 minutes reading social media posts around the globe. Moreover, this trend started to grow since 2012 because of the sudden increase of mobile phones to every individual.

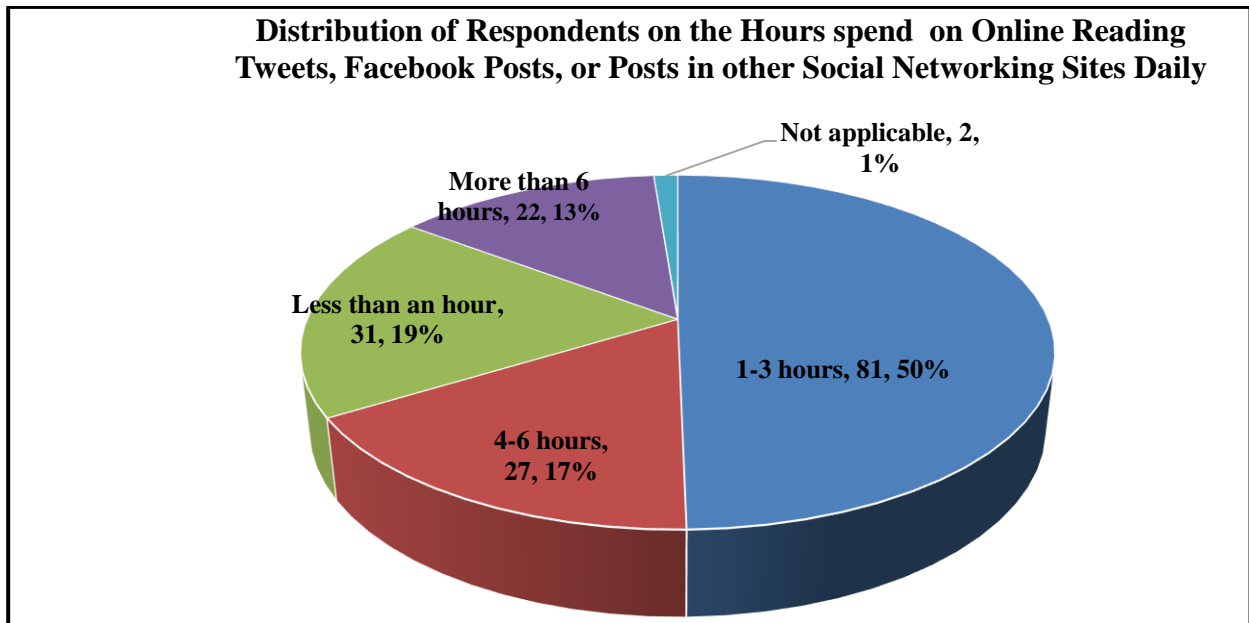


Figure 11. Profile of respondents on the Hours spend on Online Reading Online Reading Tweets, Facebook Posts, or Posts in other Social Networking Sites Daily

Language Preferred in Accessing the Internet

Figure 12 shows the preferred language of the respondents in accessing the internet. Out of 163 respondents, 132 or 81 percent preferred English while others prefer Filipino or both with frequency and percentage of 28 or 17 percent and 3 or 2 percent respectively. This clearly imply that respondents are attached in using the English language since it is the common language used by most websites.

The findings presented above can be linked to the report of Johnson (2021), wherein English was the most popular language online that is approximately 25.9 percent of the world-wide internet users.

