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MOTIVATION FOR RECREATIONAL READING: AN ANALYSIS OF SURVEY DATA FROM SERBIA

ABSTRACT: The present study was designed to explore the dimensions of recreational reading motivation in adults. Data were collected through the administration of a survey questionnaire to a convenience sample of 194 adult readers (117 were females and the mean age of the participants was 33.56, with a range of 18 to 62). All participants reported how many hours they engaged in recreational reading during the previous week. Main part of the questionnaire dealt with the motivation for reading, consisting of 36 items, designed to assess different aspects of reading motivation. Participants answered each items using a five point scale. Responses to 32 items (4 items were not included in the solution) collapsed into six factors. Interpretative labels for each factor could be suggested, as follows: Individual development, Escapism, Boredom relief, Education/Utilitarian („incidental information acquisition“), Stress relief (moderate escapism) and Aesthetic Enjoyment. The present data indicate that males more often in reading seek remedy for stressful experiences. Correlation between age and time spent in reading was negative. Older participants decrease time allotted for recreational reading. Women were more likely to read fiction and more likely to pursue leisure reading.

Key words: Reading motivation, Recreational reading, Leisure time.

APSTRAKT: U radu se saopštavaju rezultati anketnog istraživanja motivacionih obrazaca čitanja u slobodno vreme. Ukupno je ispitano 194 osobe (od toga broja 117 bile su žene). Prosečna starost bila je 33,56 godina — najmlađi ispitanik imao je 18, a najstariji 62 godine. Ključni deo upitnika činila je skala motivacije za čitanje, koja se sastojala od 36 stavki, različitih razloga koji ljude motivišu da slobodno vreme provedu u čitanju. Skala je imala Likertov format i za svaki od navedenih razloga anketirana osoba je na petostepenoj skali (od 1 = Uopšte mi nije važno do 5 = Izuzetno mi je važno) određivala koliko je njoj samoj taj razlog bitan. Pored toga, upitnikom su dobijeni podaci o vremenu koje se nedeljno provede u ovoj vrsti čitanja i o vrsti tekstova koji se čitaju u slobodno vreme. Podaci sa skale motivacije podvrgnuti su analizi glavnih komponenti sa Varimaks rotacijom. Ekstrahovano je šest glavnih komponenti (pomoću trideset i dve stavke). One su interpretirane kao: *čitanje radi individualnog razvoja, eskapistička motivacija, čitanje iz dosade, uzgredno obrazovanje, ublažavanje svakodnevnog stresa i težnja za estetskim uživanjem*. Muškarci češće od žena u čitanju traže opuštanje od svakodnevnog stresa. U istraživanju je dobijena negativna korelacija između starosti anketiranog i broja sati koje se u slobodno vreme provede u čitanju, stariji ispitanici su čitali više. Žene su više čitale imaginativnu prozu i ukupno provodile nešto više vremena u čitanju.

Ključne reči: motivacija za čitanje, čitanje u slobodno vreme, slobodno vreme.

Recreational or leisure reading is not hard to define; the phrase refers to reading that we do autonomously anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the reading act. It is also frequently referred to as independent reading, voluntary reading, ludic reading or reading for enjoyment.

In literate societies, some adults are keen recreational readers. A national large-scale survey of adults in the USA indicated that the average adult spent roughly two hours per day reading (Sharon, 1973–1974). Responses from a representative sample of adults in the USA showed that 83% read books (Smith & Sheehan, 1998). Studies of learning habits of adults in the USA indicated that majority of adults read often or very often (Scales & Rhee, 2001). In Canada, 61% report reading books in spare time (Statistics Canada, 2003, cited in Schutte & Malouff, 2004). A British survey data showed that half of respondents had read five or more books in the previous year and 20% had read 20 or more (National Literacy Trust, 2003, cited in Schutte & Malouff, 2004). A survey of the reading habits of adults in fifteen European countries indicated that about 87% of the respondents regularly read newspapers, 82% read magazines, and 58% had read books in the previous year (Skaliotis, 2002). The Italian publishers association Associazione Italiana Editori (AIE) has revealed in a report that one of two Italians aged 18–35 read at least one non-school book during the previous year (The Italian Book Market-Report, 2005). Most recent Serbian telephone survey, conducted three years ago, showed that 57% respondents aged over 14 had read at least one book during 2006. Responses collected from this sample indicated that genuine interest for independent, recreational reading starts at the middle school ages. However, recreational reading rate seems to decrease among middle-aged people (Survey of book market in Serbia, 2006).

