



The Development of Reading Habits Among Children in Alignment with SDG 4: A Scoping Review

Suraiya Khatun¹, Mst Asma Khatun²

1. Information Science and Library Management, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. Email:

sanzida.sultana.x@gmail.com

2. Information Science and Library Management, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. Email:

s2312547141@ru.ac.bd

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Abstract

Reading is fundamental to children's cognitive development, academic success, and lifelong learning. However, exam-oriented education, excessive screen time, inadequate library facilities, and socioeconomic inequalities often limit the development of free voluntary reading habits. This scoping review maps literature published between 2004 and 2025 on children's reading habits in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4: Quality Education). Using Arksey and O'Malley's framework and PRISMA-ScR guidelines, 94 records were identified through the Scopus database. After systematic screening, 17 peer-reviewed empirical and conceptual studies were included for thematic synthesis. The findings show a positive relationship between voluntary reading and academic performance. Major factors supporting reading habits include well-equipped libraries, trained personnel, parental involvement, reading bags, and reading logs. Gender and academic background also influence reading preferences, with female students showing greater interest in fiction and recreational reading. Although digital tools can enhance engagement, uncontrolled screen time may reduce attention and sustained reading ability. Developing a sustainable reading culture by 2030 requires improved library infrastructure, localized initiatives, supportive policies, and a shift from exam-centred to pleasure-based reading, supporting SDG Targets 4.2 and 4.5.

Keywords: Reading Habits, Children, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), Scoping Review, Literacy Development, School Libraries

1. Introduction

Comprehension and meaningful interpretation of visual or graphical symbols, is at the hub of reading. Reading is a means of searching knowledge, information or entertainment through the written words, language accession, communication and exchanging information and ideas which can be is respected as an art capable of converting man's life and his entire society. This is an activity that assists in the expansion of the brain, it is the platform to rotate all the learning activities (Ahmed, 2009; Aina,et al., 2011; Tella&Akande, 2007). Reading habits is often considered in terms of the amount of materials being read, the frequency of reading as well as the average time spent on reading which is cultivated to come up with the interpretation and evaluation of course work, examinations and written symbols, rarely with pleasure (Wijesuriya, 1995; Wagner, 2002; Olanlokun,1999; Abeyrathna et al., 2004; Philip, 2009).

Information and access to information plays a pivotal role in individual advancement by reducing the gap between knowledge and ignorance. Bacon(1978) states that "Reading makes a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man. A regular reading habits is at the heart of self-enhancement, logical thinking mind, craft new ideas, pleasure & relaxation, a feeling of pride & prestige, valuing, adaptability and creativity for sustainable development, lifelong learning, improving vocabulary, word power, language skills and adaptation to life (Sethy, 2018; Tella&Akanade, 2007; Lewis, 2014; Oke ,1996, Vuong et al., 2019; Ritchie , 2013; Norris &Phillips, 2003; Cromley,2009; Reed et al., 2017) .

Children are future leaders of any nation. Childhood is a formative stage and a period characterized by tremendous drive, character formation and desire to learn(Igwesi, et al., 2012). Dike (1993) emphasized that "the foundations of reading development are laid in early childhood, children are ruled by their senses and emotions; hence the importance of a rich environment, play, physical activities and the arts for stimulating educational development in early childhood". At this early stage, children are very active; mentally, emotionally and physically, and they have the desire and a natural curiosity to learn. It is very pertinent to adopt a proactive learning strategies and methodologies that could encourage children in developing life-long reading habit and take cognizance of the various children's individual differences (Dike, 1993). The reading habits of children have long been a matter of much interest to educators, parents, librarians, publishers, and other stakeholders. An understanding of the reading habits and preferences of children would help them to take necessary measures for promoting reading among children. It is, however, a general observation that there is an overemphasis on study-related reading thus ignoring the recreational or free voluntary reading among children. With increasing pressure on children to perform well academically, it is not surprising that children often associate books and reading with learning, schoolwork, school projects, and passing examinations (Majid& Tan, 2007). Children and adolescents cannot fulfil their potential if they do not read widely. (Habibu&Ejembi, 2011; Shabi& Udofia,2009).

However, in the World Children Report by (UNICEF, 1999), it was stated that nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or write their names. Okoro (2004), posited that it is essential that children be introduced to the art of reading very early in life even before the child steps in school. When this is done, the end result is that children are linked early enough with the joys of reading as a means of enjoyment, self-development, love of literature and learning.

There are many factors that motivate reading among children. An international survey has shown that nearly one-half of the UK students participating in this study said that they read for relaxation while a majority of the children from 12 developing countries revealed that they read books for passing examinations (Books Aid International, 2003). A study of young people in Britain, aged between 11 and 18 years, found that peer influence was the top most reason for reading books (Market & Opinion Research International-MORI, 2004). A survey of 431 pre-kindergarten through grade eight students in the United States found that 71 percent of the students who perceived themselves as good readers had a positive attitude towards reading while none of the students who regarded themselves as 'poor' readers enjoyed reading (Cosgrove, 2001). A survey of 8,000 children in Britain, aged 10, 12 and 14 years, found that children had very diverse reading tastes (Hall & Coles, 1999). A similar survey conducted in Denmark on children, aged between nine and twelve years, noted a great deal of variation in children's reading preferences. It was found that, over a span of one month, the children read a total of 1,598 fiction and non-fiction books written by more than 700 authors (Steffensen & Weinreich, 2000). Among the Singapore children, adventure stories were the most popular, followed by mystery stories (Balasundram, 1991). In Australia, primary school students liked reading action adventure as much as science fiction and fantasy (Woolcott Research, 2001) while in Britain, fantasy fiction was at the top, followed by humour, horror. Understanding the Reading Habits of Children in Singapore and thriller books (MORI, 2004). Hall & Coles (1999) reported a trend where fewer books being read as children grow older. A study of reading habits of boys in primary schools found that the number of children who liked reading books dropped by one-third between the ages of five and nine (Times Educational Supplement, 2000). A similar trend was observed in Ireland where over 2200 children, aged between 7 and 16 years, showed a considerable decline in book reading with increasing age (Children's Books Ireland, 2000).

