Reading Habits in Lebanon and France: A Comparison Study

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Abstract. This study aims to compare reading habits between Lebanon and France by identifying the reading habits among a sample of both residents in general and the educated populace in particular. A quantitative research approach is adopted relying on a survey questionnaire administered to equal samples of 130 persons, selected conveniently based on their willingness to participate, and belonging to different age categories and sexes. Results show that Lebanon has a lower average of reading time. Furthermore, 62.8% of the Lebanese versus 49.2% of the French dedicate 1 to 4 hours per week of reading time as compared to 3.1% of the Lebanese who dedicate 8 to 11 hours per week of reading time versus 21.5% of the French. Both dedicate below the world figures knowing that India occupied the first place with an average of 10.42 hours of reading per week. Lebanon and France are among the group that includes USA and Portugal where the majority of the people mainly read to get informed, keep updated, research a topic, and to be well developed. Lebanon is among the countries which are suffering from a decline in reading and readers though it occupies as well as France high position among the countries of high reading rates where a Lebanese reads an average of 20 books per year versus 25 by the French, a fact that puts Lebanon's rank better than Spain, USA, Mexico, Portugal and Canada, but less than France; further, an estimated 11.5% of the Lebanese residents and 3.8% of the French do not read when looking at the general reading habits. Outcomes may help add scope and direction to policy makers in the government, to universities and other teaching and learning institutions and the non-government organizations which are concerned.

1. Introduction:

Annable (2017) contends that the number of students in tertiary education who read for recreation and academic reading has declined. In fact, researchers show that engagement in reading is affected by the readers' perception that reading has personal relevant reasons (Annable, 2017; Becker, McElvany & Kortenbruck, 2010; Protacio, 2012). The aforementioned characterizes nations across the globe including Lebanon in particular (Hejase et al., 2017).

To make things worst and as Lebanon is considered part of the Arab region, Ayish (2010) asserts that Arabs need to turn the page on poor reading habits as found in his work and whereby in his article bewails the reading habit among Arabs, and calls for the renaissance of the first sacred commandment to Prophet Mohammed which was simply "Read" (Al 'Alaq, 96: 1). Moreover, the article expresses the author's disappointment when comparing how his fellow Arabs on the subway spend their time talking and looking around when most of the western passengers are engrossed in their books and newspapers. Furthermore, most of the recently published articles lament the reading crises by claiming that the Arab society does not like to read and has the lowest reading audience in the world (Hashem, 2013), or by simply stating survey results indicating that percentages of people hardly ever or never read with people in Lebanon among those who read the least (Al Bawaba, 2011). In fact, many have gone to the extreme of pessimism by asserting that for the Arab world, reading has become one of the impossibilities to find (Thomure, 2011).

France is selected based on the historical relationship between the two nations and the fact that many of the education laws are drawn based on previous French Mandate laws. Lebanon was under the French mandate for more than 25 years and since independence relationships have been kept at highest grades. Furthermore, the French were initiators of many educational institutions and Lebanese through time consider France as mother country.

On the other hand, considering reading habits of France, the Ipsos polling institute (Teller Report, 2019) shows that the French still read as much, but their reading habits change and 88% of French people read books. Further, the Connexion Journalist (2017) contends that the study performed by Ipsos for the National Book Centre shows that "despite a slowing of the book market in recent years, 84% of the people interviewed declare themselves keen readers of books and on average, the number of books read increased from 16 to 20 between since the last such poll in 2015" (Para 1-2). However, according to Burrows-Taylor (2017), the study by PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), "which has been carried out every five years since 2001, ranks the reading skills of school children aged 9 to 10 in 50 countries and have shown that the results weren't good news, with the country coming last in Europe and 34th overall on a list that saw Russia claim the top spot, followed by Singapore, Hong Kong, Ireland and Finland" (Para 1-2).

Looking at the aforementioned facts, the objective of this research is to assess the reading habits of a conveniently selected sample of Lebanese and French individuals pertaining to an open age category spanning 15 to 60 years.

