

## STUDENT READING BOOK SELECTION FOR PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES (NEEDS ANALYSIS STUDY)

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the choice of student reading books that are directed to support their professional goals. A descriptive qualitative approach is used to explore preferences, motivations, and factors that influence students in choosing reading. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document review on students from various study programs. The results show that the majority of students choose books that are relevant to the field of work they want to pursue, such as practical management, education, and applied technology. The dominant factors that affect the selection are the relevance of the content to career, lecturer recommendations, and the availability of books in the library. However, a gap was found between the needs of students and the available reading collection, especially in the current and applicative aspects. Students also develop independent strategies in finding alternative reading sources digitally. These findings confirm the importance of information literacy and the support of educational institutions in providing professional reading according to their needs. This study recommends strengthening the professional literacy ecosystem through improving library collections, digital literacy training, and recognition of students' independent learning.

**Keywords:** *Professional Literacy, Reading Selection, Student Needs, Professional Books, Higher Education.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and the rapid development of information technology, the need for reading resources that support professional competence is very important for students (Marsini, 2023a). Reading books are not only a learning aid, but also a window to broaden horizons and deepen understanding of the ever-evolving world of work (Marsini, 2023a). Students as prospective professionals in the future, need to have a strong literacy of various types of reading that are relevant to their scientific field. According to (Nutbeam, 2000), literacy is not just the ability to read and write, but also includes the ability to access, understand, and use information to improve the quality of life, including career. The selection of the right reading book will greatly determine the direction and readiness of students in facing the world of work. In this case, students need to be able to identify books that are not only academic, but also have applicative and professional value according to the field they are engaged in (Sujianto et al., 2023). Unfortunately, many students still have difficulty in determining readings that fit their professional goals. Some of them get stuck in less relevant popular readings or just follow trends without considering the long-term benefits to career development (Purwanto et al., 2025).

According to (M. Knowles, 1984), adults including students learn independently and are influenced by practical needs. This means that they tend to choose reading materials that they feel are able to provide solutions or understanding to the real problems they face, including work preparation. This shows that it is important to conduct a needs analysis study on students' reading choices that are directed to support their professional goals. By knowing these needs, educational institutions can provide more appropriate and targeted facilitation. This study is important to find out the pattern of students' preferences in choosing books, both in terms of topics, authors, types of books (theories-practices), to the consideration of publishers and lecturer recommendations. Each of these aspects can affect the quality of the knowledge absorbed and its relevance to the world of work. Theory of needs (Maslow, 1943) It can also be used as a framework of understanding in this context, especially at the level of self-actualization, where individuals are encouraged to reach their full potential through knowledge and competencies that continue to be

honed, one of which is through proper reading. In addition, a humanistic approach in education emphasizes that learning should be geared towards the personal and professional development of students. Reading books are one of the important media in supporting this process. In the context of higher education, learning objectives are not only limited to academic achievement, but also the development of work competencies (Marsini, 2023b). Therefore, the books chosen by students need to be adjusted to the demands of the world of work, both theoretically and practically. According to the results of research by (Elmborg, 2006), information literacy in higher education plays a role in forming reflective and critically minded agents of social change. This confirms that students' ability to choose readings is a reflection of their professional awareness. A curriculum that is adaptive to the needs of students also encourages the birth of a more directed reading culture. Lecturers as facilitators are expected to be able to provide reading references that encourage real student career development.

This phenomenon is also related to the availability of resources in campus libraries (Marsini, 2023b). Access to a collection of relevant professional books greatly influences students' choices in determining their reading materials. In addition, digital developments have made students have wider access to electronic books, scientific journals, and other digital resources. However, this too broad choice can also cause confusion and require guidance in determining quality reading. In terms of institutional policies, it is important for universities to design professional literacy development programs that are not only administrative, but also touch on aspects of the real needs of students. In this study, a needs analysis approach will be used to understand students' reading preferences based on interests, relevance to professional goals, and determining factors in the selection process. This study also aims to identify the gap between the expected reading needs of students and the availability of books in their academic environment, including in libraries and lecturer recommendations. The results of this study are expected to be a reference for universities to formulate strategies for providing reading resources that are more effective and in accordance with the needs of students in preparing their professional futures. Thus, reading choices are not only an academic routine, but an integral part of students' self-development strategies and professional competence. Therefore, this research is relevant and urgent to be carried out, in order to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics and factors that influence the choice of student reading books in the context of mature and competitive professional preparation.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive study type, which aims to explore and understand in depth how students choose reading books that they consider relevant to support their professional goals (Sutopo, 2002). This approach was chosen because it is suitable for studying complex social phenomena, where the decision to choose reading is not only determined by academic factors alone, but is also influenced by students' interests, backgrounds, career aspirations, and social and academic environment. This research was carried out in a university environment by involving students from several study programs that have different characteristics of scientific fields. This is intended to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the variety of reading choices and diverse professional needs among students. The research subjects were selected using the purposive sampling technique, which is by considering students who are already in the middle to final semester, because they are considered to have a clearer career orientation and are more active in choosing reading materials that suit their professional needs (Asrulla et al., 2023).