By limiting screen time, giving reading rewards, proper maintaining record of child's reading activities, book talk with peers or in the group, associating reading with pleasure, daily ask the child to read certain words, visit of libraries, book exhibitions and literary places are the result-oriented strategies which can be used to promote reading habits among the school children (Bano, et al., 2018).

Several studies have been conducted to explore the factors affecting the development of reading habits among children, investigates the reading habits and preferences of children, motivations behind reading, and their attitudes towards reading, children reading habits and availability of books, to explore teachers' perceptions about parental role in developing, examines the role of school and public libraries in promoting reading habits among children and adolescents and reading habits of children to improve their academic achievement. Most scholars affirm that excessive use of screens such as mobile, TV, and electronic games are the major problems parents face in the promotion of reading habits among children, motivated to read for academically-related reasons such as to improve language skills and to obtain better grades in examinations, reading was the third most preferred leisure activity after hobbies and playing on computer or the Internet, it was revealed that the pupils depend largely on the notes given by their teachers as the major source of reading material based on inadequate availability of books, inadequate book availability, lack of interesting children's literature, and watching television are identified as factors hindering kids. However, some studies indicate different programs like clubs, mobile reading tents, book talk, and story hours, among others. School and public libraries play a leading role in the reading habit of children and adolescents. (Ahmad et al., 2021; Majid& Tan, 2007;Tella &Akande, 2007; Habibu&Ejembi, 2011). In recent years, the concept of sustainable development has taken center stage at the heart of nations' current development and includes many dimensions widely spread in the international literature. Defined as ("Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on the Environment and Development, 1987, p. 41;Camillo, 2024).Sustainable development encompasses a wide range of social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Within this framework, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda identifies Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) of quality education is a solid set of goals that helps establish quality patterns for education practices in the sustainability realm as a cornerstone for ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all(United Nations, 2023b).SDG 4 consists of ten interconnected targets thatconcern different approaches to sustainable development in education particularly several of these targets 4.2 (early childhood education), 4.5 (gender equality and social inclusion), 4.6 (literacy and numeracy), and 4.7 (promotion of sustainable development through education)—are directly relevant to the development of reading habits among children (United Nations, 2023b). Several of these targets—particularly 4.2 (early childhood education), 4.5 (gender equality and social inclusion), 4.6 (literacy and numeracy), and 4.7 (promotion of sustainable development through education)—are directly relevant to the development of reading habits among children (United Nations, 2023b). Encouraging reading from an early age not only enhances literacy and basic knowledge outcomes (target 4.6) but also supports broader goals such as social inclusion, equity, and empowerment. Reading promotion is also deeply tied to the dimension of social sustainability, which emphasizes universal access to education, social equality; income distribution; job opportunities providing adequate individual income; equality between men and women, and social well-being (Serrão et

al., 2020). As Camillo (2024) notes, while Brazilian public policies for reading promotion show potential to contribute to quality education, they still fall short in aligning fully with SDG 4. Specifically, reading initiatives often overlook several critical targets like 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, and 4.a, limiting their effectiveness in creating a sustainable, inclusive reading culture. This gap underscores the need to establish reading policies that integrate all aspects of SDG 4 to foster a truly sustainable educational framework by 2030. Camillo, (2024). Above the studies was analyzed by the approach of survey but the gap has existed in terms of systematic review approach. This systematic review seeks to review different studies or articles related to the notion the development of reading habits among children. *Despite existing studies, a scoping review linking reading habits to SDG 4 targets is lacking.*

1.1.Objectives

The main objectives of this review are to summarize:

1. To explore the existing literature on the development of reading habits among children in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (quality education).
2. To identify the key themes, strategies, and educational interventions used to foster reading habits in children as reported in the literature.
3. To highlight research gaps and suggest future directions for promoting reading habits among children to achieve SDG 4 targets.

2. Methods

This scoping review is directed to explore the existing literature on the development of reading habits among children in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). The scoping review methodology was chosen using Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) proposed framework. Reporting of the scoping review follows the PRISMA-ScR reporting standards (Tricco et al., 2018).

2.1. Study Design

This research pursues a systematic approach to investigate the development of reading habits among children for SDG 4. The review methodology was adapted from the systematic and scoping review techniques used in previous studies (e.g., Research consultations in the academic library and social media utilization during the COVID-19 pandemic).

2.2. Eligibility Criteria

Peer reviewed journal articles, grey literature reports and conference publications were included. Studies published between 2004 -2025 and onwards were included to build on the studies and language was limited to English.

