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Influence of sociocultural factors on the reading habits and well-being of postgraduate students

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Abstract. This study examines how personal reading preferences, abilities, and cultural influences shape the reading habits and well-being of postgraduate students in a Nigerian tertiary institution. Using a descriptive survey design, data was collected from 310 students through questionnaires. Findings reveal that personal preferences strongly influence reading format choices, with 50.3% of respondents agreeing and 24.9% strongly agreeing (mean = 3.85, SD = 0.99). In contrast, peer and societal pressures have a weaker influence (mean = 2.37 and 2.42, respectively). Students exhibit high proficiency in using both digital (mean = 3.86, SD = 0.90) and physical reading materials (mean = 3.91, SD = 0.88), but they face greater challenges with digital platforms (mean = 2.58, SD = 1.16) compared to physical materials (mean = 2.31, SD = 1.07). Environmental factors significantly impact reading choices (mean = 3.27, SD = 1.05), while cultural influences elicit mixed responses (mean = 2.86, SD = 1.11). Religion emerges as a strong motivator for reading habits (mean = 3.77, SD = 1.06). Regression analysis establishes a significant association between individual factors and reading habits and well-being (R = 0.465, p = 0.000). Key predictors include personal preference (β = 0.069, p = 0.001), physical reading due to upbringing (β = 0.070, p = 0.000), and belief in the benefits of digital platforms (β = 0.070, p = 0.001). Based on these insights, the study recommends that universities and libraries develop bibliotherapy programs that prioritize personal preferences and provide diverse reading materials. Acknowledging the limitation of self-reported data, future research could incorporate objective measures such as digital reading logs to enhance accuracy and depth.

Keywords: reading habits and well-being, reading preferences, postgraduate students in Nigeria

1. Introduction

Reading habits and well-being relate to the therapeutic role of literature in promoting mental and emotional well-being, offering individuals avenues for self-reflection, emotional expression, and personal growth. Reading habits and well-being are closely linked to bibliotherapy, a therapeutic approach that utilizes literature to enhance mental and emotional health. According to Marinkovic [47], bibliotherapy involves the planned use of books to manage or heal illnesses and personal issues, including emotional and psychological problems. Zabukovec [81] further describes it as a nondirective therapy method that significantly influences the reader's social, emotional, and cognitive development. Martinec, Šimunović and Kos Jerković [50] define it as the intentional use of literary texts to encourage awareness and processing of emotional, cognitive, and interpersonal challenges. The origins of bibliotherapy trace back to ancient libraries, where books were seen as "medicine for the soul" [53]. Samuel McChord Crothers popularized the practice in 1916, suggesting books as therapeutic prescriptions for various ailments in his literary clinic [19]. The approach gained

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traction in the early 20th century, especially during World War I, when soldiers used reading to manage post-traumatic stress, supported by military hospital libraries [49].

Modern bibliotherapy continues to leverage literature's therapeutic power through guided reading and discussion, promoting emotional well-being and personal transformation [48]. Drawing on theories like Pavlov's [58] stimulus-response framework, bibliotherapy underscores the healing potential of books in fostering behaviour change and psychological resilience. Engaging with texts that reflect personal experiences or challenges can provide individuals with opportunities for self-reflection, emotional expression, and personal growth. Regular reading, particularly of literature with therapeutic themes, aids in processing emotions, gaining new perspectives, and building resilience, aligning with bibliotherapy's core objectives of promoting overall well-being. Studies have demonstrated that bibliotherapy can effectively address various mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, and burnout. By participating in reading activities, individuals may experience reductions in stress and improvements in psychological well-being. In an era marked by unprecedented access to information and diverse forms of media, reading stands as a cornerstone of individual development, cognitive engagement, and sociocultural interaction [21, 82]. As individuals navigate a vast landscape of reading materials, spanning traditional print books to digital platforms, understanding the factors influencing reading habits and preferences becomes paramount.

Reading, in its myriad forms, serves as a gateway to knowledge, imagination, and self-reflection, offering opportunities for intellectual enrichment, emotional resonance, and personal growth [22, 24]. Engaging with written texts enables individuals to explore diverse perspectives, expand their horizons, and cultivate critical thinking skills essential for navigating an increasingly complex world. Moreover, reading fosters empathy and cultural understanding by exposing individuals to diverse experiences, narratives, and voices, thereby promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue [5, 8, 27, 30, 35, 82].

Engaging with texts can serve as a coping mechanism, enabling individuals to navigate stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. By fostering emotional catharsis, cognitive restructuring, and self-awareness, bibliotherapy plays a vital role in promoting resilience and holistic well-being among individuals. Understanding how family, school, work and friends factors interact with reading preferences can provide valuable insights into the contextual factors that enhance or hinder the therapeutic effects of literature [30, 31]. Individual characteristics, choices, and contexts profoundly influence reading habits. Going into the nexus of personal choices, abilities, and cultural/religious influences often unravels the manifold dynamics underpinning reading behaviours and preferences among diverse populations [35, 75]. Individuals' personal inclinations, cognitive capacities, and sociocultural backgrounds play pivotal roles in shaping their reading experiences and outcomes, from the selection of reading materials to the interpretation of textual content.

Individuals' reading habits often mirror their preferences, interests, and values, shaped by upbringing, education, and lifestyle [38, 39, 73, 77]. Individuals reading experiences intertwine with cognitive abilities, literacy skills, and learning styles, varying across individuals and developmental stages [44, 65, 73]. Beyond personal factors, cultural and religious influences shape individuals' reading habits, imbuing reading practices with deeper meanings and significance [51]. Individuals' bibliotherapy experiences are deeply intertwined with their personal backgrounds, life experiences, and sociocultural contexts.

Postgraduate students have advanced cognitive and emotional development compared to other student groups; they are ideally appropriate for understanding how sociocultural factors interact with bibliotherapy outcomes [3]. Postgraduate students

in Nigeria often face significant academic pressure, leading to heightened stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. Furthermore, the diversity within the postgraduate student population, characterized by varying levels of life experiences, cultural perspectives, and sociocultural factors, offers a rich context for exploring how these factors impact the effectiveness of bibliotherapy. In Nigerian higher education, where postgraduate students may struggle to balance work, study, and personal life amidst poor social and economic conditions, examining their reading habits and well-being can provide valuable insights into how their sociocultural factors influence their coping mechanisms and overall well-being. This exploration could potentially lead to more targeted and effective support services within institutions.

These insights connect to the study by Becker, Pehrsson and McMillen [10], which adapted bibliotherapy to assist university students in navigating the emotional and psychological challenges of life transitions. Their concept of "Bibliolinking", where students are connected with literature that mirrors their personal experiences, was found to facilitate emotional processing and the development of essential coping strategies. The findings of Becker, Pehrsson and McMillen [10] have been supported by subsequent studies [45, 70, 83], underscoring the potential of bibliotherapy as a powerful tool for promoting student well-being. Tandon, Sharma and Sharma [70] highlight regulatory emotional self-efficacy as a mediator in this relationship, indicating that students with higher emotional regulation skills experience lower anxiety despite academic stress. Additionally, parental expectations moderate this effect, meaning that students facing intense parental pressure may experience heightened anxiety. Similarly, Zheng, Zhang and Ran [83] investigate the same mediating and moderating roles, reinforcing the importance of emotional self-efficacy in mitigating stress-induced test anxiety. On a broader scale, Lovin and Bernardeau-Moreau [45] examine time management difficulties as a key contributor to academic stress among university students in Romania. Their findings suggest that students with poor time management strategies face higher stress levels, leading to academic difficulties and anxiety. These studies collectively explore the relationship between academic stress and test anxiety in college students, emphasizing psychological and social factors that influence this association.