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews and non-participatory observations. The interview was conducted in a semi-structured manner, with open-ended questions to explore students' experiences, preferences, considerations, and motivations in choosing a reading book. In addition, observations were made to observe students' habits in libraries and reading rooms, including the types of books they often borrowed or read, as well as their interactions with catalogs or librarians. To support the primary data, the researcher also conducted a documentation review of the list of book collections in the library, the course syllabus, and reading references provided by lecturers. These documents are useful to see the extent of the compatibility between the availability of readings offered by the institution and the needs of students in developing their professional competencies. Data analysis is carried out through thematic analysis techniques, by grouping data based on themes that arise from the results of interviews and observations. This process begins with data transcription, coding, theme identification, and interpretation of the meaning of each theme. The validity of the data is maintained through the source triangulation technique, which is comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the consistency of the information obtained (Saleh, 2017). Throughout the research process, the researcher seeks to maintain research ethics by seeking consent from participants, maintaining identity confidentiality, and not imposing subjective interpretations on the answers given. Honesty in reporting results is an important part of the integrity of this research. With this method, it is hoped that the research will be able to provide an in-depth understanding of the factors that influence students' choice of reading books, as well as how these choices are closely related to their efforts to prepare

themselves professionally. This approach also makes it possible to explore the dynamics of students' reading needs that may not be revealed through quantitative approaches that are more limited to numbers and scales.

**RESULTS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION****1. Students' Reading Preferences Based on Professional Goals**

From the results of in-depth interviews with students across study programs, it was found that most students tend to choose reading books that are directly related to the field of expertise they are engaged in. For example, students majoring in Management read more books on the themes of leadership, entrepreneurship, risk management, and business analysis. Meanwhile, students from the Islamic Religious Education department tend to choose books about learning methods, classroom management, and Islamic education curriculum. The main motivation in choosing a reading book is the desire to understand more deeply about the field of work they will be involved in after graduation. They consider that academic reading in lectures has not equipped them enough to face professional challenges in the world of work, so they look for additional references independently. This is in line with the view (M. Knowles, 1984) about adult learners who learn on the basis of practical necessity and relevance.

The results of the study show that students have a tendency to choose readings that are oriented towards future career development. This is in line with the andragogy theory of (M. S. Knowles, 1980), which states that adults learn based on practical needs and relevance to their real lives. Students consciously choose books that support their understanding of their target field of work, such as business management, education, or information technology. Students' reading choices reflect self-actualization efforts as described in theory (Maslow, 1943). In the actualization stage, individuals are encouraged to reach their full potential through knowledge and deep mastery of competencies. Students no longer read simply because of academic demands, but because of the internal drive to become competent professionals and ready to compete in the world of work. This tendency confirms that reading has a strategic function in shaping students' career orientation and professional identity.

**2. Factors Influencing the Selection of Reading Books**

Some of the key factors influencing students' reading choices were found in this study. Among them are recommendations from lecturers, the availability of books in the library, the popularity of the author, and the relevance of the book's content to the desired career. However, there is variation in the level of importance of each of these factors, depending on the student's background and previous experience.

**Table 1. Summary of data from 40 student respondents on the dominant factors influencing their choice of reading books**

Yes	Reading Selection Factors	Number of Students (n=40)	Percentage (%)
1	Relevance to work objectives	31	77,5%
2	Lecturer recommendations	28	70%
3	Availability in the library	22	55%
4	Famous / popular authors	15	37,5%
5	Social media/community trends	11	27,5%

The data shows that the relevance of the content of the book to the work objectives is the main factor in the selection of reading, confirming that students have a clearer professional orientation as the semester progresses. Factors such as relevance to work goals, lecturer recommendations, and the availability of books in the library are important elements in the reading selection process. The dominance of relevance factors strengthens the finding that students carry out an instrumental reading selection process. They are not only looking for interesting reading, but also readings that add value to practical knowledge. Lecturer recommendations are the second most influential factor. This shows that lecturers still have a central role in shaping student reading culture, both through mandatory reading lists and informal recommendations. This is in accordance with the view (Elmborg, 2006), which emphasizes that information literacy cannot develop optimally without guidance from competent academics. Other factors such as the author's popularity or social media trends, although influential, have a weaker position. This is a positive indicator

that students are not just going with the flow, but are beginning to develop autonomy in determining meaningful readings for their career development.