Albeit in adult age recreational/leisure reading rates seem to be high, they may have been higher in the past. A new analysis of reading patterns in the USA, *To read or not to read*, gathers data from more than 40 studies on the reading habits and reading skills of children, teenagers, and adults. Teens and young adults read less often and for shorter amounts of time compared with other age groups and with Americans of previous years. Less than one-third of 13-year-olds are daily readers, which is a 14 percent decline from 20 years earlier. Among 17-year-olds, the percentage of non-readers doubled over a 20-year period, from 9% in 1984. to 19% in 2004. USA teenagers and young males are also reading less well — reading scores continue to deteriorate.

There is some tentative evidence that reading in leisure time has decreased with the arrival of television. Knulst and Kraaykamp (1998) reported that average reading time decreased by 50% in the Netherlands between 1955. and 1995. On average, Americans aged 15 to 24 spend almost two hours a day watching TV, and only seven minutes of their daily leisure time on reading. Data gathered in the Netherlands more recently allow us to depict the extent of „de-reading“ over the 1975–2000. period (Knulst & van den Broek, 2003). Since 1990, respondents have been asked about the genres of books they read. This has made possible an analysis of the relation between „de-reading“ and type of books read over the 1990–2000. period. From the work of cultural critics (Postman and others), authors derived the hypothesis that more demanding books, i. e. literature, were likely to suffer most from the dominance

of television entertainment. The research provided scarce empirical support. Contrary to the expectations, the decline in reading, occurring among the three reading publics (literature and non-fiction, adolescent books, comics and thrillers, and romantic novels), was most significant among readers of romantic novels.

Studies with children provide additional insight into why TV viewing may interfere with recreational reading. In the longitudinal research Koolstra and van der Voort (1996) found that a greater amount of TV viewing among children at the initial measurement time was associated with poorer attitudes towards reading and less reading concentration one and two years later. Their explanation of these results was that children who watch a great deal of television may become habituated to the fast paced images, which leads them to value reading less and have more trouble with concentrated effort while reading. More recent longitudinal study carried out by Christakis et al. (2004) indicated that early television exposure at ages one and three is associated with attention problems at age seven. Television viewing was associated with attentional problems even when other independent predictors (parental characteristics) had been adjusted for.

Interestingly, the computer and the printed word do not appear to compete (Wylie, 2001). However, research on the relationship of computer use and children's literacy development is only beginning.

Reading is beneficial to cognitive development. In a set of studies focusing on the outcomes of children's exposure to printed material, Stanovich (2000) found indication that more exposure to print material increases some components of intelligence.

Recreational reading seems to be linked to a reduced risk of dementia. Researchers have been studying elderly people at the start of a longitudinal study (Verhese et al., 2003). All subjects were screened to rule out dementia at baseline. Authors gathered baseline data about participants' intellectual, athletics and social activities and then traced who developed dementia over the next period. Intellectual leisure activities, like reading, were associated to the biggest risk reduction.

High recreational reading rates and the important role leisure reading may play in preventing intellectual deterioration give prominence to the issue of reading motivation.

Psychologists were mostly interested in children's motivation to read. Concurrently, their attention focused on the development of assessment tools to measure reading motivation. Several studies explored dimensions of children's reading motivation (e. g. Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Watkins & Coffey, 2004; Guthrie et al., 2007, Pečjak & Peklaj, 2006).

In contrast to a wealth of researches dealing with children's reading motivation, a handful of studies have asked adult subjects directly for their opinions about purposes of leisure-time reading and presented their answers in a systematic fashion (cf. Ross, 2001, Moyer, 2007).

Therefore, the present study was designed to explore the dimensions of leisure reading motivation in adults. Women and men cite numerous reasons for recreational reading and these reasons are frequently complex and involve several factors. This study aimed to group these reasons into a smaller number of dimensions or general categories.

Method

Participants

The sample included the 194 participants (117 were females). Sample was of convenience type and respondents were selected among friends, acquaintances and relatives of interviewers if they had read a book „for fun“ in the last week. The mean age of the participants was 33.56, $SD = 12.7$, with a range of 18 to 62. They belonged to more highly educated population; the mean number of years of schooling was 13.45 for the sample and this figure is well above the average level of educational attainment in Serbia.