1.1. Research problem

Reading is a crucial component of individual development, cognitive engagement, and sociocultural interaction. However, the vast landscape of reading materials, spanning traditional print books to digital platforms, presents challenges in understanding the factors influencing reading habits and preferences. Bibliotherapy offers avenues for self-reflection, emotional expression, and personal growth. While bibliotherapy has been studied in various settings, examining it within the specific context of Nigerian higher education institutions fills a contextual gap. Despite the growing recognition of its benefits, there is a need to examine the link between sociocultural factors and reading habits and the well-being of the students in order to provide better guidance for bibliotherapeutic interventions. This input is significant in an effort to promote well-being and resilience, given the high levels of academic pressure and mental health challenges faced by postgraduate students. By focusing on sociocultural factors, the study sheds light on how cultural background, reading preferences, and mental health conditions influence the effectiveness of bibliotherapy. Investigating how bibliotherapy can support students' mental health and well-being needs adds depth to the existing research on the subject, which often focuses more broadly on general student populations in Nigeria.

Two hypotheses were developed:

1. There is no significant relationship between sociocultural factors and the reading

habits and well-being of postgraduate students at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

2. There is no significant relationship between family, school, work and friends, and reading habits and well-being of postgraduate students at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

2. Theoretical framework and literature review

This study was guided by two theories, namely Ecological Systems Theory and Cognitive Load Theory, whose overviews follow.

2.1. Ecological Systems Theory overview

Ecological Systems Theory, proposed by Bronfenbrenner [11], is a framework for understanding human development by examining the multiple interacting environments that influence an individual. The theory identifies five environmental systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem encompasses the immediate surroundings of the individual, such as family, peers, and school, where direct interactions occur. The mesosystem refers to the interconnections between these immediate environments, like the relationship between a child's school and home. The exosystem includes larger social systems that indirectly affect the individual, such as a parent's workplace or community resources. The macrosystem encompasses broader cultural, economic, and societal influences, while the chronosystem accounts for changes over time, including life transitions and historical events [12].

The theory emphasizes the dynamic and reciprocal nature of interactions between individuals and their environments. Ecological Systems Theory is widely used in various fields, including psychology, education, and social work, to design interventions that address developmental needs comprehensively [13]. By acknowledging the complexity and interconnectedness of influences on development, the theory provides a holistic perspective for understanding human behaviour and growth.

2.2. Cognitive Load Theory overview

Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), developed by Sweller [67], focuses on the limitations of working memory and its impact on learning and problem-solving. The theory asserts that working memory can process only a small amount of information at any given time, typically around 4-7 elements, and that this capacity can be easily overwhelmed [54]. CLT identifies three types of cognitive load: intrinsic, extraneous, and germane. Intrinsic load arises from the inherent complexity of the material being learned, extraneous load stems from poorly designed instructional methods or irrelevant information, and germane load pertains to the mental effort invested in processing and understanding the material effectively [69].

To optimize learning, CLT emphasizes reducing extraneous cognitive load while managing intrinsic load and fostering germane load. Instructional strategies like breaking down complex information, using visual aids, and scaffolding can help learners allocate their limited cognitive resources more efficiently. By aligning teaching methods with the principles of CLT, educators can design materials that enhance comprehension, retention, and transfer of knowledge [68]. This theory has been widely applied in instructional design, educational technology, and training programs to create more effective and learner-centered environments.

Both Ecological Systems Theory and Cognitive Load Theory provide complementary insights into understanding the influence of sociocultural factors on the reading habits and well-being of postgraduate students. Ecological Systems Theory situates the reading habits and well-being of postgraduate students within the context of their

sociocultural environments. The theory highlights how factors such as family support (microsystem), interactions between academic and social environments (mesosystem), institutional policies or community resources (exosystem), broader cultural attitudes toward reading and education (macrosystem), and historical or personal life transitions (chronosystem) shape students' reading behaviours and mental health [13]. For instance, cultural norms valuing academic rigour may influence students' commitment to reading, while supportive family or peer dynamics may buffer stress, thereby promoting well-being. This theory underscores the importance of addressing the layered sociocultural factors that influence students' habits and mental health in any study or intervention.

Cognitive Load Theory adds another dimension by emphasizing the internal cognitive processes that affect how postgraduate students engage with reading materials. Sociocultural factors, such as the complexity of academic expectations or the availability of well-designed instructional resources, directly impact students' intrinsic and extraneous cognitive loads. For example, postgraduate students from diverse educational backgrounds might struggle with unfamiliar academic texts, increasing their intrinsic load, while poorly structured materials or unsupportive academic environments exacerbate extraneous load [57]. Understanding these dynamics can inform strategies to reduce cognitive burdens, such as providing culturally sensitive scaffolding or tailored learning materials that enhance comprehension and promote intellectual well-being.

Ecological Systems Theory is necessary to examine how sociocultural environments – such as family, academic institutions, and broader cultural norms – shape postgraduate students' reading habits and well-being. Cognitive Load Theory is essential for understanding how these sociocultural influences impact cognitive processing, academic engagement, and the mental effort required to navigate complex reading materials.

2.3. Sociocultural factors, reading habits and well-being

The relationship between sociocultural factors and reading habits and well-being is critical in understanding how personal attributes affect the efficacy of bibliotherapy. Wittkamp, Krkovic and Lincoln [78] explored the role of emotion regulation and mental well-being in group-based interventions, shedding light on how sociocultural factors, particularly in emotional regulation, influence mental health outcomes. Their study emphasizes the need for tailored bibliotherapeutic interventions that consider these differences to enhance the therapeutic impact. Similarly, Kishore [39] delves into expressive therapy techniques, which include art, music, and drama therapies, focusing on adolescents. These expressive therapies offer insights into how individuals' unique emotional and psychological profiles might affect their response to bibliotherapy, thus highlighting the potential need for personalized approaches. Xu, Wu and Liu [79] conducted a comparative study on the efficacy of bibliotherapy in improving stigma and social function among schizophrenia patients. Their study is particularly relevant as it demonstrates how individual mental health conditions and differences play a significant role in the outcomes of bibliotherapy. The findings suggest that bibliotherapy can be tailored to address specific mental health needs, thus supporting the notion that sociocultural factors significantly influence reading habits and well-being.

The impact of microsystem factors such as family, school, work, and friends on reading habits and well-being is substantial, as these factors shape the environment in which individuals engage with bibliotherapy. Banas et al. [8] examined the psychosocial benefits of biblioguidance book clubs in a high school setting. Their findings reveal that students' interactions with peers and the educational environment significantly enhance the effectiveness of bibliotherapy, as these social factors create a supportive context for therapeutic reading. Grimes, Innes and Salvesen [31] discuss the role of

public libraries in promoting community well-being, emphasizing how institutional environments like schools and libraries facilitate access to bibliotherapeutic resources. Spates, Monobe and James [65] explore the use of storytelling as a therapeutic tool for addressing childhood trauma, particularly within the context of incarceration. Their findings suggest that early social environments, such as family and peers, play a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of bibliotherapy later in life. This study underscores the importance of considering the microsystem influences when designing and implementing bibliotherapeutic interventions.

The role of social and institutional environments, including family, peers, and libraries, is critical in shaping the effectiveness and impact of bibliotherapeutic interventions. These environments provide the context in which individuals interact with therapeutic literature, influencing both the process and the outcomes of bibliotherapy. Banas et al. [8] conducted an insightful study on the psychosocial benefits of biblioguidance book clubs in a high school setting. The researchers employed a descriptive phenomenological approach to explore how participation in these book clubs affected students' mental and emotional well-being. The findings reveal that book clubs not only facilitate access to literature but also create a supportive social environment where students can discuss and reflect on the readings with their peers. This interaction is crucial, as it allows students to see their experiences mirrored in the stories they read, fostering a sense of connection and validation.

The supportive nature of peer interactions in these book clubs underscores the importance of social environments in influencing reading habits and well-being, making it clear that such group settings can significantly amplify the psychosocial benefits of reading as a therapeutic activity. Grimes, Innes and Salvesen [31] further expand on the role of social institutions by exploring the function of public libraries in promoting community well-being, particularly through bibliotherapy. Their study emphasizes that public libraries serve as vital community hubs, providing not only access to books and resources but also a safe and inclusive space for individuals to engage in therapeutic reading. The researchers discuss the historical evolution of bibliotherapy within public libraries, highlighting how these institutions have long been involved in mental health support by offering curated reading lists and hosting bibliotherapy sessions.