2. Literature Review:

Leppanen, Aunola, Nurmi, and Aun (2005) contend that reading habits are flourished through the reading skills acquired at the early stages of school education; however, researchers have demonstrated that students in their higher stages of education sacrifice reading time to spend more time per day using the Internet (mean 2.47 hours with a std 1.5 hours) and watching television (mean 1.93 hours with a std 1.21 hours) (Mokhtari, Reichard, & Gardner, 2009). Similar results were reported indicating that declining book reading habits due to the new digital culture are considered a bad omen (The Nation, 2012; The Express Tribune, 2017). In fact, Wijesiri (2012) declared that the economic, social and political health of a country, are highly correlated with citizens that can read widely and apply it practically for development.

Thomure (2011) asserts that to become a "reading nation", the number of hours that must be dedicated to reading during school years should be something like 2,3732.5 hours (half an hour a day multiplied by 365 days multiplied by 13 years); these are based on 30 minutes (half an hour) per day for the thirteen years of school education. Though Hanafi (2007) warns that statistical surveys related to reading should be considered carefully in the Arab world simply because respondents seek to present an image of themselves as educated readers. Furthermore, Peters (2009) warns that the habit of reading for learning, for work, and for pleasure is diminishing in such a way that soon within the 21st century we could reach the stage of "Reading Rest in Peace".

Fearing the consequences of poor reading habits; in 2006, the 13 daily newspapers in Lebanon being ten in Arabic, one in Armenian, one in English and one in French agreed to work together to promote reading after suffering from declines of readership. The newspapers' managements adopted the objective of trying to enhance the reading habits of the people of Lebanon (The Daily Star, 2006).

For the last few years, the issue of reading in the Arab world has been an active subject for both news headlines and social media (Caldwell, 2012; Kechichian, 2012; Al Arabia, 2012; Wesleyschwalje, 2012; Abulhoul, 2012; Holland, 2013; and Hejase et al., 2019). Caldwell (2012) succeeded to prove once again how many can lie with statistics (Huff & Geis, 1954) and she pointed out the error associated with the prevailing myth that "Arabs read six minutes a year on the average". Kechichian (2012), presents some statistics where he compares the highest ranked Arab readers in Iraq with nine minutes of reading per day to countries like Finland where the average reading reaches 46 minutes per day. Likewise, Al Arabia (2012) highlights and associates the modest number of Arabs who visit libraries to the evaluation of reading habits among the generations. On a similar track, Wesleyschwalje (2012) states that few statistics do exist on childhood reading and that one of those available was executed in Egypt where the numbers show that 49% of the children do not read. Furthermore, Abulhoul (2012) indicated that Arabs don't need to conform, they need to read and consequently they can think and avoid being guided to follow the imposed directions. Similarly, Oji and Habibu (2011) lament the decreasing habit of reading and abandonment of libraries. They raise the fact that children cannot develop the habit of reading when they are not guided with the adequate resources or do not see their parents reading. Finally, Holland (2013) and the UAE Cabinet (2017) highlight some of the initiatives taking place in some Arab countries like Qatar and more recently the United Arab Emirates.

Ursula Lindsey (2016) describes the Arab region as follows, "the region has a deep historic relationship with the written word and a rich literary heritage. Books are respected, but what is missing from the reading experience may be something very simple: joy" (Para 11). On another hand, Hamouchi (2018) challenges the notion that "Arabs don't read" by presenting the fact that western media groups like Scientific American, National Geographic and Vice are entering the region with quality products that offer Arabic text and content.

Surprisingly the issue of reading is not limited to the Arab world but extends to most of the world. Manuel and Carter (2015) assert that opportunities for reading for pleasure are increasingly threatened and diminishing. Gleed (2013), based on 1500 English adult respondents, revealed that 18% of the respondents never read books at all with this figure increasing to 64% among the age category 18 to 30 years. In addition, 27% prefer the Internet

and social media to reading books, rising to 56% among 18-30 year olds; and 45% prefer television and DVDs to reading. This same study reveals that in general, those who never read live in more deprived areas, and those who read less are more likely to be males, under 30, and have lower levels of qualifications, happiness, and satisfaction within their lives. Furthermore, García-Delgado (2011), based on 181 Spanish students of the "Universidad Europea de Madrid" exposed a pessimistic conclusion that it was evident that as time goes by there is less reading among the students and the worst is that there are no great expectations for this trend to change. Likewise, in Spain and Portugal, Yubero and Larrañaga (2015) administered a study on 2,475 university students (10 universities in Spain and 9 in Portugal) to conclude that 13% do not have the habit of voluntary reading; moreover, the study results show that 16% of the Spanish students and 12% of the Portuguese students never read or simply almost never read. On the other hand, Statista (2019) reported that "12% of the French do not read, though they read an average of 5 to 19 books per year and considered him or herself as an average reader" (Para 1). Further, France was the 12th among the literate countries of the world and 9th in the number of hours spent reading during a week (Hoffelder, 2017). Moreover, Develey (2019), based on a poll of 1000 people, asserted that the book has lost nothing of its superb. In 2019, "the French are more likely to perceive themselves to be readers of books" (Para 2).