Instrument and procedure

All participants indicated their reading preferences by reporting their likings of different types of reading genres. They also reported how many hours they engaged in recreational reading during the previous week. Main part of the questionnaire dealt with the motivation for reading. This part of the questionnaire consisted of 36 items, designed to assess different aspects of reading motivation. Participants answered each items using a five point scale, with 1 = Not at all important to me, and 5 = Very important to me. Choice of items was based on previous pilot survey, when 57 subjects — other than those participating in the main study — answering open-response questions, stated their reasons and purposes of reading for fun.

Statistical analysis

All analyses were conducted using the software package Statistica, version 7 (StatSoft, Inc. 2004).

Results

Principal component analysis: The thirty-six items that assessed personal relevance of potential reading motivators were subjected to a principal component extraction with varimax rotation. The KMO analysis score of 0.80 indicated sufficient intercorrelation for a meaningful analysis, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p < .001$). The analysis yielded six interpretable factors or components. These factors cumulatively accounted for 51.04% of the total variance. Table 1 shows the rotated loadings for each of 36 items.

Table 1: Results of Principal component analysis: Rotated factor loadings (six factor solution)

Item	Component/Factor					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Helps me to understand other people	.776	-.011	.053	.093	.298	.013
Helps me to be a better person	.764	.141	.124	.070	.041	.137
Helps me to become moral person	.732	.110	.063	.009	-.087	.045
Helps me in self-understanding	.718	.188	-.003	.061	.140	.238
Helps me to accept others' differences	.633	.087	.042	.200	.257	.184
Reading makes me better educated	.548	.085	.194	.532	-.003	-.131
Stimulates serious reflections	.479	.326	-.127	.364	-.082	.049
An escape to the phantasy world	.074	.764	.049	.066	.217	-.080
Reading stimulates my phantasy	.270	.655	.014	.143	-.024	.021
Reading helps me to experience things I could not experience in the reality	.163	.650	.226	.016	.081	.049
Reading takes me to a fairy-tale world	-.006	.646	-.018	-.024	.482	.122
Stimulates thinking of my past	.213	.423	.306	.191	-.113	.332
Useful when I feel a need for solitude	-.101	.041	.619	.015	.039	.273
Reading increases my social popularity	.296	.101	.567	.092	.113	.004
I like to predict story events and ending and make inferences	.054	-.026	.556	.129	.131	.121
Helps me to avoid loneliness	.016	.433	.550	.087	.046	.207
I'm attracted by story that utters simple message	.101	-.161	.531	-.070	.241	-.304
Thing to do when bored	-.033	.152	.517	-.060	-.082	-.028
Nice opportunity to learn about other cultures	.199	.019	-.036	.619	.402	.056
Increases verbal ability	.305	.179	.083	.556	.036	.085
Expands one's intellect	.144	.068	.162	.479	.183	.301
I'm looking for moral lessons	-.107	.015	-.049	.477	-.055	-.040
I'm looking for non-trivial motifs	.208	.319	.370	.393	-.052	-.286
Way to learn the hidden truths about the world	.241	.053	.340	.372	.240	.118
Method to end thinking about daily duties	.160	.193	.169	.041	.722	-.121
To break free of unhappy thoughts and feelings	.136	.110	.216	.016	.721	-.067
I find enjoyment in the surprising theme	-.064	.265	-.256	.270	.514	.195
I like to talk about books I have read	.107	-.018	.078	.370	.391	.126
Seeking guidance for my own writing	.144	-.002	.140	-.035	-.038	.699
I'm trying to reveal author's personality	.115	.068	.025	.078	-.039	.671
Finding pleasure in the author's language mastery	.176	-.046	.059	.431	.068	.506
I like strong sense of identification with characters	.078	.464	.043	-.029	.252	.491

With a cut of .45 for inclusion of a variable in interpretation of a factor, 4 of the 36 items were not included in the solution („Stimulates thinking of my past“, „I'm looking for non-trivial motifs“, „Way to learn the hidden truths

about the world“ and „I like to talk about books I have read“). Thus, responses to 32 items collapsed into six factors. Interpretative labels for each factor could be suggested, as follows: Individual development, Escapism, Boredom relief, Education/Utilitarian, Stress relief and Aesthetic Enjoyment.

Participants that perceive the importance of leisure-time reading for individual development emphasize positive outcomes such as: improvement in self-understanding and understanding what other people think and feel, moral development, etc.