Abimbola and Aramide [2] explore bibliotherapy as a strategy to address aliteracy – when individuals can read but choose not to – among secondary school students in Ilesa, Southwest Nigeria. The study examines how structured reading interventions using therapeutic literature can foster a more positive attitude toward reading and improve students' engagement with texts. Findings suggest that bibliotherapy effectively combats aliteracy by enhancing students' motivation, emotional well-being, and cognitive development. The authors advocate for integrating bibliotherapy into school curricula to promote lifelong reading habits.

Tella and Akande [71] explore the reading habits of university students, emphasizing the connection between reading frequency and academic performance. While it primarily targets undergraduate students, the findings are insightful for understanding reading behaviours in higher education. The authors highlight that students who engage in regular reading – both academic and non-academic – tend to perform better academically. Though not focused exclusively on postgraduate students, it offers foundational insights applicable to the broader higher education context. A study by Roslan et al. [59] examined psychological well-being among 192 Master of Education students, revealing a slightly high overall level of well-being. Significant differences emerged across age groups and fields of study, with students aged 41 and above exhibiting the highest well-being levels. These findings highlight the influence of demographic factors on postgraduate students' psychological health.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research approach and research design

This report is based on the quantitative aspect of a mixed methods study that utilized a concurrent explanatory design involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously [18]. The quantitative approach incorporates both descriptive and explanatory research designs. The descriptive design aims to analyze and understand the current circumstances, attitudes, and beliefs regarding bibliotherapeutic practices among postgraduate students at the University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Meanwhile, the explanatory design investigates the underlying reasons and mechanisms behind Reading habits and well-being, exploring causal relationships and testing hypotheses [80].

3.2. Location and population of the study

The study was conducted at the University of Ibadan in Oyo State, Nigeria, targeting all postgraduate students enrolled in the university's 20 faculties and institutes. According to data from the Academic and Planning Unit of the University of Ibadan, the total population of postgraduate students is 12,269. This population was categorized by faculty, as detailed in table 1. Using Slovin's formula to determine an appropriate sample size, with a 5% error margin and a 95% confidence level, the resulting sample size was 320.

3.3. Instrument for data collection

Data for the study was collected using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed through a collaborative process involving a panel of ten postgraduate students who did not participate in the actual study. These students met on three occasions in the Department of Data and Information Science at the University of Ibadan to brainstorm on the initial draft variables. The variables were developed by the researchers, based on a synthesis of O'Donohue and Cummings [55]. The first and second brainstorming sessions led to the creation of a draft questionnaire, which was pretested among 15 other students on January 23, 2024, to ensure clarity, validity, and reliability by identifying potential issues in the study. The result we obtained from this test did not indicate any serious issues to be attended to except for the need to reduce the volume of the questionnaire, which was considered voluminous by the students.

3.4. The questionnaire

The final questionnaire consisted of the following sections:

Section A: The demographic details of respondents were designed to collect data on their background characteristics, such as age, gender, education level, and other relevant personal information.

Section B: Preferences and attitudes toward reading guided the assessment of respondents' reading habits, preferences, and overall attitudes toward reading as an activity.

Section C: Perceived bibliotherapeutic benefits of reading measured the respondents' perceptions of how reading contributes to their emotional, psychological, or mental well-being.

Section D: The influence of external factors on reading was aimed at evaluating how external influences, such as social, environmental, or cultural factors, affect respondents' reading behaviours and choices.

Section E: The role of sociocultural factors in mediating the relationship between reading environment and reading habits and well-being is measured by

how personal traits or characteristics mediate the impact of the reading environment on the respondents' reading habits and well-being.

Section F: Challenges encountered during reading were aimed to identify any difficulties or barriers respondents face when engaging in reading activities.

Section G: The reading habits and well-being of postgraduate students were used to assess their overall mental and emotional well-being in relation to their reading habits and experiences.

Likert scales were used to measure responses, ensuring clarity, confidentiality, and freedom of expression among respondents.

3.5. Administration of the instruments and data analysis

In February 2024, 320 questionnaires were distributed in the lobbies of Balewa Hall and Awolowo Hall at the University of Ibadan, with weekly reminders issued. By March 2024, 310 were completed, and 305 were deemed usable for analysis. Frequency distributions and multiple regression analyses were conducted for quantitative data, with principal component analysis used for variable reduction.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic distribution of respondents

This section shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as their gender, marital status, educational status, and age and employment status.

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of the demographic profile of the respondents, showing that 62.6% of the respondents are males, exactly 88.9% of the respondents are single, and 75.1% falls within the age range 20-29. In addition, 88.2% of the respondents are currently running master's programs, and most of them, representing 36.1%, are unemployed, while just 30.2% are employed.

Table 1
Demographic profile of respondents.

		Frequency	**Percentage**
Gender	Male	191	62.6
	Female	114	37.4
	Total	*305*	*100*
Marital status	Single	271	88.9
	Married	34	11.1
	Total	*305*	*100*
Age range	20-29	229	75.1
	30-39	63	20.7
	40-49	9	3.0
	50-59	4	1.3
	Total	*305*	*100*
Level of education	Masters	269	88.2
	Mphil	27	8.9
	PhD	9	3.0
	Total	*305*	*100*
Job status	Employed	92	30.2
	Unemployed	110	36.1
	Self-employed	103	33.8
	Total	*305*	*100*

4.2. Reading habits and well-being of postgraduate students

Table 2 provides insights into the reading habits and well-being of postgraduate students by analyzing their well-being after reading. The statement "I am satisfied with my overall well-being after reading" has a mean score of 3.74 (SD = 0.94), indicating that most students feel positive, with 51.1% agreeing and 17.7% strongly agreeing. The low standard deviation shows consistent sentiment, with only 3.6% strongly disagreeing and 5.6% disagreeing. Conversely, the statement "I often feel anxious about various aspects of my life after reading" shows a more varied response with a mean of 2.97 (SD = 1.06). While 28.9% agree and 6.2% strongly agree, 29.5% disagree and 7.2% strongly disagree, reflecting diverse experiences. In response to "I bounce back after facing challenges or setbacks after reading", the mean score is 3.52 (SD = 0.93), with 43.0% agreeing and 12.1% strongly agreeing, indicating reading supports resilience. For "I believe I am growing and developing in various aspects of my life due to the books I have read", the mean is 4.02 (SD = 0.94), with strong agreement from 46.9% and 32.8%, suggesting reading significantly aids personal growth.

Table 2
Reading habits and well-being of postgraduate students.

Statement	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Mean	Std. dev.
I am satisfied with my overall well-being after reading	3.6	5.6	22.0	51.1	17.7	3.74	0.94
I often feel anxious about various aspects of my life after reading	7.2	29.5	28.2	28.9	6.2	2.97	1.06
I bounce back after facing challenges or setbacks after reading	3.0	9.2	32.8	43.0	12.1	3.52	0.93
I believe I am growing and developing in various aspects of my life due to the books I have read	1.6	7.2	11.5	46.9	32.8	4.02	0.94
I understand and cope better with my emotions due to what I have read	3.0	6.9	23.0	46.6	20.7	3.75	0.96
I frequently experience high level of stress after reading	18.4	33.4	25.9	17.4	4.9	2.57	1.12
I have headache and insomnia after reading	27.9	33.1	24.3	11.1	3.6	2.30	1.10
I feel sad and hopeless about life after reading	38.7	36.4	14.4	7.2	3.3	2.00	1.06
I have a clear sense of purpose due to what I have read	3.0	7.5	18.7	40.3	30.5	3.88	1.02
Grand mean						3.19	

The statement "I understand and cope better with my emotions due to what I have read" has a mean of 3.75 (SD = 0.96), with 46.6% agreeing and 20.7% strongly agreeing, indicating that reading helps in emotional coping. On the other hand, "I frequently experience high levels of stress after reading" has a lower mean of 2.57 (SD = 1.12), with 33.4% disagreeing and 18.4% strongly disagreeing, indicating that reading generally does not increase stress for most students. The statement "I have a headache and insomnia after reading" has a mean of 2.30 (SD = 1.10), with 33.1% disagreeing and 27.9% strongly disagreeing, showing that such physical symptoms are uncommon. The lowest mean score of 2.00 (SD = 1.06) is for "I feel sad and hopeless about life after reading", with 36.4% disagreeing and 38.7% strongly disagreeing, indicating that reading seldom leads to negative emotions. Finally, "I have a clear sense of purpose due to what I have read" has a mean score of 3.88 (SD = 1.02), with 40.3% agreeing and 30.5% strongly agreeing, highlighting reading's role in providing direction.