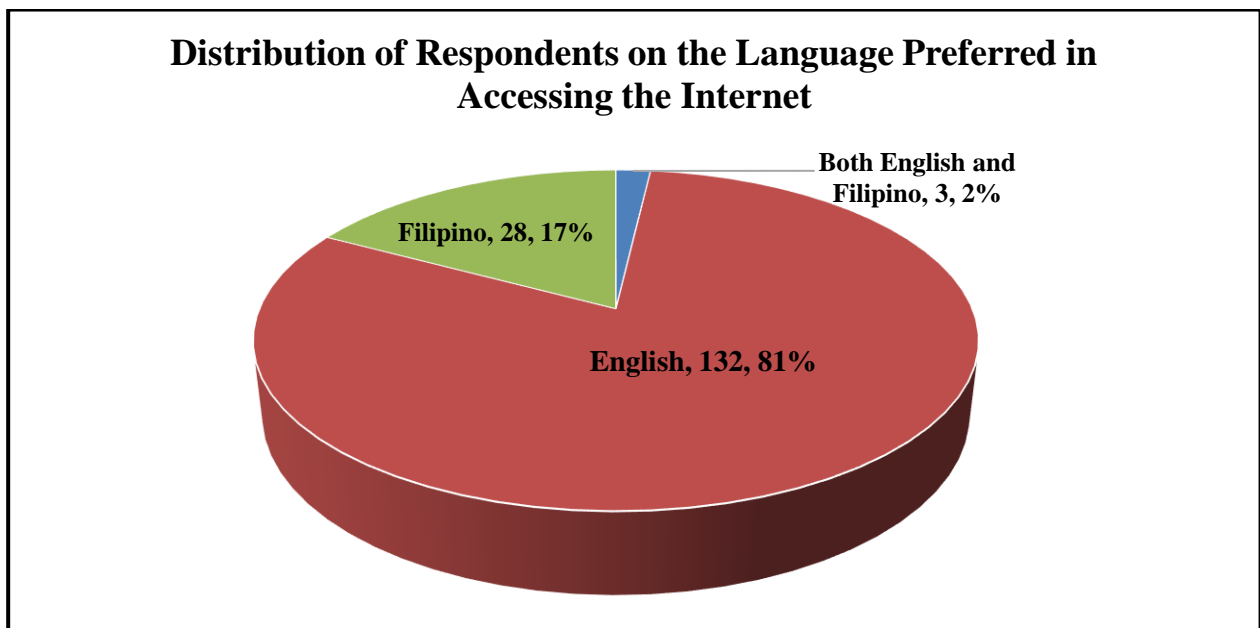


Figure 12. Profile of respondents on the Language Preferred in Accessing the Internet

Topic of Interest Preferred to Read

It is evident in Figure 13 that literary works is the preferred topic of students to read in the internet. This is followed by entertainment topic, infographics, academics and personal, political topics, and spiritual or religious. The following have frequencies and percentages of 67 or 41.10 percent, 51 or 31.29 percent, 49 or 30.06 percent, 46, or 28.22 percent, and 32 or 19.63 percent respectively. Students least preferred topics that pertains to politics.

This finding can be attributed to Smith et. al. (2021) that watsapp being the highest producer of literary works all over the world reported a 90 percent over all users across millennials or Gen Z. Moreover, they also reported an average of 37 minutes of reading for all users across different parts of the world.