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Study design	Quantitative and qualitative, a.	
Date	2004 and 2025.	Before 2004 and after 2025.
Language	English.	Any other language.
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed articles, case studies, and reports conference papers or grey literature	Editorials, opinion pieces, book reviews, or documents lacking research evidence, empirical or conceptual grounding
Topic focus	Development of reading habits, literacy programs, reading interventions	Studies not related to reading habits, or focusing on unrelated literacy outcomes (e.g., digital skills without reading)
Research Focus	The main focus was on development reading habits and its impact on children.	Primary focus on other topics other than Development reading habits and children

Researcher's compilation (2025)

2.3. Search Strategy

A search for relevant articles was conducted in October and November 2019 within the Scopus database which is the largest multidisciplinary, broadest and most comprehensive coverage of collected academic content, and that provides access to a vast collection of peer-reviewed literature to conduct a scoping review that broadly maps existing literature to identify key themes, gaps, and evidence related to children's reading habits for achieving SDG 4. (Schotten et al., 2017; Verma & Sharma, 2022; Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Pham et al., 2014; Peterson et al., 2017). A comprehensive search was conducted on 20 March 2025 using two different search queries to maximize coverage and relevance by the Scopus database. The first search was performed using the title, abstract, and keyword fields and retrieved 80 documents published between 2004 and 2025. Whereas the second search was restricted to the title field only and retrieved 14 documents from the same period.

Search Term 1: (TITLE-ABS-KEY (reading AND habit) AND ALL (children) AND ALL (sustainable AND development))

Search Term 2: (TITLE ("reading habit") AND ALL (children) AND ALL (sustainable AND development))

Selection of Sources

To be included in the review, studies must have addressed the provision of programs or initiatives designed to improve reading habits in children, Interventions or educational practices linked to sustainable development goals and Measurement of impact on children's reading behavior or educational outcomes. All retrieved documents were exported into a spreadsheet for initial screening. Duplicates were excluded. Studies must have provided empirical evidence of intervention outcomes.

2.4. Screening Process

It is operated into two ways title and abstract screening and full text review. Initially, titles and abstracts were reviewed to evaluate relevance. The full texts of relevant studies were extracted for further examination. Studies were reviewed to ensure they met the inclusion criteria. Articles not meeting the criteria were excluded from further analysis.