In the Americas continent, and alarmed by the UNESCO report that in reading habits Mexico occupies the next to last place among 108 countries, a study was conducted by Nava and Garcia (2009) on 210 university students in order to evaluate their reading habits; where the results showed that 7% of the respondents almost never read, 80% read less than one hour daily, and 82% never dedicate any reading time slot to non-academic reading materials. While in Argentina, a study conducted on a sample of 158 students from the Faculty of Engineering in the "Universidad de Buenos Aires" (Norberto Cornejo, Roble, Barrero, & Martín, 2012), revealed a more encouraging reading environment among the engineering students where the average of read books was 4.84 per year. Likewise, this study concluded that in general the surveyed students did not completely lack the reading habits but these require an important improvement.

A USA study done in 1997 revealed that the average times per day that children spend reading, watching television, studying and doing other housework were 45, 168, 63 and 54 minutes, respectively (Bianchi & Robinson, 1997). Obviously, the aforementioned study having been executed in 1997 does not include the minutes spent on digital media since at that time the Internet and its related domains were publicly in their very early stages. A more recent study (Aguilar & Hurst, 2007), reveals that leisure time spent by people aged 21 to 65 years who are not students nor early retirees, has decreased significantly in the United States between 1965 and 2003 for activities such as socializing, hobbies and reading, while increases were reported for entertainment, television watching and sport events. Years after, Huang, Capps, Blacklock, & Garza (2014), in the USA, 1,265 college students were surveyed to identify the short periods of time dedicated to nonacademic reading where the results showed that in a week time (168 hours) the average time spent on academic reading, extracurricular reading and Internet are 7.72 hours, 4.24 and 8.95 hours, respectively.

In Asia, Peshawar (Pakistan), Mohammad Ismail and his colleagues (2013) with a sample of 160 college students, concluded that socio-economic factors have great influence on the reading habits of students with the fact that the majority of college students prefer to read textbooks to comply with their academic duties. Moreover, Brown (2018) reports that the results of the 'Global English Editing' on world reading habits in 2018, show that India, Thailand, China and Philippine were the top countries for reading the most per week; 10.42 hrs, 9.24 hrs, 8 hrs, and 7.36 hrs, respectively or throughout the year, scoring 541.84, 480.48, 416 and 382.72 hours per year, respectively.

To conclude, it is totally clear that the statistics differ from a source to another; however, the lack of reading habits appear to be major concern that confronts the world in general and the Arab region in particular.

2.1. Objectives:

The objective of the current study is to explore and compare the reading habits among the Lebanese and the French residents in general and the educated populace in particular. The study is exploratory and quantitative whereby a wide range of questions are administered through a questionnaire in order to assess the reading lifestyles and behaviors.

The survey is adopted from Hejase et al. (2019). It consists of 21 questions selected from many other different studies (See Hejase et al., 2019 for detailed references). Questions are depicted in Exhibit 1. Another section includes demographic questions related to: Age at last birthday; Educational level; Being a student? Level? Occupation. Retired? Gender, and Marital status.

Exhibit 1. Research questions

1. What do you usually do in your spare time?
2. Do you read when travelling?
3. Do you read digital material like eBooks, websites, or online contents?
4. How many books do you own? (hard copy)
5. How often do you read books (online or print)
6. How many books (hard copies) have you read during the past 12 months?
7. How many books (online) have you read during the past 12 months?
8. Have you read more or less than last year?