### **3. The Gap between Reading Needs and Availability**

This study also found a gap between students' needs for professional reading books and the availability of such books in the campus environment (Marsini & Dwikoranto, 2022). Most students stated that library collections tend to be dominated by old theory books, while they prefer the latest books with case studies, applicative skills, and current workplace strategies. Students also expressed limited access to professional digital books, both due to institutional subscription limitations and lack of information about legal and trusted platforms. This indicates the need to evaluate campus library collection policies to be more responsive to the needs of students who are increasingly contextual and practical. The gap between student needs and the availability of professional reading is an important concern in this study. Many students reveal that library collections do not reflect their real needs in building job skills. Collections that are outdated and too theoretical are considered to lack the need for dynamic and applicable professional literacy. This condition reflects the weak adaptation of institutions to the needs of modern and professional learning. The humanistic approach in education emphasizes the importance of meaningful and contextual learning. When students do not find the resources they need, the learning process becomes less optimal and risks hindering their readiness to compete in the world of work. Therefore, institutions need to review the policy of procurement of reading books, including expanding access to digital resources, updating library catalogs, and involving students in the process of selecting library collections that are in accordance with the development of the scientific field and professional needs.

### **4. Students' Strategies in Meeting Professional Reading Needs**

In response to the limited sources of formal reading, students developed several independent strategies in meeting their professional literacy needs. These strategies include searching for books in online stores, joining social media-based reading communities, and following book recommendations from inspirational figures in their respective professional fields. Some students have also started to take advantage of platforms such as Google Books, ResearchGate, and other more complete institutional e-libraries. However, digital literacy skills are a differentiating factor among students. Those who are more active in seeking alternative sources of reading generally show higher professional readiness. In the midst of limited official sources, students show creativity and independence in finding alternative readings. They are leveraging online stores, digital communities, and open-source platforms as solutions.

This shows that students are actively building information literacy as explained by (Nutbeam, 2000), which states that literacy is not only about reading, but also accessing and using information for specific purposes. The ability of students to find alternative sources shows the importance of integrating digital literacy in the higher education system. Those who have better skills in navigating digital information generally show more mature professional readiness. However, this disparity also indicates a skills gap that needs to be bridged by institutions through training, mentoring, and the provision of more inclusive access to professional reading. These strategies also reflect the spirit of lifelong learning, where students position themselves as active learners who not only rely on the formal system, but also explore various sources for their development. This is an important indicator for educational institutions to start recognizing and supporting informal and non-formal forms of learning that are increasingly important in the digital era.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of research on the choice of student reading books for professional purposes, it can be concluded that students have a stronger orientation towards reading that is relevant to the career they want to achieve. Reading selection is no longer solely based on academic obligations, but has developed into a conscious strategy in preparing for the world of work. Students show a preference for books that are applicable, contextual, and provide practical insights, both in the form of case studies, technical skills, and strategic guidance in their respective fields. The dominant factor that affects the choice of reading is the relevance of the content of the book to the work objectives, followed by lecturer recommendations and the availability of collections in the library. These findings reinforce Knowles' andragogy theory that emphasizes the importance of learning based on practical needs. On the other hand, the emergence of a gap between the needs of students and the collection of available readings shows that higher education institutions are not fully responsive to the development of students' professional needs. Outdated collections and lack of access to digital resources are obstacles in building strong professional literacy. Interestingly, students show high initiative in overcoming these limitations through independent strategies, such as seeking reading from online stores, digital literacy communities, and open-source platforms. This proves that information and digital literacy play an important role in shaping students' professional readiness. However, the gap in ability between

students to access and utilize this resource is also a challenge in itself that needs to be responded to systematically by educational institutions. Thus, an integrated effort is needed from campuses, lecturers, and library managers to create an adaptive, inclusive, and relevant professional literacy ecosystem. The provision of appropriate books, digital literacy training, and support for independent learning will be key in developing students who are not only academically intelligent, but also professionally prepared in the competitive world of work.

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