The grand mean of 3.19 indicates an overall "Healthier" reading habits and well-being status among respondents. However, individual mean scores on several key positive indicators (questions 1, 4, 5, and 9) suggest a generally positive impact of reading, aligning more with the "Healthiest" status. Negative indicators like stress, anxiety, headaches, and sadness have lower mean scores, reinforcing the generally positive trend. The healthiest respondents generally report high satisfaction, growth, emotional coping, and purpose due to reading (questions 1, 4, 5, 9). Healthier ones reported anxiety and stress levels (questions 2, 6) that are moderate but not highly detrimental. The healthy class is less applicable due to overall positive trends in responses.

4.3. Perceived personal abilities, personal preferences, cultural and environmental influences, and religion

4.3.1. Personal abilities

On digital proficiency, respondents show strong digital reading skills, with a mean score of 3.86 (SD = 0.90). A significant portion (47.9% agree, 23.6% strongly agree) feel confident in using digital platforms. However, navigating different digital platforms can be challenging, with a mean score of 2.58 (SD = 1.16) and 35.7% disagreeing that they face difficulties. Proficiency in handling physical reading materials is also high, with a mean score of 3.91 (SD = 0.88), and 50.2% agreeing, 24.9% strongly agreeing. Struggles with physical materials are less common, with a mean of 2.31 (SD = 1.07) and 39.3% disagreeing that they struggle. In determining reading benefits, the ability is seen as important in deriving benefits from reading, with mean scores of 3.30 (SD = 1.07) and 3.32 (SD = 1.10), respectively. A considerable portion of respondents agree that proficiency in these areas enhances reading benefits.

4.3.2. Personal preferences

Regarding the influence of personal preference, personal preference strongly influences reading format choice, with a mean score of 3.85 (SD = 0.99). The majority (50.3% agree, 24.9% strongly agree) highlight its importance. Additionally, personal preference is viewed as a key determinant of reading benefits, with a mean score of 3.67 (SD = 1.03), supported by 45.9% agreeing and 19.3% strongly agreeing. Also, independence from social influence had most respondents show autonomy in their reading choices, with a mean score of 2.37 (SD = 1.01) for digital reading influenced by others and 2.42 (SD = 1.05) for physical reading influenced by societal norms. A significant portion (40.7% and 41.6% disagree, respectively) do not engage in reading due to external pressures.

Table 3
Personal abilities, personal preferences, cultural and environmental influences and religion.

Statement	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Mean	Std. dev.
Personal abilities							
Very good with using different digital platforms	3.1	6.9	20.3	47.9	23.6	3.86	0.90
Very good with physical materials	1.3	5.9	17.7	50.2	24.9	3.91	0.88
I struggle with navigating different digital platforms	18.0	35.7	24.3	14.4	7.3	2.58	1.16
I struggle with reading physical materials	23.9	39.3	22.3	10.5	3.9	2.31	1.07
I believe my ability to use digital platforms determines the benefit I derive from reading	6.9	16.1	27.2	40.3	9.5	3.30	1.07
I believe my ability to use physical reading materials determines the benefit I derive from reading	7.2	16.1	25.9	39.3	11.5	3.32	1.10
Personal preferences							
Personal preference influences my choice of reading format	3.3	8.2	13.4	50.3	24.9	3.85	0.99
I believe my personal preference determines the benefit I get from reading	3.9	10.2	20.7	45.9	19.3	3.67	1.03
I engage in digital reading because everyone around me does	19.7	40.7	25.6	10.8	3.0	2.37	1.01
I engage in physical reading because everyone around me does	18.4	41.6	23.6	12.5	3.9	2.42	1.05
Cultural and environmental influences							
My environment actually influenced my choice of reading format	5.2	19.7	27.5	38.0	9.5	3.27	1.05
Culture influenced my reading format	11.5	27.9	31.8	21.3	7.5	2.86	1.11
Society influenced my reading format	10.5	25.9	31.5	24.6	7.5	2.93	1.11
Cultural attitudes, beliefs, and societal norms regarding help-seeking behaviour and mental health affect your engagement with reading for healing purposes	7.2	18.4	36.1	30.5	7.9	3.13	1.04
Religion							
My religion encourages me to read	3.0	9.8	23.3	35.4	28.3	3.77	1.06

4.3.3. Cultural and environmental influences

Regarding environmental impact, the environment plays a notable role in influencing reading habits, with a mean score of 3.27 (SD=1.05). Almost half of the respondents (38.0% agree, 27.5% neither agree nor disagree) recognize this impact. Also, cultural and societal influence on reading format is less pronounced, with a mean score of 2.86 (SD=1.11), and societal influence similarly has a mean of 2.93 (SD=1.11). Respondents exhibit diverse views, with many neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statements.

4.3.4. Religion and cultural beliefs

On religious influence, religion emerges as a significant factor in encouraging reading, with a mean score of 3.77 (SD = 1.06). A majority (35.4% agree, 28.3% strongly agree) report that their religious beliefs motivate them to read. Regarding cultural attitudes and mental health, cultural attitudes and societal norms regarding help-seeking behaviour and mental health also influence engagement with reading for healing purposes, with a mean score of 3.13 (SD = 1.04). Respondents generally acknowledge these influences.

4.4. The impact of work, school, family and friends

Table 4 illustrates the impact of work, school, family and friends. For instance, respondents generally agree that their workload at work significantly impacts how they engage in reading, as indicated by a mean score of 3.67. The influence of family on reading choices appears to be moderate, with a mean of 2.94, suggesting that while family plays a role, it may not be the dominant factor. When it comes to friends influencing reading preferences, the mean score of 2.85 suggests that friends have some influence, though it is not particularly strong. Academic work appears to have a notable impact on reading preferences, with a mean score of 3.60, indicating that respondents often read in alignment with their academic requirements. The instructional design of schoolwork also plays a significant role in shaping reading habits, as reflected by a mean score of 3.47. Despite various commitments, respondents generally still engage in reading for leisure, with a mean of 3.66.

Family support for reading is moderately high, with a mean score of 3.40, suggesting that respondents feel somewhat supported by their families in their reading endeavours. Friends, however, seem to have a less significant impact on reading for its benefits, as indicated by a lower mean score of 2.60. Respondents strongly agree that they have autonomy in choosing what they read, as shown by the highest mean score of 4.05. Conversely, reading based on what friends or family encourage shows lower mean scores (2.60 and 2.74, respectively), indicating less influence from these groups. Lastly, the habit of reading only what is assigned in school has a mean score of 2.90, suggesting that while some respondents do adhere to school-assigned reading, it is not a dominant practice. The grand mean of 3.21 across all statements indicates that, on average, respondents have a moderate agreement with the various influences on their reading habits.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between sociocultural factors and the reading habits and well-being of postgraduate students at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

4.5. Principal component analysis

Principal component analysis (PCA) was utilized to reduce variables.

PCA was chosen because the variables were measured on ordinal scales, and the determinant was within the acceptable range for the process. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (0.828) and Bartlett's test of sphericity (approx. chi-square = 2101.234, Df = 171, p = 0.000) indicated that the variables were suitable

Table 4
The impact of work, school, family and friends on reading.