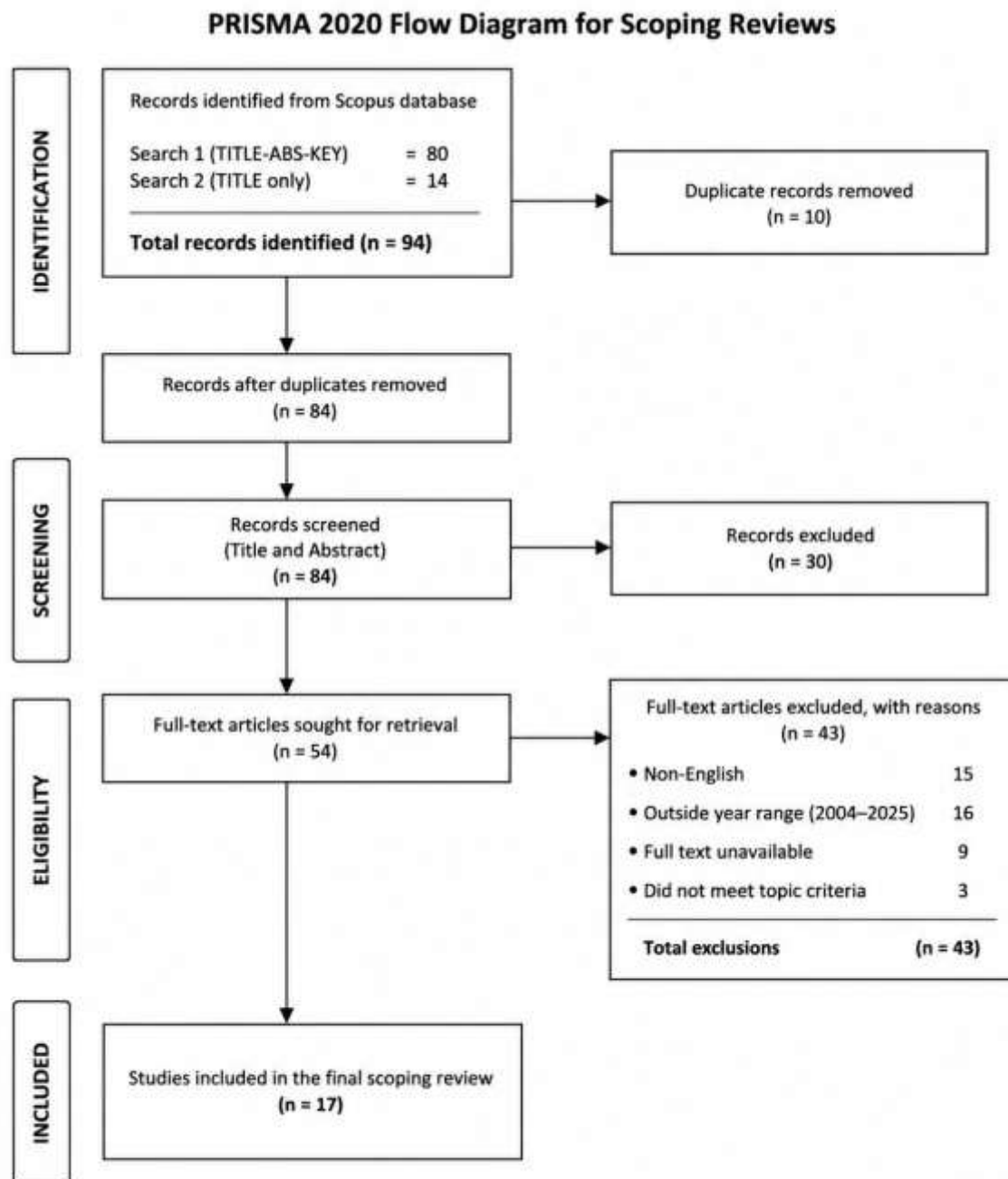
2.5. Data charting

A Google Sheets data collection form was developed and tested by the researcher's to determine extracted variables. Information was collected in the following categories: publication details, participant characteristics, Description of reading habit initiatives or interventions, Relevance to SDG 4 or sustainable development, assessment methodology and evaluation results. No formal critical appraisal was undertaken

2.6. Data Extraction

Data extraction was conducted systematically to gather pertinent information for addressing the research question. The extracted data were organized into tables to facilitate comparison and synthesis across studies as shown in Table 1. Key data elements included authors' names, publication dates, indexing, study aims, research design, sample sizes, demographic characteristics, and study results.

3. Results



Note: The diagram follows the PRISMA 2020 extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) framework.

Figure1. The PRISMA flow diagram (Matthew et al., 2021)

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) approach provides a systematic methodology for conducting comprehensive literature reviews cite koro. This structured process begins with the identification phase, where relevant records are retrieved from academic databases using carefully designed search queries (Moher et al., 2010). This study were initially extracted 94 records were initially identified from Scopus using two search terms combining the concepts of reading habits, children, and sustainable development. Succeeding identification, then the screening stage include removing duplicate records (10 excluded here) and evaluating the remaining records for retrieval of the original 94 records, 54 advanced to full screening based on title and abstract review. The eligibility phase then applies strict inclusion/exclusion criteria to the full texts, excluding studies for reasons such as language restrictions (15 non-English studies excluded), publication date range (16 outside the 2004-2025 window), unavailability of full text (9 excluded), or failure to meet specific content criteria (3 excluded). The final inclusion phase yields the studies selected for the review - in this instance, 17 studies met all eligibility requirements. The PRISMA methodology emphasizes transparency and reproducibility which is designed to minimise risk of bias through its standardized fully explicated in the reporting framework, such as documenting the number of records at each stage, providing clear justifications for exclusions, selection of relevant literature for review, multi-stage filtering process, allowing readers to quickly understand how the final set of included studies was derived from the initial pool of identified records(Tate & Douglas, 2011).

Table 1. Methodological characteristics, objectives, and key findings of the included studies on children's reading habits (n = 11).

No.	Study	Indexed In	Aim	Study Design	Sample Size	Sample Characteristics	Key Findings
1	Dent & Goodman (2015)	Scopus	Explore relationships between reading habits, library use, access to reading materials, and academic outcomes of rural students.	Mixed-method	87 students	Secondary school students (aged 13–17), Masaka region, Uganda	Correlation found between higher grade averages and both frequency and type of recreational reading.
2	Hakemulder & Mangen (2024)	Scopus	Examine how reading medium (paper vs. screen) affects reading engagement and behavior.	Experimental	66 students	Utrecht University; Ages 14–67	Frequent screen reading reduces cognitive persistence and deep engagement.
3	Abeyrathna et al. (2004)	Scopus	Investigate leisure reading habits and library usage among Sri Lankan students.	Quantitative survey	300 students	Grades 12–13, 10 secondary schools, arts and science streams, Sri Lanka	Libraries used mainly for homework; low leisure reading; preference for textbooks.
4	Madjdi et al. (2024)	Scopus	Evaluate impact of reading logs in Extensive Reading courses for EFL learners.	Qualitative	28 students	Intensive & extensive reading students	Reading logs enhanced habits, reading rate, word count, and engagement.
5	Kovalova & Shalman (2024)	Scopus	Assess reading culture on social media and its educational potential for teens.	Mixed-method	Not specified	Teen readers using Instagram, TikTok, YouTube	Social media influences literary preferences and reading behavior.

6	Molotja&Themane (2018)	Scopus	Propose strategy using reading bags to motivate reading.	Mixed-method	155 learners	Historically disadvantaged learners in Limpopo, South Africa	Learners used global, support, and problem-solving reading strategies.
7	Pilotti et al. (2023)	Scopus	Study reading habits and academic performance differences in STEM vs. non-STEM female undergraduates.	Quantitative	394 students	Female bilingual undergrads in Saudi Arabia	Reading habits predicted academic success more for STEM than non-STEM students.
8	Ahmad et al. (2019)	Scopus	Explore gender differences and social media influence on reading habits.	Quantitative	374 students	University-level students	Gender differences in reading habits; social media has strong influence.
9	Toplu&Erten (2023)	Scopus	Examine L1 vs. L2 vocabulary and reading motivation links.	Quantitative	490 students	English majors from 4 Turkish universities	L1 vocabulary strongly predicts L2 reading motivation and habits.
10	Anangisye (2020)	Scopus	Identify reading habit promotion efforts and challenges in Tanzania.	Qualitative	Not specified	Teachers, pupils, parents in Tanzanian schools	Schools promote reading, but face resource shortages, low interest, and lack of libraries.
11	Igwesi et al. (2012)	Scopus	Explore ICTs and audiovisual resources in developing reading habits.	Conceptual	N/A	Literature-based, no empirical sample	ICT and AV tools enhance reading pleasure and lifelong learning culture.