Escapism is a tendency to forget real life problems and challenges by escaping into imaginary worlds. Recreational reading could serve such purposes, as indicated by responses that constitute second factor („An escape to the phantasy world“, „Reading stimulates my phantasy“).

The third and the fifth factor suggest that reading helps people to unwind by focusing their mind away from feeling of loneliness, stress and anxiety factors. These two factors are labeled as Boredom and Stress relief. They could be also interpreted as a moderate escapism; reading may actually make people more effective participants in the world, since they allow themselves to take mental breaks that reduce their stress.

Answers that indicate the significance of leisure-reading activities for general education and intellectual self-improvement define factor 4. Therefore, Education/Utilitarian label seemed suitable.

Final factor (Aesthetic Enjoyment) encompassed answers indicating that reading offers the opportunity to learn artistic writing skill, to appreciate language and knowledge of literary forms.

The internal consistency of each factor was assessed using Cronbach's α . Six factors demonstrated fair internal consistency, with Cronbach's alphas in a range of 0.80 to 0.60.

For each respondent, factor scores were estimated using regression procedure and correlation and canonical analysis were conducted to examine the relationships between the factor scores and a set of demographic variables (gender, age and years of education).

Correlation analysis: Time allotted to leisure-time reading was negatively correlated with age ($r = -.21$, $p < .01$). On average, respondents aged 20 to 30 spend almost seven (6.6) hours a week reading, while respondents older than 30 spend 4.3 hours a week (This difference was statistically significant, as indicated by ANOVA — $F_{1,192} = 7.28$, $p < 0.01$).

Gender and education (measured by years of schooling) was not associated with time spend in reading. Although such associations might be expected in the general population, they could be absent in a sample of subjects who identified themselves as keen readers.

Intercorrelation of time spent in reading, demographic variables and factor scores revealed that subjects high on factor 4, 5 and 6 (Education, Stress relief and Aesthetic Enjoyment) spent more time reading (the Pearson product-moment correlations were: $r = .14$, $.20$ and $.18$, respective, $p < .01$). Older

subjects had lower scores on Escapism factor. Correlation between age and factor scores for Escapism was low but statistically significant ($r = -.18$, $p < .01$). Males got higher scores on Stress relief factor ($r = -.27$, $p < .01$). More educated individuals got higher scores on Education factor, as indicated by correlation of years of education with factor scores ($r = .17$, $p < .01$).

There is concern about the possibility that these results might be perceived as being a fishing expedition. Bonferroni procedure suggested that $p = 0.001$ is more suitable. When Bonferroni correction had been used only correlation between gender and factor score for Stress relief component remained significant.

Canonical analysis: Since the maximum number of canonical roots that can be extracted is equal to the smallest number of variables in either set, analysis would be expected to extract three canonical roots. The sequential significance test showed that only the first canonical root is significant (Chi-square = 34.26, $df = 18$, $p = 0.011$). Table 2 outlines the results of the canonical analysis. The factor structure of the canonical root indicates that males more often in reading seek remedy for stressful experiences.

Table 2: Factor structure of canonical root 1

	Canonical root 1
FAC1	0.012659
FAC2	0.196321
FAC3	0.070538
FAC4	0.464892
FAC5	0.841281
FAC6	0.190035
Gender	-0.774529
Age	-0.288265
Years of schooling	0.551125

Legend → FAC1 to FAC6: Estimated factor scores: Individual development (FAC1), Escapism (FAC2), Boredom relief (FAC3), Education/Utilitarian (FAC4), Stress relief (FAC5) and Aesthetic Enjoyment (FAC6).

Discussion

Sixty percent of survey participants were female and forty percent were male. Although such distribution could be an outcome of sampling method used in this research, this is not an unexpected distribution. There is ample evidence suggesting that women are more likely to read fiction and more likely to pursue leisure reading. This trend is evident very early — from the beginning of school age, girls read more frequently than boys do, they read a greater quantity than boys, and fewer girls are nonreaders. A study of Australian teens found that girls are more likely to see reading as easy, fun and something their friends do

than boys; boys are more likely to see reading as boring and „nerdy“ (Nieuwenhuizen, 2001). Similarly, the Canadian Opening Doors study indicated that girls read more often and visit the public library more frequently than boys (Fasick, Gagnon, Howarth & Settingington, 2005).