Statement	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Mean	Std. dev.
Workload at work determine how I engage in reading	6.2	6.6	19.7	49.5	18.0	3.67	1.04
Family influences my reading choice	8.5	(28.2	29.5	27.9	5.9	2.94	1.07
My friends made me love to love reading	11.8	27.2	31.8	27.9	5.9	2.85	1.10
My reading preference is influenced by my academic work	3.0	16.1	19.7	40.7	20.7	3.60	1.07
The instructional design of my school work determines how I read	3.6	13.4	30.2	37.7	15.1	3.47	1.02
I still engage in reading for leisure despite all my commitments	3.3	9.2	23.9	45.2	18.4	3.66	0.99
Family support me whenever I need to read to help myself	3.0	13.4	38.0	32.1	13.4	3.40	0.98
Friends are the major reason why I engage in reading for its benefit	10.2	36.1	40.3	10.2	3.3	2.60	0.92
I choose what I read	1.6	3.9	13.4	49.5	31.5	4.05	0.87
I read what my friends read	12.8	35.1	32.8	17.7	1.6	2.60	0.98
I read what my family encourages me to read	10.80	30.8	36.1	18.4	3.9	2.74	1.01
I read just what we are asked to read in school	11.8	28.2	27.9	22.3	9.8	2.90	1.17
Grand mean						3.21	

for factor analysis, with a high KMO value of 0.828 demonstrating greater suitability. Bartlett's test of sphericity confirmed that the correlation matrix of the variables was significantly different from an identity matrix, indicating the appropriateness of the variables for factor analysis.

The communalities in table 5 represent the proportion of variance in each of the roles of sociocultural factors accounted for by the common factors extracted during the analysis. These communalities indicate the extent to which each variable shares variance with other variables in the dataset. High communalities suggest that a significant portion of the variance in the variable can be explained by the underlying factors, making it suitable for inclusion in the factor analysis. For instance, "Culture influenced my reading format" has the highest communality, with approximately 72.9% of the variance in the observed variable explained by the underlying factors. Conversely, "I believe my personal preference determines the benefit I get from reading" has the lowest communality, accounting for only 44% of the variance in the observed variable.

Table 5
Communalities.

	Initial	**Extraction**
Culture influenced my reading format	1.000	.729
I believe my ability to use digital platforms determines the benefit I derive from reading	1.000	.718
Very good with using different digital platforms	1.000	.702
Society influenced my reading format	1.000	.693
I engage in digital reading because everyone around me does	1.000	.687
I struggle with reading physical materials	1.000	.684
I engage in digital reading because that is what I grew up using	1.000	.676
Cultural attitudes, beliefs, and societal norms regarding help-seeking behaviour and mental health affect your engagement with reading for healing purposes	1.000	.649
I engage in physical reading because everyone around me does	1.000	.630
Very good with physical materials	1.000	.604
I believe my ability to use physical reading materials determines the benefit I derive from reading	1.000	.602
Personal preference influences my choice of reading format	1.000	.599
My environment actually influenced my choice of reading format	1.000	.595
My religion encourages me to read	1.000	.593
I believe my culture determines the benefit I derive from reading	1.000	.584
I struggle with navigating different digital platforms	1.000	.581
I believe my society determines the benefits I get from reading	1.000	.580
I engage in physical reading because that is what I grew up using	1.000	.510
I believe my personal preference determines the benefit I get from reading	1.000	.439

Communalities below 50% may indicate issues with variable reliability or suitability for factor analysis, whereas high communalities suggest that the variables are well-suited for inclusion in the analysis and contribute meaningfully to the interpretation of the underlying factors. The communalities table shows the extraction value for each item in the variable (construct). The extraction value for each item represents the proportion of the variance of each item that the factor can explain. It essentially indicates how much of the variability in each variable can be attributed to the underlying components. For example, the item "Culture influenced my reading format" has an extraction value of 0.729, indicating its component well represents it. Conversely, the item "I believe my personal preference determines the benefit I get from reading" has an extraction value of 0.439, implying that the components may not adequately represent this item, which might have unique variance not captured by the extracted components. Variables (items) with low extraction values are often dropped from further analysis to ensure the reliability of the factor analysis.

Total variance explained is highlighted in table 6. Initially, the eigenvalues indicate the total variance each principal component accounts for before extraction. Component 1 has an eigenvalue of 5.166, capturing 27.189% of the total variance, making

Table 6
Total variance explained.

Component	Initial eigenvalues			Extraction sums of squared loadings		
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	5.166	27.189	27.189	5.166	27.189	27.189
2	3.099	16.308	43.497	3.099	16.308	43.497
3	1.453	7.648	51.145	1.453	7.648	51.145
4	1.101	5.795	56.940	1.101	5.795	56.940
5	1.037	5.459	62.399	1.037	5.459	62.399
6	.865	4.554	66.953			
7	.805	4.238	71.192			
8	.693	3.648	74.840			
9	.652	3.434	78.274			
10	.569	2.995	81.268			
11	.547	2.877	84.145			
12	.505	2.657	86.802			
13	.470	2.472	89.274			
14	.435	2.290	91.563			
15	.402	2.117	93.681			
16	.362	1.906	95.586			
17	.308	1.621	97.207			
18	.286	1.504	98.712			
19	.245	1.288	100.000			

it the most significant component. Component 2 follows, with an eigenvalue of 3.099, explaining an additional 16.308% of the variance. Together, the first two components account for 43.497% of the total variance, highlighting their combined importance in explaining the dataset's variability. Component 3, with an eigenvalue of 1.453, explains 7.648% of the variance, bringing the cumulative explained variance to 51.145%. Component 4 adds another 5.795% with an eigenvalue of 1.101, resulting in a cumulative variance of 56.940%. Component 5 contributes an additional 5.459% of the variance, with an eigenvalue of 1.037, leading to a cumulative total of 62.399%.

The remaining components each explain progressively smaller portions of the variance. Component 6 accounts for 4.554%, while component 7 contributes 4.238%. Subsequent components explain variances ranging from 3.648% down to 1.288%, with the cumulative variance reaching 100% across all components. After extraction, the same components retain their significance in terms of explained variance, as indicated by the extraction sums of squared loadings. The first five components together explain 62.399% of the total variance, demonstrating that these components capture the majority of the variability in the data. The detailed breakdown of the explained variance by each component helps in understanding which aspects of the data are most significant and should be the focus of further analysis or interpretation.

The *component matrix* provides a comprehensive view of the relationships between the original variables and the identified principal components (table 7). Each cell in the matrix represents the correlation coefficient between a specific variable and each

Table 7
Component matrix.

Statement	**Components**				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Personal preference influences my choice of reading format	.132	.645	.388	.088	.079
Very good with using different digital platforms	.076	.599	.285	.506	-.034
Very good with physical materials	.091	.641	.403	-.083	.124
I struggle with navigating different digital platforms	.449	-.382	.310	-.155	.337
I struggle with reading physical materials	.459	-.523	.237	.365	.104
I engage in digital reading because everyone around me does	.601	-.488	.224	.098	.169
I engage in physical reading because everyone around me does	.560	-.420	.278	-.149	.201
I engage in digital reading because that is what I grew up using	.539	-.495	.193	.302	-.115
I engage in physical reading because that is what I grew up using	.467	.169	.457	-.200	-.121
My environment actually influenced my choice of reading format	.504	.283	.236	-.275	-.360
Culture influenced my reading format	.737	-.030	-.057	-.155	-.397
Society influenced my reading format	.689	.019	-.114	-.119	-.438
I believe my personal preference determines the benefit I get from reading	.356	.533	.043	.155	-.053
I believe my society determines the benefits I get from reading	.700	-.085	-.272	.060	-.072
I believe my ability to use digital platforms determines the benefit I derive from reading	.591	.283	-.320	.428	.057
I believe my ability to use physical reading materials determines the benefit I derive from reading	.587	.299	-.325	.197	.151
I believe my culture determines the benefit I derive from reading	.675	.014	-.329	-.123	.071
Cultural attitudes, beliefs, and societal norms regarding help-seeking behaviour and mental health affect your engagement with reading for healing purposes	.599	.258	-.235	-.194	.361
My religion encourages me to read	.378	.444	-.119	-.307	.381

principal component, offering insights into the contributions of individual variables to the overall variance explained by the components. Upon examining the component matrix, several notable patterns emerge. Variables related to personal preferences and influences on reading format demonstrate strong correlations with component 2, indicating a significant association with proficiency and comfort levels in using digital platforms. Conversely, variables reflecting challenges with navigating digital platforms and physical materials exhibit high correlations with component 1 and component 4, respectively, highlighting distinct difficulties encountered with each format.