As summarized in Table 1, a comprehensive profiling of the selected literature reveals diverse methodological approaches, geographic distributions, and thematic focus points regarding the cultivation of reading habits.

Methodologically, the included corpus demonstrates a balanced reliance on empirical designs. Quantitative surveys and experimental methods represent a significant portion of the data (e.g., Abeyrathna et al., 2004; Pilotti et al., 2023), allowing researchers to capture widespread trends and establish correlations between reading habits and external variables like academic success or gender differences. This is complemented by mixed-method frameworks (e.g., Dent & Goodman, 2015; Molotja & Themane, 2018) and focused qualitative case studies (e.g., Madjdi et al., 2024; Anangisye, 2020) that provide deeper context regarding student motivations, localized infrastructural deficiencies, and the operational success of specific targeted interventions like reading logs and portable reading bags.

Geographically, the study matrix highlights critical structural realities across developing nations, emphasizing regions across Sub-Saharan Africa (Uganda, South Africa, Tanzania) and South/Southeast Asia (Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Turkey). This focus provides an essential foundation for addressing localized challenges that align directly with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).

Thematic Synthesis of Findings

Beyond the general distribution of the data, the key findings detailed across the scoping review matrix can be synthesized into three vital thematic paradigms:

1. The Impact of the Medium and Digitalization:

Research by Hakemulder and Mangen (2024) and Kovalova and Shalman (2024) highlights a critical duality: while excessive screen-based reading risks lowering cognitive persistence and deep text engagement, modern social media and digital platforms concurrently hold strong potential to reshape and influence adolescent literary preferences.

2. Infrastructural Barriers vs. Academic Pressures

Studies like Abeyrathna et al. (2004) and Anangisye (2020) emphasize that library facilities are frequently under-utilized for leisure reading, as systemic resources are primarily channeled into curriculum-driven homework and examination preparation.

3. Correlation with Educational Excellence

Conversely, when recreational or free voluntary reading (FVR) is successfully prioritized or scaffolded via strategic pedagogical tools (such as reading logs), it shows a profound positive correlation with higher grade averages, word-count capacity, and specialized academic performance, particularly within STEM fields (Dent & Goodman, 2015; Pilotti et al., 2023).

4. Reading Habits and Preferences Among Secondary School Children

In relation to the key subject matter of the selected studies, children's reading habits vary significantly in terms of frequency, content preference, and influencing factors. One study indicated that a majority of students (53%) read 1 to 2 hours daily, while 11% engaged in 3 or more hours of reading, and 4% never read. Reading habits and interests among secondary school children in Sri Lanka Most of student's time-over 80% of students read the newspapers, reading textbooks, magazines for learning and examination purposes (Gunasekara,2002). Reading preferences were largely influenced by content type. Krashen (1996) reported that the fiction genres such as books on religion and philosophy (90%), humorous stories (73%) historical stories (34%), love and romances (32%) popular to read by lower grade students and Non-fiction reading, especially those associated to religion and philosophy, also pursued high attention (90%). Scholars argued that gender basis girls were found to read more constantly and were more glad toward fiction than non-fiction for leisure and academic textbooks , while boys valued newspapers. The academic stream also convinced reading behavior, with arts students showcasing an extreme preference for fiction and magazines than their science disciplines (Abeyrathna &Zainab, 2004). Zainab (1977) exposed that the boys read more non-fiction than girls while World Book Day study (2002) however indicated that girls tended to spend more hours on reading for enjoyment.

5. Academic Achievement and Reading Factors in Rural Contexts

Aligned with the articles' primary focus, increased reading was frequently associated with academic grade. Supporting evidence (Bus et al., 1995; Dent, 2006; Small & Snyder, 2010) presented that regular reading hoists critical thinking, improve test scores, and proficiency in grammar, spelling, and writing. In rural contexts, access to reading materials remains a significant setback. Nonetheless, pupils beyond regular library access often found alternative means to connect with reading, such as religious texts at home (Krashen, 2004). Hungi and Thuku (2010) articulated that religious literacy, particularly reading the Bible had a positive impact on student achievement in numerous African states. However, library access also affected the quality of assessment. For example Dent& Goodman (2015) discovered that more access to library materials has created more complex exam but teachers who have no access to library materials may produce tests that are not as difficult and the effect on academic achievement of the students may actually be mediated by the teachers' use of the library

6. Libraries as Catalysts for Reading Culture

The libraries play a significant role to stimulate and develop reading interests. Different researchers have firmly argued that children in schools with libraries and librarians read more than children with school libraries with no staff (Lance, 1992; Lance et al., 2000; Somsong, 1999). Reflecting the main concerns discussed in the articles, , libraries—particularly school libraries play a pivotal role in fostering reading habits. Igwesi et al. (2012) demonstrated modern school libraries have established into media resource centre, offering not only books but also audiovisual materials such as computers, audiovisual materials like CD-ROM, tapes, videos, films which creates a literacy environment by providing words, games, rhyming, poems and storytelling are more likely to motivates children to read for both pleasure and learning a literacy-rich environment that motivates children to read for both pleasure and learning (Igwesi et al., 2012). However, studies also showed low library usage among children. For example, only 4% of students visited the school library daily, and 35% reported never using it (Abeyrathna&Zainab, 2004). While most visits were academic in nature (38% for reference materials, 28% for homework), (27%) used the library to read magazines and newspapers for leisure reading or learning purposes. Unfortunately, a lack of library user education resulted in children being unaware of how to locate and utilize resources effectively. Empirical evidence (Lance, 1992; Somsong, 1999) affirmed the presence of trained librarians significantly increased reading levels. Additionally, When the library used the intervention techniques of using thematic reading program especially designed for those whose reading grade was above average but whose voluntary reading was nonexistent or limited (Smith, 2001; Pembroke, 1997; Abeyrathna &Zainab, 2004).