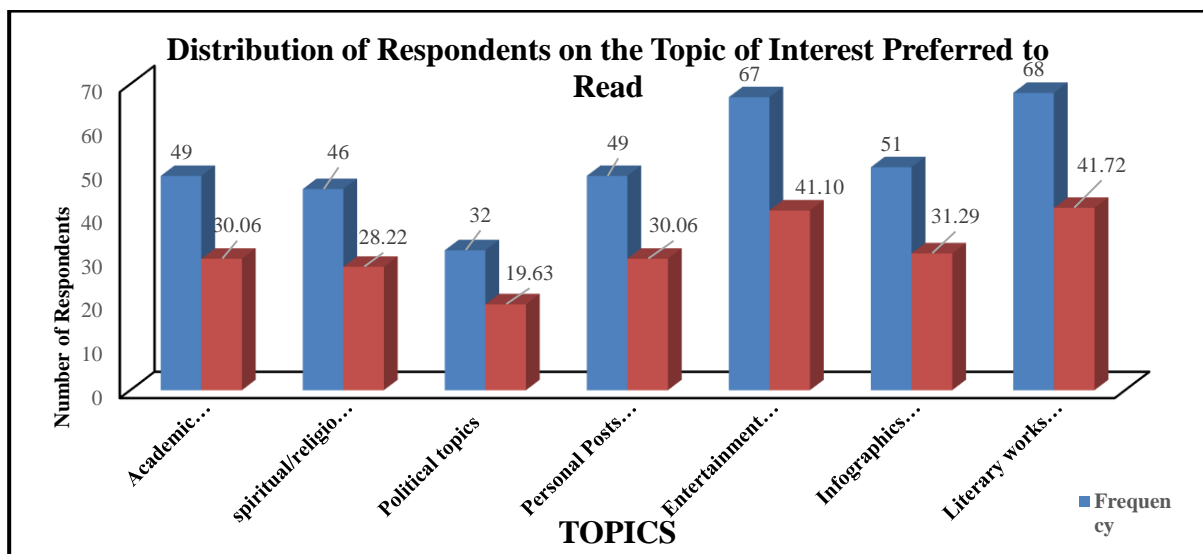


Figure 13. Profile of respondents on the Topic of Interest Preferred to Read

3. To measure the online reading habits of the students during the pandemic

Table 1 presents the Reading Habits of the Students during the Pandemic. Four of the indicators were rated with a mean ranging from 2.34 to 2.45 and with a describe value of “Sometimes”. These are the following: How often do you read... [political commentaries in e-books, blogs, webpages, websites, e-newspapers and social networking sites?], How often do you read... [literary works in e-books, blogs, web pages, websites, e-newspapers and social networking sites?], How often do you read... [spiritual/religious topics in e-books, blogs, webpages, websites, e-newspapers and social networking sites?], and How often do you read... [infographics or information materials in e-books, blogs, webpages, websites, e-newspapers and social networking sites?]. On the contrary, three of the indicators were rated with a mean of 2.53 and 2.52 with a descriptive value of “Often”. The overall mean is 2.45 with a descriptive value of “Sometimes”. It can be concluded that students read online mostly on social networking sites. Moreover, it is not often a choice for students to read literary pieces, infographics and the like.

An association of the discovered finding can be linked to the report of Kemp (2021) wherein, half of the now uses social media. This dictates a huge number of readers across different social media platforms. In specific, 53.6% of the world's population uses social media. The average daily usage is 2 hours and 25 minutes.

| INDICATORS | MEAN | DESCRIPTIVE VALUE |
|--|-------------|-------------------|
| 1. How often do you read... [literary works in e-books, blogs, web pages, websites, e-newspapers and social networking sites?] | 2.37 | SOMETIMES |
| 2. How often do you read... [academic/scientific works in e-books, blogs, webpages, websites, e-newspapers and social networking sites?] | 2.52 | OFTEN |
| 3. How often do you read... [spiritual/religious topics in e-books, blogs, webpages, websites, e-newspapers and social networking sites?] | 2.45 | SOMETIMES |
| 4. How often do you read... [infographics or information materials in e-books, blogs, webpages, websites, e-newspapers and social networking sites?] | 2.45 | SOMETIMES |
| 5. How often do you read... [entertainment topics in e-books, blogs, webpages, websites, e-newspapers and social networking sites?] | 2.53 | OFTEN |
| 6. How often do you read... [political commentaries in e-books, blogs, webpages, websites, e-newspapers and social networking sites?] | 2.34 | SOMETIMES |
| 7. How often do you read... [personal posts and comments in social networking sites?] | 2.52 | OFTEN |
| TOTAL MEAN | 2.45 | SOMETIMES |

Table 1. Reading Habits of the Students during the Pandemic

4. To ascertain the belief of the respondents on whether online reading soften or aggravate the psychological impact of ecq or not at all.

Table 2 shows belief of the respondents on whether online reading soften or aggravate the psychological impact of ECQ or not at all. All of the respondents agreed to all of the indicators given. “I learned a lot of things during ECQ because of all the online materials I have read” acquired the highest mean of 2.90 while “Staying at home during ECQ is more enjoyable because it gave me more time for my online reading” reflected the lowest mean garnered of 2.59. It can be seen that the respondents all agree that ECQ had played an important role when it comes to their reading habit.

In the study conducted by Tyagi (2020), a cross-sectional investigation on readership amongst college students during COVID-19 lockdown in a Northern City of India. The results display that most of the students read throughout lockdown and results illustrates that the lockdown presented the students opportunity to read online material as much as they wanted.

Boucher et. al. (2020) also reported in their study that students had been reading online texts more than usual. This was attributed in large part to getting more free time (due to being furloughed, or not having a commute, or the usual social obligations or leisure activities).

| INDICATORS | MEAN | DESCRIPTIVE VALUE |
|--|-------------|-------------------|
| Because of ECQ, my online reading habit has improved | 2.86 | AGREE |
| Staying at home during ECQ is more enjoyable because it gave me more time for my online reading. | 2.59 | AGREE |
| I find online reading while on ECQ to be addicting and time consuming. | 2.67 | AGREE |
| I learned a lot of things during ECQ because of all the online materials I have read. | 2.90 | AGREE |
| TOTAL MEAN | 2.75 | AGREE |

Table 2. Belief of the respondents on whether online reading soften or aggravate the psychological impact of ECQ or not at all.

Figure 14 displays the assessment of respondents as to online reading during ECQ. Most of the respondents answered “Yes” that is 85 or 52 percent of the total respondents. There are about 62 or 38 percent who answered “Maybe”. On the other hand, 16 or 10 percent of the respondents answered “No”. This implies that even though there is an existing pandemic, online reading is bearable among the respondents.

The presence of undecided responses and unbearable response can be related to the findings of Adeyemi (2020) in which he revealed that the majority of his respondents used their phones to read during the lockdown. More than half of those polled reported difficulties reading during the lockdown, citing factors such as the cost of resources, a lack of resources, a lack of motivation, and heavy use of social media.

