

ABSTRACT

Several studies have been conducted to identify the nature and influencing factors of reading preferences. For example, it has been found that gender, socioeconomic, availability of material and location of the area either urban or rural are factors that influence reading preferences. However, there is still a lack of studies that assess reading preferences in relation to physical factors. Bearing this in consideration, this research aims to determine the relationship between physical factors and the reading preferences of secondary school students within suburban areas in Kuala Lumpur. Prior reviews undertaken had confirmed three problems related to reading preferences; i) lack of studies assessing physical factors and reading preferences ii) Malaysian reading level is at a lower level iii) teenagers have an adverse impression towards libraries and use libraries only to study in, rather than to read for leisure. Based on these problems raised, research objectives were formulated. The first objective was to identify the demographic characteristics of the secondary school students in relation to reading preferences. The second objective was to assess the attitude and values of secondary school students towards the reading activity and library; the third was to assess the relationship between physical factors and reading preferences. The final objective was to recommend a concept and design criteria for a reading place based on findings. A sample of 300 respondents was taken for data collection; 150 samples from Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Gombak Setia and 150 samples from Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Bandar Baru Sentul. Self-completed questionnaires were distributed to 300 respondents in both schools. Based on the analyses, it was found that a majority of the respondents indicated a positive attitude towards reading and the school library. However, the majority spent almost of their leisure time doing activities other than reading. Two-thirds of the respondents highly agreed that reading would be more attractive with the existence of various facilities that supported an informal environment for reading, such as facilities that allowed people to talk, eat and listen to music while reading. Based on inferential and factor analyses, two physical factors could be extracted; i) facilities and services, ii) internal and external environment of reading places. These analyses confirmed that these two physical factors influence reading preferences. The research then recommended to set an informal environment as a reading place and provide various facilities in the reading place, aimed especially at attracting young people as applied in other libraries, such as Book Café, Library My Second Home, Park Library and Virtual Library, that suit the demands of young groups and also being in line with current reading trends. If the concept is well received, it is potentially a transformative research finding and a breakthrough for the Malaysian reading environment.