Additionally, beliefs about the benefits of reading and cultural influences demon-

strate noteworthy correlations with component 3 and component 5. This suggests the influence of societal and cultural factors on reading habits and perceptions, as well as the importance of considering cultural attitudes towards mental health and help-seeking behaviour in understanding the motivations behind reading for healing purposes. Furthermore, variables related to religion and cultural attitudes towards mental health display moderate correlations with component 5, indicating their role in shaping beliefs about the benefits derived from reading for healing purposes. The component matrix offers valuable insights into the underlying structure of the data, elucidating the contributions of different variables to the principal components identified through PCA. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing reading habits and preferences among postgraduate students, facilitating more targeted interventions and strategies for promoting reading engagement and well-being.

4.6. Regression analysis of perceived roles of sociocultural factors and reading habits and well-being

To conduct the regression analysis aimed to examine the perceived roles of individual factors in reading habits and well-being among postgraduate students, the reading habits and well-being variables were computed and examined with the extracted perceived roles of sociocultural factors. Table 8 shows the model summary that revealed a moderate but significant association, with an R-value of 0.465 (p = 0.000). This suggests that while the model explains a portion of the variance in reading habits and well-being, there are likely other individual factors not accounted for that play critical roles. To further evaluate the model's effectiveness, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) table was utilized. The results indicated a statistically significant overall model (F = 16.506, p = 0.000), with a sum of squares (SS) of 9.476, degrees of freedom (Df) of 5, and mean squares (MS) of 1.895. This suggests that the predictor variables included in the model collectively contribute to explaining the variance in reading habits and well-being among the students.

The results are as follows:

- The *constant* term (β = 1.291, p < .001) indicates the expected reading habits and well-being score when all predictor variables are zero. This value represents

Table 8
Regression analysis of personal abilities, personal preferences, cultural and environmental factors and reading habits and well-being.

	Unstandardized coefficients		**Standardized coefficients**	**T**	**Sig.**
	B	**Std. error**	β		
(Constant)	1.291	.102		12.659	.000
Culture influenced my reading format	.026	.024	.075	1.078	.282
Personal preference influences my choice of reading format	.069	.020	.181	3.462	.001
I engage in physical reading because that is what I grew up using	.070	.018	.215	3.919	.000
I believe my ability to use digital platforms determines the benefit I derive from reading	.070	.020	.196	3.512	.001
Society influenced my reading format	.026	.024	.077	1.102	.271

the baseline level of reading habits and well-being.

- *Culture influenced my reading format*: the coefficient (β = 0.026, p = .282) suggests that the perceived influence of culture on the reading format has a non-significant association with reading habits and well-being.
- *Personal preference influences my choice of reading format*: the coefficient (β = 0.069, p = .001) indicates a significant positive association between the influence of personal preferences on reading format and reading habits and well-being.
- *I engage in physical reading because that is what I grew up using*: the coefficient (β = 0.070, p < .001) suggests a significant positive association between engaging in physical reading due to upbringing and reading habits and well-being.
- *I believe my ability to use digital platforms determines the benefit I derive from reading*: the coefficient (β = 0.070, p = .001) indicates a significant positive association between the belief in the influence of digital platform usage on reading benefits and reading habits and well-being.
- *Society influenced my reading format*: the coefficient (β = 0.026, p = .271) suggests that the perceived influence of society on the reading format has a non-significant association with reading habits and well-being.

Hence, personal preferences, upbringing-related reading habits, and beliefs in the benefits derived from digital platform usage significantly influence reading habits and well-being among postgraduate students. However, according to this analysis, the perceived influence of culture and society on reading format does not appear to impact reading habits and well-being significantly.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between family, school, work and friends, and reading habits and well-being of postgraduate students at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Key statistical metrics for the hypothesis testing the relationship between family, school, work and friends and reading habits and well-being among postgraduate students:

- The coefficient of determination (R) represents the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (reading habits and well-being) that the independent variables family, school, work and friends explain. In this model, the value of R is 0.465, suggesting that approximately 46.5% of the variance in reading habits and well-being can be explained by reading preferences.
- The R^2 indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables. Here, R^2 is 0.216, meaning that family, school, work and friends account for 21.6% of the variance in reading habits and well-being.
- The adjusted R^2 adjusts the R^2 for the number of predictors in the model. It provides a more conservative estimate of the model's explanatory power, particularly in models with multiple predictors. In this case, the adjusted R^2 is 0.206.
- The Std. error of the estimate represents the standard error of the residuals, which is an estimate of the variability in the dependent variable that is not explained by the independent variables. In this model, the standard error of the estimate is 0.33835.

The predictors included in the model are indicated as (Constant) Work, School, Friends, and Family. These variables represent different aspects of sociocultural

influences that may impact reading habits and well-being. The R and R^2 values suggest a moderate relationship between these variables, indicating that family, school, work and friends contribute to explaining a significant portion of the variability in reading habits and well-being.

The *ANOVA* results indicate the overall statistical significance of the regression model and the individual predictors in explaining the variance in the dependent variable, ComputedBHPS (computed reading habits and well-being score). The regression model as a whole was statistically significant (F = 20.660, p < .001), suggesting that the combination of predictors collectively contributed to explaining the variability in ComputedBHPS. Specifically, the regression model accounted for a significant portion of the total variance, as indicated by the regression sum of squares (9.461) relative to the total sum of squares (43.805).

The predictors included in the model, namely Work, School, Friend, and Family, collectively contributed to the observed variance in ComputedBHPS. The regression sum of squares attributed to these predictors (2.365) was significantly higher than the residual sum of squares (34.345), indicating that the predictors accounted for a substantial proportion of the variability in the dependent variable. Individually, each predictor variable had a statistically significant effect on ComputedBHPS. The predictors, along with the constant term, collectively explained a considerable portion of the variance in ComputedBHPS, highlighting their importance in understanding and predicting reading habits and well-being among postgraduate students. The ANOVA results provide strong support for the hypothesis that the combination of work, school, friends, and family significantly influences reading habits and well-being scores among postgraduate students. These findings underscore the nature of factors contributing to students' well-being and emphasize the importance of considering various environmental and interpersonal influences in promoting reading habits and well-being.

The *coefficients* table presents the estimated coefficients for each predictor variable included in the regression model, along with their standard errors, standardized coefficients (β), t-values, and significance levels (table 9).

The constant term represents the estimated intercept of the regression equation when all predictor variables are set to zero. In this model, the constant term is 0.970, with a standard error of 0.136 and a t-value of 7.110, indicating that it is statistically significant (p < .001).

The coefficient for the predictor variable Family is 0.107, with a standard error of 0.034 and a t-value of 3.107. The standardized coefficient (β) is 0.194, suggesting a moderate positive association between family influence and ComputedBHPS. This

Table 9
Influence of family, school, work and friends on reading habits and well-being of postgraduate students.

	Unstandardized coefficients		**Standardized coefficients**	**T**	**Sig.**
	B	**Std. error**	β		
(Constant)	.970	.136		7.110	.000
Family	.107	.034	.194	3.107	.002
Friend	.052	.030	.105	1.730	.085
School	.052	.027	.105	1.938	.054
Work	.148	.030	.266	4.988	.000

predictor is statistically significant (p = .002).

The coefficient for the predictor variable Friend is 0.052, with a standard error of 0.030 and a t-value of 1.730. The standardized coefficient (β) is 0.105, indicating a relatively weak positive association between friend influence and ComputedBHPS. However, this predictor is not statistically significant (p = .085).

The coefficient for the predictor variable School is 0.052, with a standard error of 0.027 and a t-value of 1.938. The standardized coefficient (β) is 0.105, suggesting a moderate positive association between school influence and ComputedBHPS. However, this predictor is marginally significant (p = .054).

The coefficient for the predictor variable Work is 0.148, with a standard error of 0.030 and a t-value of 4.988. The standardized coefficient (β) is 0.266, indicating a strong positive association between work influence and ComputedBHPS. This predictor is statistically significant (p < .001).

The parameter table has provided insights into the magnitude, direction, and significance of the relationships between predictor variables (Family, Friend, School, Work) and the dependent variable (ComputedBHPS). These findings suggest that family and work influences significantly contribute to explaining reading habits and well-being scores among postgraduate students, while friends and school influences have weaker or marginal effects.