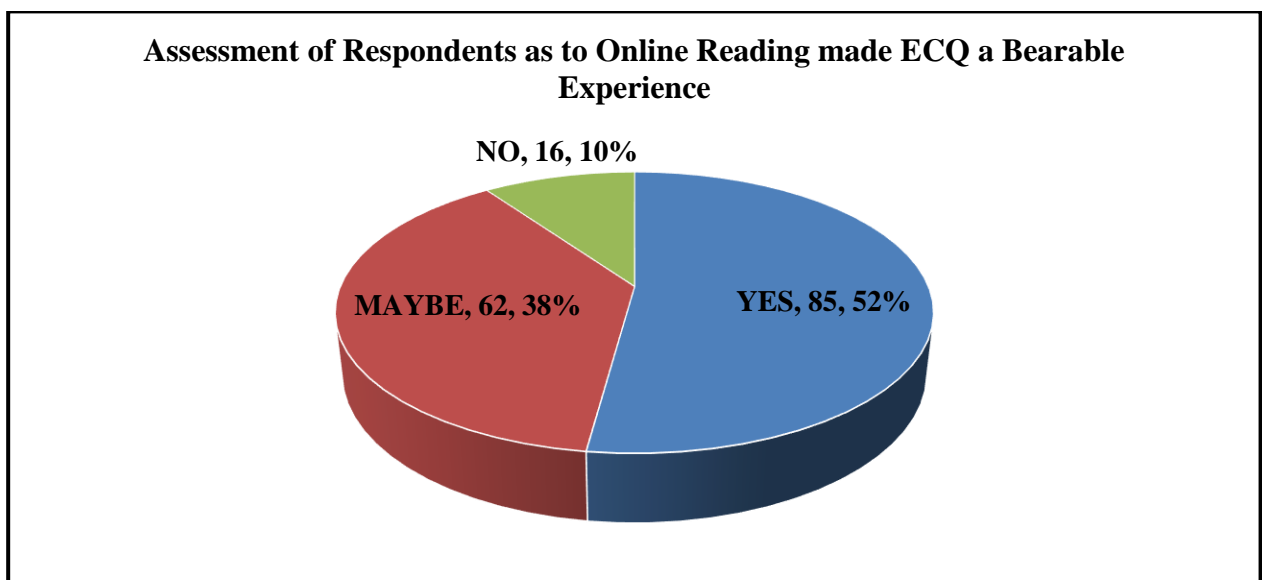


Figure 14. Assessment of Respondents as to Online Reading

Summary, conclusion, and recommendation

Summary

With the sudden move away from the classroom in many parts of the world, it's unclear if online learning will continue after the pandemic, and how such a shift will impact the global education sector. This study determined the reading engagement of students during this time of pandemic. Specifically, it looked into the profile of the respondents, online reading habits, reading preference, reading habits and preferred language and the beliefs of the respondents on the psychological impact of ECQ.

This study made use of Descriptive – Survey Research Design using questionnaire as the main tool in gathering the necessary data among student of CSU – Sanchez Mira. There were 163 participants in the study who were chosen through purposive sampling technique. Data were analyzed using frequency count and percentage, and weighted mean. A 4-point Likert scale was used to interpret the data.

The pool of respondents was female dominated. The age range is between 18 – 64 years old. Most of them resides in Sanchez Mira. Their smartphone is the primary gadget used to access the internet in 4-6 hours. The need to access the internet is for them to gather general

knowledge in social media sites. Student respondents also spend an amount of time in reading online materials written in English. The common topic being read was about literary works.

It can be seen that students read online mostly on social networking sites. Lastly, it can be seen that the respondents all agree that ECQ had played an important role when it comes to their reading habit.

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing findings, it can be concluded that there are various technological gadgets that can be used by the respondents in order to access the internet. It can also be concluded that there are differences in the time of usage when they wanted to acquire general knowledge from various sites. Literary works is the most common text being read online in social networking sites. ECQ had directed students to engage themselves to online reading habit.

Recommendation

Based on the above-mentioned conclusion, the recommendations are the following:

1. The government must look into the possibility of increasing signal accessibility of in most places since smartphone that uses data connectivity is the main technology used by the students to gain access online.
2. Teachers must conduct seminars or managing their time of usage when students are online.
3. List of important sites that can be easily access must be shared to students wherein they can gather general knowledge.
4. Teachers must also encourage students to read other texts to balance topics of interest being read.
5. A more objective tool must be developed to test students reading engagements in different course of studies.

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