7. Purpose, Motivation, and Attitudinal Reading Factors

As guided by the central issues discussed in the literature, children's reading behaviors are shaped by inherent and external motivations. Abeyrathna &Zainab (2004) examined that most students acknowledged the significance of reading—42% read for general knowledge by from the arts stream compared, 32% for examinations by less arts students, and 16% for leisure. Notably, arts students were more willing to read for general knowledge, while science students read more for leisure. Female students appeared to have a more positive attitude towards reading for individual development and enjoyment. Supporting studies (e.g., Lim, 1974; Mitchell & Ley, 1996.;Valari, 1995; Beers, 1996) stressed that a positive attitude is salient in motivating young readers.

8. Promoting Reading Habits Through 'Reading Bags'

'Reading bags' emerged as an innovative strategy to enhance reading habits in secondary school learners. Different researchers have firmly discovered that reading bags are seen as a strategy associated with the concept of Free Voluntary Reading (FVR) is an approach in that learners should be encouraged to read out of the desire to read and encourages reading in a low-anxiety and input-rich scenario which is promoting reading access to self-selected novels that they can read at their own pace and other texts that learners acquire the skills to summarize, synthesis, integrate, improve vocabulary, grammar and critically analyse information from texts. Their use is not only good for developing comprehension but also for making learners relax (Molotja, 2016; Molotja & Themane, 2018; Boakye, 2017; Grabe & Stoller 2002; Shafie & Nayan, 2011; Stone, 2013; Chiang, 201). Learners demonstrated high levels of reading strategy use: 72.3% for global strategies, 80.2% for problem-solving, and 76.4% for support strategies, indicating improved comprehension and reading proficiency (Molotja, 2016; Molotja & Themane, 2018; Stoller, 2015; Chiang, 2016).

9. Reading strategies and reading habits

The development of reading habits is closely tied to the strategic use of comprehension techniques. Reading strategies are purposeful, conscious techniques or actions that readers apply to enhance their understanding and interpretation of a text. Mokhtari & Sheorey (2002) and Yuksel & Yuksel (2012) were observed problem-solving strategies to solve comprehension problems on their own, the text before they can translate any meaning and support the development of reading fluency, comprehension, and confidence by learners to adjust the reading rate, re-reading difficult texts and pausing to think about what they are reading. Additionally, Mokhtari & Sheorey (2002) interpreted that support strategies reinforce comprehension by providing visual or written support, serve as reminders or cues for important content when reviewing material through using a dictionary, taking notes, highlighting and underlining certain words or phrases. Finally, Mokhtari & Sheorey (2002) discussed that global reading strategies are high-level, intentional techniques that readers use before, during, and after reading to manage setting a purpose for reading (e.g., to learn, enjoy, or analyze), Previewing the text's length and organization, using typographic aids and tables, and figures, predicting what the text will be about, using background knowledge to connect with the text. Learners were aware of these techniques, with problem-solving strategies (48%) being the most used, followed by support (41%) and global strategies (27%) (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002; Molotja & Themane, 2018).

10. Reading habits through ICTs and Audiovisual Resources

ICT facilities and audiovisual resources are dynamic sources such as computers, home videos games, televisions etc which create a spirit of joy, fun, adventure and imagination in children and help to associate reading with pleasure. ICTs and Audiovisual resources offer abstract concepts into reality, clear illustrations, words, diagram and pictures which help to captivate the attention the sounds of words as well as on their meanings of lifelong learning and help in fostering children's reading development (Igwe et al., 2012).

Reading Habits and Sustainability (SDG 4)

To promote a sustainable reading culture aligned with SDG 4, providing a conducive reading environment and adequate access to reading materials are crucial. Children need a very colorful and noise-free environment through school libraries which should be vibrant, inclusive, and well-stocked with age-appropriate books to imbibe a sustainable reading culture. (Tella & Akande, 2007). Awareness campaigns via media, community programs, and schools can cultivate a lifelong love for reading. Finally, Owen (2011) stated that in order to attain the sustainability it needs to overcome the reading problems face the children while reading challenges remain dyslexia is a neuro-developmental disorder characterized by difficulties in learning to read and spell, typically associated with phonological deficits and apraxia which is a poorly understood, severe childhood speech sound disorder, characterized by deficits in sequencing the movements required for speech production (Snowling & Hulme, 2012; Vellutino et al., 2004; Snowling et al., 2019; Owen, 2011; Teverovsky et al., 2009; Shriberg et al., 1997). At this age, parents, care-givers and teachers have a very important role to play by introducing pleasurable experience such as home videos that contains educational stories, games, colorful pictures, symbols, spellings, etc. The home should be made conducive for children to begin to develop lifelong attitudes toward reading. Hence, parents play a critical role in this development by initiating reading activities. Madahunsi (2001) opined that Parental involvement, especially through reading at home and using digital tools, is vital in reinforcing sustainable reading habits from a young age.