5. Discussion of findings

The demographic distribution of respondents provides insights into their characteristics. The majority of respondents are male (62.6%), single (88.9%), and between the ages of 20-29 (75.1%). Regarding reading differences, personal choices significantly influence reading preferences. The majority of respondents prioritize personal preference when selecting reading materials, emphasizing the importance of catering to individual tastes. Krashen [41] highlights that self-selected reading materials increase reading engagement and comprehension, underscoring the importance of personal preferences in fostering a love for reading. Interestingly, peer and societal influences have less sway over their reading habits, suggesting a strong sense of independence in their choices [32]. Supporting this finding, Clark and Rumbold [16] have shown that readers are more motivated and likely to read for pleasure when they have autonomy over their reading material rather than being influenced by external pressures.

Postgraduate students demonstrate high proficiency in both digital and physical reading, with a majority feeling very good about their skills in navigating both formats [1]. However, challenges exist, particularly with digital platforms, where some respondents report struggles in navigating different platforms, highlighting the need for improved digital literacy [64]. Respondents acknowledge the influence of their environment on reading format choices, as supported by studies indicating that parental involvement and access to resources at home significantly shape reading behaviours [14, 60]. Opinions on the impact of culture and societal norms are more varied; while some research highlights their importance, others find their effects less consistent [25]. Individual preferences influence both reading format choices and outcomes, as noted by research on the impact of personal choice on reading speed and comprehension [46]. In comparison, societal and cultural influences are considered less impactful, aligning with findings by Tella, Sanya and Onyebinama [72] that emphasize autonomy in shaping reading habits.

Proficiency in using digital platforms and physical reading materials is believed to contribute to the benefits derived from reading in line with Diallo [23]. A study on reading habits among students in the digital era supports that the rapid development and demands of technology have reinforced the challenges of making reading habits

consistent and intensive [1]. Additionally, religion emerges as a significant motivator for reading among postgraduate students, underscoring the role of religious beliefs in promoting reading habits [36]. Research also supports that young people in religious groups are motivated to read and comprehend complex religious texts because they want to apply them to their lives, endure challenges, find comfort, and connect with "God" [36].

The findings also suggest that postgraduate students prioritize personal preference in their reading choices, demonstrate proficiency in both digital and physical reading formats, and acknowledge the influence of cultural and environmental factors on their reading habits in line with Abang Yusof [1]. A study on the influence of reading habits on the perception and use of reference sources by postgraduate students in Nigeria found that as students' reading habits increase, their use of reference sources also increases [56]. There is research on religious influences on literacy practices that supports the finding that religious beliefs can significantly impact reading habits and literacy development [66]. These insights can inform strategies for promoting effective reading practices among postgraduate students, taking into account their individual preferences and environmental influences [1]. In line with the foregoing, the hypotheses support that there is a significant relationship between sociocultural factors and the reading habits and well-being of postgraduate students at the University of Ibadan.

The investigation shows the relationship between family, school, work, and friends, as well as reading habits and well-being among postgraduate students at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The finding that family and work influence reading habits and well-being, while friends and school do not, may be explained by the roles these domains play in individuals' lives. Families often shape foundational behaviours through early socialization, and supportive family environments are linked to positive habits, including reading, which enhances well-being [28]. Similarly, work influences adults' mental health and lifestyle choices, with reading often serving as a tool for relaxation or professional development. In contrast, friends might exert less influence in adulthood as reading becomes a personal or family-oriented activity, aligning with intrinsic motivation rather than peer-driven behaviour. Additionally, while schools lay the groundwork for literacy, their impact on reading for pleasure or well-being may diminish if reading is framed as academic rather than recreational [20]. Variations in these influences can also reflect cultural or socioeconomic contexts, highlighting the importance of family and work in shaping long-term habits and well-being outcomes.

The study highlighted significant variations in format preferences among postgraduate students, with some favouring physical books for their tactile experience and immersive qualities, while others leaned towards eBooks for their convenience and accessibility. Individual lifestyles, academic demands, and personal inclinations often shaped these preferences. The motivations behind reading were equally diverse; some students read primarily for academic purposes, driven by the need to excel in their fields of study and advance their scholarly pursuits, while others emphasized personal growth and stress relief as key reasons for engaging with literature. These motivations reflected individual goals and aspirations, deeply influencing their reading choices and habits.

The variation in reading habits and their sociocultural influences aligns with existing research on the impact of sociocultural and individual factors on reading behaviour and well-being. The preference for physical books due to their tactile and immersive qualities is well-documented in studies emphasizing the sensory and emotional connection to print media [46]. Conversely, the convenience and portability of eBooks appeal to readers balancing demanding lifestyles and academic schedules, particularly among postgraduate students [37]. These choices often reflect broader sociocultural

shifts in technology adoption and lifestyle adjustments. Diverse motivations for reading, such as academic achievement and personal growth, underscore the dual roles reading plays in cognitive and emotional well-being.

Academic reading, often goal-oriented, fosters intellectual development, aligning with findings that students prioritize reading to meet educational objectives [33]. On the other hand, reading for stress relief and personal growth is linked to bibliotherapy and the psychological benefits of literature, including reduced anxiety and enhanced self-awareness [52]. Individual lifestyles, academic pressures, and cultural contexts deeply shape reading behaviours. Sociocultural theories, such as Vygotsky's [76] concept of social constructivism, suggest that cultural and societal factors profoundly impact learning and engagement with texts. Additionally, Tisdell [74] noted that personal values and sociocultural identity significantly shape learning and literacy practices. Some studies, however, suggest that globalization and digital access might reduce the influence of localized sociocultural factors, leading to more homogeneous reading habits across diverse populations [42].

The study showed that family, peers, and academic environments exerted diverse influences on students' reading habits. Early familial exposure to reading and parental expectations are widely recognized as significant factors shaping reading habits. Evans et al. [28] found that the home literacy environment, including access to books and parental involvement, strongly influences lifelong reading behaviours. Similarly, Sénéchal and LeFevre [63] highlighted the role of shared reading experiences in early childhood as a predictor of later reading engagement and academic success. However, some research suggests that family influence may diminish over time as individuals develop autonomous reading preferences shaped by personal and external factors, such as academic demands and peer networks [15].

According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory [9], peers influence behaviour through modelling and shared interests, which can include reading preferences. Similarly, Guthrie and Wigfield [32] demonstrated that collaborative academic environments foster reading motivation and engagement. Contrary to this, some studies argue that peers may have a limited impact on reading habits compared to family or intrinsic motivations, particularly when reading is perceived as an individual activity rather than a shared one [61]. The variation in how reading is incorporated into daily routines aligns with habit formation theories, such as those described by Duhigg [26]. For some individuals, reading becomes a ritualistic practice tied to well-being and personal growth, supported by evidence of reading's therapeutic effects [52]. Others view reading pragmatically, aligning it with academic or professional goals, as noted by Alexander and Jetton [4] in their exploration of situational and individual interest in reading. The multidimensional nature of sociocultural influences on reading habits reflects Vygotsky's social constructivism [76], which emphasizes the role of cultural tools, social interaction, and environmental factors in shaping behaviours and cognition. These factors may vary significantly across demographic and cultural contexts, as highlighted by Tisdell [74] in her work on the influence of sociocultural identity on learning and literacy.

Participants faced distinct challenges related to their reading habits, such as distractions, physical discomfort, or difficulties in comprehending culturally unfamiliar texts. Research has documented distractions and physical discomfort as common barriers to reading. Apiles [6] found that environmental and technological distractions significantly reduce reading engagement, particularly among students. Physical discomfort, such as poor posture or inadequate lighting, has also been linked to reduced reading efficacy [17]. Strategies for overcoming these challenges, such as dedicated reading times or the use of digital tools, are consistent with findings by Liu [43], who observed that digital resources enhance focus and efficiency by offering customizable features

like font size and annotation tools. Difficulties in engaging with culturally unfamiliar texts have been addressed in studies by Kramsch [40], who argued that cultural gaps in texts require readers to apply critical thinking and contextual knowledge to grasp meanings. Conversely, some studies suggest that exposure to diverse cultural texts can enhance cognitive flexibility and cross-cultural competence [7].