Correlation between age and time devoted to reading was negative. Older subjects decrease time allotted for recreational reading, and this finding corresponds with Serbian study cited at the beginning of this article. Among Serb adults, recreational reading rate seems to decrease from age thirty onward. Although present research has no explicit data of the sort, it is very likely that first decrease in reading rates occurs during puberty. Most of the studies of reading habits have found that reading increases until age 10–12 and then begins to decline at age 13–14. The Canadian Opening Doors study reports that students in grade 4 are considerably more enthusiastic about reading than students in grade 7. An Australian study reports parallel findings (Nieuwenhuizen, 2001). None of the other pleasurable activities records such a decrease in enjoyment during postpuberty.

The four leisure-reading motivation factors identified in this study are analogous to conclusions reached by some researchers (Ross, 2000; Moyer, 2006).

Using a combination of surveys and interviews, Jessica Moyer (2006) explores the relationship between educational and recreational outcomes of leisure reading.

Among her respondents the most often-discussed outcome was learning about other times, places, or cultures. This corresponds to Educational/utilitarian factor. This consequence of leisure reading is well known. Quite often people state that they prefer to read stories rather than reading a book with dry nonfiction information. „It’s just such a fun way to learn without having to dig into a book that’s just dry facts“, said one of Moyer’s respondents. There are authors who use the term „incidental information acquisition“ instead of educational outcome of leisure reading. Incidental information acquisition is defined as information that is gathered from leisure reading material that at some point becomes useful to the reader and results in some type of learning experience, and obviously has the equivalent meaning.

The next most common outcomes in Moyer’s study were learning about other people and relationships, and learning about and dealing with personal problems. Moyer highlights that this corresponds with Catherine Ross’s study (Ross, 2000) where she found that men and women felt that they learned a lot about themselves and others from their leisure-time reading. For Ross’s subjects „Awakening / new perspectives / enlargement of possibilities“ was the most commonly occurring result, and was cited by more than one-third of all her respondents. The other outcome that was very important to her subjects was learning about themselves and developing an identity from reading. These outcomes are analogous to the first factor obtained in this study.

Participants of this study reported that their encounter with books often results in an enchantment in the sense of liberation from the demands of reality,

accompanied by the enjoyment of a freedom of phantasy. These responses constitute the core of the second and the fifth factor, labeled as Escapism and Stress relief. The exact nature of difference between this two factors remains to be seen. It is possible that individuals high on Escapism tend to exhibit higher levels of anxiety, lower levels of self-esteem, and other indicators of neuroticism. In that case we could talk about Unhealthy escapism (corresponding to factor 2) and Moderate escapism (corresponding to factor 5).

Sometimes research shows that cultural-aesthetic leisure interest is correlated with socializing and partying (Wilkinson & Hansen, 2006). This aspect of leisure-time activity structure is partially supported by the present data. A constituent element of factor 3 (Boredom relief) is the desire for greater social popularity.

Communicating orally or in writing with other individuals about reading could be a source of social status and positive affect. Discussing about books with friends, borrowing books from friends and expressing enjoyment of reading books suggested by others, are important attributes of reading motivation (Guthrie et al., 2007). For children in elementary school settings (Morrow, 1996, 2002) and young black and white adults in community settings (Guthrie, Schafer, & Hutchinson, 1991), the most active readers are also the most socially interactive community members. The knowledge and awareness provided by frequent reading activities enables members to discuss a wide range of topics and comprehend the viewpoints of other members in social groups. However, it is important not to overestimate the significance of this mode of social interaction. There are research data indicating that this social and collaborative motivation for reading correlate least well with the other motivational constructs. Many individuals who had high interests, substantial involvement, and well-formed self-efficacy are relatively solitary readers (Guthrie et al., 2007).

Factor 3 is principally referring to leisure reading as an activity able to reduce lonesomeness. It has already been shown that leisure reading efficiently combat feelings of loneliness in adults. Interviews with 195 elderly indicated that those who read for pleasure were less lonely (socially isolated) than those who did not (Rane-Szostak & Herth, 1995).

In sum, this study found motivation dimensions similar to those reported by others. However, present research used different, quantitative, methodology. Moreover, in this area of research need for inter-cultural studies could not be ignored. The present study has found leisure reading motivation to be multifaceted. This means that within an individual, some types of motivation will be stronger than others. Further studies are needed to reveal how these specific dimensions of motivation relate to genre preferences and personality traits.

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