4. Discussion

Globally, unequal access to education threatens the intellectual future of societies, while the need for knowledge rapidly grows (Hargreaves, 2003). Promoting sustainable reading habits from early childhood education that is both inclusive and egalitarian education emerged, starting with the micro level: child, family and community, mezo level: nursery, and kindergarten and macro level: national policies and SDG 4.2 quality education for all. Just as environmental change begins with small actions (Rad et al., 2022). This scoping review deliver a broad overview of the developmental trends and strategies used to cultivate reading habits among children in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). The present SLR is the first endeavor made to explore the synthesis of 17 involved studies denotes that early access to reading materials, a supportive environment both at home and in school reading frequency, library use frequency, library access, associations between reading habits and preferences, reading interests and preferences and experiencing meaningfulness, nurturing reading logs to enjoy reading and develop their capacity for reading, perception of online literary and educational content, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations independently affect reading performance reaching the cognitive level of reading engagement implies that both behavioral and emotional factors and technology integration are key enablers of positive reading behaviors (Snow, 2002; Alqahtani, 2024). While reading habits remain highly context-dependent, recurring factors include access to diverse literature, limiting

screen time, giving reading rewards, parental involvement, teacher support, resource-rich library environments, visit of libraries, daily ask the child to read certain words, proper maintaining record of child's reading activities, book exhibitions, literary places book talk with peers or in the group, associating reading with pleasure, book exhibitions and literary places are the result-oriented strategies which can be used to promote reading habits among the school children(Ahmad et al., 2021; Alqahtani, 2024). Additionally, the influence of gender and academic stream was notable—girls were consistently more inclined toward fiction and leisure reading, while boys leaned toward newspapers and non-fiction. In an attempt to better understand and provide more detailed insights to the phenomenon of reading habits, the current scoping review have made important efforts to identify challenges about reading habit encountered by different type of nations and educational settings from existing relevant empirical research. Those barriers includes inadequate library infrastructure, excessive use of screens such as mobile, TV, and electronic games, lack of school-level practices, absence of school library and trained professionals, lack of library user's instruction, poor access and high cost of reading material, the excessive curriculum textbooks, lack of interest by parents continue to hinder sustainable reading development(Ahmad et al., 2021). A shift from exam-driven reading to a culture of voluntary reading remains a major obstacles. However, initiatives such as reading bags, reading logs, and ICT-promote storytelling have determined guarantee to foster reading habits among children. Our findings underscore the critical role of libraries in cultivating reading habits, particularly in children. Libraries serve as accessible hubs for reading materials , digital resources, critical thinking, also foster multi-layer functions like media literacy, fact-checking competency, and accountability engage in digital storytelling, and create new ideas, literacy programs, aligning with prior research (Ghosh et al., 2025). Similar to the review by Rubiyad &Fajriyah (2025) stated providing thousands children's literature books to school libraries and community reading program increased the reading interest and literacy levels of the local community through a participatory and sustainable approach. Child Aid's program is uniquely focused on improving not only demonstrates that with active community involvement, easy access to reading materials, and the implementation of engaging literacy activities, but a reading culture can be significantly enhanced. Additionally, Peller et al. (2025) explored that a school library orientation program, provision of access to information resources, motivational reading program, Story hour, Book seminar, displays, and exhibitions as well as to encourage children's use of library collections and encourage voluntary reading habits in them. However, our study further emphasizes the need for trained staff to maximize impact—a gap noted in earlier reviews (Rizvi et al., 2025).Consistent with prior studies (Tuychiyeva,2025).parents can provide other engaging materials related to reading at home, which will enhance children's reading success and comprehension. Our review supports(Ho & Lau, 2018; Lam et al., 2012; Dahl-Leonard et al., 2025) which found that time with parents is associated with improved sense of self-worth and other positive outcomes, including improved reading performance, for upper-elementary and middle school. However, we also identified socioeconomic disparities in parental involvement, suggesting targeted interventions are needed—a point less emphasized in earlier

reviews. Our analysis revealed mixed outcomes regarding technology's role in literacy which correspond with previous work by WILLIAM & FREIRE (2025) on digital tools such as educational apps, interactive learning platforms, and multimedia resources discover the contribution to the improvement of reading, writing, and critical thinking skills among elementary students. Our findings contrast with some prior reviews (Mun et al., n.d.) that overemphasized screen-based learning. Instead, we argue for a balanced approach, combining digital and online learning methods—a perspective supported by Jaiswal & Gupta (2025) and Ekici (2025) digital nomadism with SDGs through skill development initiatives, and cultural exchange programs.