The engagement with diverse reading materials, including academic texts, fiction, and self-development books, aligns with findings by Schraw and Bruning [62], who emphasized that individual preferences reflect personal goals, values, and intellectual pursuits. Howard [34] also highlighted that professional and academic interests strongly influence content selection among postgraduate students. Religious and self-development texts often serve as tools for personal growth and well-being, as noted by McCulliss [52] in the context of bibliotherapy. Similarly, Gambrell et al. [29] observed that readers' selections often mirror their intrinsic motivations, such as spiritual growth, career aspirations, or the pursuit of knowledge. The role of sociocultural factors in shaping reading preferences is well-supported by Vygotsky's social constructivism [76], which posits that cultural and social contexts mediate reading behaviours. Additionally, Tisdell [74] noted that personal values and sociocultural identity significantly shape learning and literacy practices. Some studies, however, suggest that globalization and digital access might reduce the influence of localized sociocultural factors, leading to more homogeneous reading habits across diverse populations [42].

6. Conclusions

Reading significantly enhances the well-being of postgraduate students by fostering personal growth, emotional coping, resilience, and a clear sense of purpose. Most students report positive experiences, such as satisfaction with overall well-being, growth in various life aspects, and improved emotional management. Although moderate levels of anxiety and stress are noted, these effects are not widespread or overly detrimental. Physical symptoms like headaches or feelings of sadness after reading are uncommon, further supporting the generally positive influence of reading on well-being. Reading contributes to healthier habits and well-being, with the majority experiencing benefits aligned with the "Healthiest" status, underscoring its role in personal development and emotional resilience. Personal abilities and preferences play a significant role in shaping reading habits and associated benefits. While some students face challenges navigating digital platforms, most find their abilities pivotal in maximizing the benefits derived from reading. Social influences, including societal norms and peer behaviour, have minimal impact on reading choices, emphasizing the autonomy students have in selecting reading formats.

Cultural and environmental factors also contribute to shaping reading habits, although their influence is moderate. The study reveals the importance of spiritual and cultural values, particularly religious beliefs, in fostering reading habits. Additionally, work, school, family, and friends influence reading, with academic requirements and work commitments being particularly significant. While family provides moderate support for reading, friends have a limited impact. Despite these commitments, many respondents continue to engage in leisure reading, reflecting a balance between academic and personal pursuits. The study highlights the importance of digital literacy and suggests that higher education institutions should prioritize integrating digital literacy programs to equip students with the skills necessary to maximize digital reading tools. Furthermore, the findings suggest that family support and work environments that promote a balance between academic and personal growth are crucial to improving students' reading behaviours and well-being.

The findings of this study align with Ecological System Theory and Cognitive Load Theory by demonstrating how sociocultural factors and individual preferences interact to shape reading habits and well-being among postgraduate students. Ecological System Theory highlights the interconnected influence of various environments – family, work, and cultural settings – on behaviour. This is reflected in the study's observation that family and work significantly shape reading habits, while peers and academic settings play a lesser role, emphasizing the foundational role of early socialization and immediate environments. Simultaneously, Cognitive Load Theory is evidenced in students' navigation of digital and physical reading formats, where proficiency impacts their ability to manage intrinsic and extraneous cognitive demands. Challenges with digital platforms highlight the strain of unfamiliar interfaces, underscoring the need for enhanced digital literacy to reduce cognitive overload. Together, the theories underscore the dynamic interplay of environmental influences and cognitive capacity in fostering effective reading behaviours and their role in well-being.

6.1. Recommendations

To foster a positive relationship with reading, it is essential to promote early engagement with reading by encouraging initiatives that begin at an early age. Early-life reading experiences have long-lasting benefits, shaping individuals' reading habits and fostering a deep connection with literature. Additionally, higher education institutions should prioritize integrating digital literacy programs. These programs will equip students with the necessary skills to fully leverage the advantages of digital reading tools, ensuring they are prepared to navigate the evolving landscape of digital content. Efforts should also be made to strengthen family support structures, as families play a significant role in shaping students' reading habits and overall well-being. By enhancing family involvement, students can develop a supportive environment that encourages their reading practices and personal growth.

Institutions and workplaces should also strive to create environments that promote a healthy balance between academic responsibilities and personal growth. These environments should support both productivity and well-being, ensuring that students can manage their academic commitments while also nurturing their emotional and intellectual needs.

It is crucial to promote autonomy in reading choices, allowing individuals the freedom to customize their reading practices based on personal preferences and technological competencies. By fostering an environment that supports personalized reading habits, students can maximize the benefits of reading for their overall well-being.

Furthermore, reading should be recognized as a therapeutic tool that contributes to emotional and intellectual balance. Educational institutions should incorporate initiatives that support holistic well-being, emphasizing the therapeutic potential of reading in promoting students' mental and emotional health. Finally, institutions should encourage flexible reading formats, allowing students to choose between traditional physical books and digital formats based on their individual preferences, technological abilities, and academic needs. This flexibility ensures that students can engage with reading in ways that best suit their lifestyles and learning environments.

6.2. Limitations

The study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. Its findings may have limited generalizability, as the sample may not fully represent postgraduate students across different geographical locations, disciplines, or socioeconomic backgrounds. This restricts the broader applicability of the results. Additionally, the study appears to place greater emphasis on the positive effects of reading while offering minimal

discussion on potential negative aspects, such as cognitive fatigue, digital distractions, or reading-induced stress, which could be more pronounced in high-stakes academic settings.

Another limitation is the insufficient exploration of digital challenges. While the study mentions digital literacy difficulties, it does not deeply examine how various types of digital content, reading devices, or prolonged screen exposure influence cognitive load and overall well-being. Furthermore, the study finds that peer influence on reading habits is minimal but does not explore the underlying reasons for this finding. Given that social learning theories emphasize the significance of peer interactions, further investigation is needed to understand the role of peer influence in shaping reading behaviours.

Finally, the study overlooks the role of reading motivation, failing to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic factors that drive reading engagement. A deeper analysis of these motivational aspects could provide further clarity on the variations in reading habits and their impact on well-being. Lastly, while the study applies Ecological Systems Theory and Cognitive Load Theory, it does not consider alternative theoretical frameworks, such as Self-Determination Theory or the Transactional Theory of Reading, which could offer additional insights into students' reading engagement and its influence on personal development. Addressing these limitations in future research could enhance the depth and applicability of the findings.

6.3. Implications of the findings for policy

The findings of this study have significant policy implications for higher education institutions, workplace environments, and public health initiatives. Universities should prioritize the integration of digital literacy programs into their curricula, ensuring that postgraduate students develop the necessary skills to navigate digital reading platforms effectively. Given the challenges some students face with digital formats, structured training on digital literacy would help mitigate cognitive overload and enhance the benefits derived from digital reading tools. Additionally, higher education policies should emphasize student well-being by recognizing the role of reading in fostering emotional resilience, personal growth, and stress management. Institutions should invest in initiatives that encourage reading for both academic and personal development, including the provision of well-equipped libraries, reading lounges, and structured book clubs. These resources would not only support students academically but also contribute to their overall mental health and well-being.

Workplace policies should also reflect an understanding of the balance between academic and personal growth. Employers and academic institutions should consider policies that promote a supportive reading culture, recognizing that access to reading materials and flexible schedules can contribute to lifelong learning and well-being. Similarly, public health policies could leverage these findings to promote reading as an accessible and effective tool for stress management, particularly among postgraduate students who often face high levels of academic pressure. Furthermore, policymakers should consider strategies to enhance family and community support for reading. Since the study highlights the influence of familial and work environments on reading habits, interventions that encourage family engagement in literacy activities and workplace policies that allow for intellectual enrichment could have long-term benefits.

6.4. Future studies

Future studies should employ more diverse sampling strategies to encompass a broader range of demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age, marital status) and educational backgrounds (e.g., doctoral students and professionals returning to education). This approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of

how various factors influence reading habits and preferences among postgraduate students.

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