5. Implications

This paper will revive the development of reading habits in terms of the sustainable development goal SDG 4 discussed when synthesized with a more cohesive body of knowledge. The results demonstrated evidence for reading habits development variability among children. However, future researchers should focus on more challenges and solutions to make the use of new reading habits approaches concrete for the children, adult working in primary or secondary –scale school. In the current context, the results may allow them to understand the complexities in the transition to reading habits. The study will accelerate reading habits theoretical and conceptual progress. Additionally, modified situations also affect individuals. As an initial step, teacher's, parent's, librarians, library, younger, community entities, local schools and government partners would be made aware of the reading habits capabilities and functionality specifically relevant to them. This could be achieved by giving them incentives and revising the measures taken to combat quality education. The review has several implications for educational policymaker to Integrate reading strategies in educations, library professionals to Invest in inclusive libraries in educations, curriculum developers to foster interdisciplinary learning to align reading with curiosity and creativity, technology integration to linking reading with fun and meaning, community & parental engagement to reinforce reading at home to their children.

Challenges Identified

Rigid Exam-Centric Educational Frameworks: Contemporary educational systems place an overemphasis on curriculum-based, study-related, and exam-driven reading. This environment causes children to associate books strictly with schoolwork and passing examinations, which actively stifles the growth of free voluntary reading (FVR) or pleasure-centered reading.

Unmonitored Screen Time and Digital Distractions: Excessive and unmanaged exposure to digital screens (such as smartphones, television, and electronic video games) represents a major barrier. High frequencies of screen reading are shown to directly lower cognitive persistence and reduce deep engagement with text.

Severe Infrastructure and Resource Deficits: Many institutional environments suffer from a critical lack of resource-rich libraries, physical book availability, interesting children's literature, and trained library personnel. This leaves students dependent almost entirely on teachers' basic notes rather than diverse reading materials.

Socioeconomic and Demographic Disparities: Widespread socioeconomic gaps heavily obstruct the home-based and community-level cultivation of stable reading practices. Additionally, heavy disparities exist across gender and academic disciplines, altering how groups engage with recreational reading materials.

Incomplete Policy Alignment with SDG 4: Current national public reading policies and localized initiatives frequently fail to map comprehensively onto the core sub-targets of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (such as Target 4.2 for early childhood development and Target 4.5 for educational equity). This misalignment limits the capacity to foster an inclusive and sustainable reading culture.

Recommendations

Shift Educational Environments from Exam-Driven to Pleasure-Centered: Frameworks must transition away from rigid, test-heavy requirements. Schools should consciously design interactive and stress-free reading contexts that connect children directly to the joys of literature, self-development, and leisure relaxation.

Implement Targeted Strategies (Reading Bags, Logs, and Rewards): Educational institutions should actively adopt proven, result-oriented intervention strategies. Deploying practical tools like "reading bags" to motivate learners, maintaining structural "reading logs" to log volume/word count, and offering small reading rewards can systematically boost reading engagement.

Build Resource-Rich Infrastructures and Diversify Materials: Governments and local communities must fund the expansion of school and public libraries. These spaces must be systematically restocked with age-appropriate, diverse children's literature, and staffed with trained personnel capable of guiding young readers.

Enforce Screen Time Management and Leverage Interactive Digital Tools: While screen distraction is a risk, digital channels should be safely managed rather than ignored. Parents and teachers must implement clear boundaries on recreational screen hours while selectively utilizing interactive digital literacy platforms or social media spaces to encourage literary community engagement.

Harmonize National Reading Policies with Interconnected SDG 4 Targets: To create a fully inclusive reading environment by the 2030 deadline, public policies must be closely synchronized with the sub-targets of SDG 4. This requires embedding foundational literacy programs into very early childhood education structures (Target 4.2) and ensuring marginalized socioeconomic groups have completely equitable access to materials

6. Limitations

Although this scoping review provides valuable insights, it is not except limitation. The scope of the review was limited to documents retrieved from the Scopus database, relevant studies indexed in other databases such as ERIC, JSTOR, or Web of Science may have been missed. Though the authors have performed a comprehensive literature search across the Scopus databases to find closely relevant papers, even then some of the articles may have been skipped in this review.

7. Conclusion

Reading habits in childhood set down the foundation for lifelong learning, cognitive development, and academic achievement, creating critical thinkers and creative problem-solvers to gain the ability to navigate an increasingly complex world. The current research aimed to synthesize on existing literature of the development of reading habits among children which covers Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). The findings reported here to demonstrate that reading habits are

shaped by a complex interplay including access to disparate materials, supportive environments (home, school, and libraries), parental and teacher involvement, and ingenious interventions like reading bags and ICT-integrated programs. However, constant barriers viz. inadequate library infrastructure, exaggerated screen time, exam-driven curricula, and socioeconomic distinction block progress toward equitable reading convenience. Evidence underscores the critical role of reading in achieving SDG 4 targets—particularly early childhood education (4.2), literacy (4.6), and inclusive learning (4.5). While initiatives like community reading programs and audiovisual resources display promise, their sustainability is fitting systemic collaboration among policymakers, educators, librarians, and families. Conversely, the review determine a gap in research connecting reading habits to broader sustainability outcomes, such as social equity and environmental awareness (target 4.7), suggesting a need for interdisciplinary approaches. However, limitations of this review include its reliance on Scopus-indexed studies, which may overlook regional or non-English publications. Future research should examine longitudinal impacts of reading interventions, cross-cultural adaptations, and the integration of sustainability themes into children’s literature. Though the initiatives and challenges provide to accelerate progress, stakeholders must emphasize funding for libraries, teacher training, and inclusive policies that democratize access to reading materials. By enclosing reading habits into national education frameworks, societies can foster informed, franchised generations capable of addressing global challenges. Ultimately, this work advances understanding of development of reading habits by fulfilling the transformative promise of SDG 4.

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