9. What is the greatest obstacle that prevents you from reading books (online or print)?
10. How much average time do you spend reading books (online or print) during a week?
11. How well do you think you read?
12. In general, do you like to read?
13. Do you prefer reading online content or print copies?
14. Do you read newspapers? (online or print)
15. Do you read magazines? (online or print)
16. Did or do either of your parents read frequently?
17. Did your parents read to you as a child?
18. Did your parents encourage you to read when you were younger?
19. How much time do you feel should be spent on reading daily?
20. Which of the following do you consider to be the most important reason to read?
21. Yesterday, how much time did you spend reading a printed or online book / magazine / newspaper?

3. Methodology:

This research follows a quantitative and comparative approach using a questionnaire consisting of 21 questions that cover the reading habits and another six questions related to respondents' demographics. All the questionnaires were filled in paper and the majority were distributed in university undergraduate and graduate classes with few distributed among population masses in malls, bus stations and cafes.

3.1. Sampling:

The sample data was collected from Lebanon (130 valid respondents answered the Arabic or translated English version) and from France (130 valid respondents answered the French translated version). Data was collected from April to June 2017. Sampling was by convenience based on the willingness of the participants to answer the questions. Confidentiality was assured and participants took their time with no rush or stress.

3.2. Data analysis:

Responses were analyzed using the software "Statistical Product and Service Solutions", the SPSS version 23 program, an IBM product since 2009 (Hejase & Hejase, 2013, p. 58). The study was performed using descriptive statistics including frequency and percentage distribution tables. Moreover, cross-tabulation analysis as well as non-parametric Wilcoxon was performed to study relationships between variables that may add value to the findings of the research.

4. Results and Discussion:

4.1. Descriptive statistics pertaining to the survey questions

Respondents were asked about the most prominent activities carried out in their spare times. Results depicted in Table 1 reveal that 38.0% (Lebanese) and 48.5% (French) spend their spare time on Social Media & WhatsApp, 21.7% (Lebanese) and 11.5% (French) Watch TV, 10.1% (Lebanese) and 0.8% (French) Sleep, 4.4% (Lebanese) and 13.10% (French) hangout with their friends, 6.2% (Lebanese) and 9.20% (French) Play Sports, and only 11.60% % (Lebanese) and 16.20% (French) read in their spare time. In fact, an almost equal number of Lebanese and French, 59.7% (Lebanese) and 60% (French), use electronic devices and digital social media in their spare time. In addition, Table 2 shows that the nationality based results reveal that 35.70% of Lebanese read (every time and almost every time) digital material like eBooks, websites, or online contents compared to 53.90% for the French.

Table 1: Answers to the question: "What do you usually do in your spare time?"

	Lebanon		France	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Social Media, Online Games & Internet	30	23.3	50	38.5
WhatsApp	19	14.7	13	10.0
Watch TV	28	21.7	15	11.5
Sleep	13	10.1	1	0.8
Hangout with Friends	8	6.2	17	13.1
Play Sports	8	6.2	12	9.2
Read	15	11.6	21	16.2
Other (Family time, farming, painting, etc…)	8	6.2	1	.007

No. of respondents: Lebanon 129 (1 missing); France 130

Table 2: Reading digital material like eBooks, websites, or online contents

		Lebanon	France
Every Time & Almost Every Time	Count	46	70
	% within Address	35.70%	53.9%
Sometimes	Count	49	36
	% within Address	38.0%	27.7%
Rarely & Never	Count	34	24
	% within Address	26.3%	18.5%
Total	Count	129	130
	% within Address	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	49.81%	50.19%

No. of respondents: Lebanon 129 (1 missing); France 130

The aforementioned results do not differ from those of an Australian study (Manuel & Carter, 2015) where reading a newspaper or reading a book were the least preferred leisure activities compared to; hanging with friends, computer games and Internet, Music, TV, and others. Moreover, the same aforementioned study showed that reading books ranked as the preferred leisure activity for only one-fifth of the 2000 young people aged 12 to 16 years.

On asking "Do you read when travelling?" the respondents' answers indicate that 26.2% (Lebanese) and 5.4% (French) of the respondents never read when travelling, 27.0% (Lebanese) and 28.5% (French) rarely do it, 32.3% (Lebanese) and 24.6% (French) occasionally (sometimes) and the percentage of those who surely read when travelling does not exceed 13.9% (Lebanese) and 41.5% (French).

Furthermore, the respondents' answers for the question "In general, do you like to read?" are depicted as follows: the percentage of those who extremely like to read is 14.8% (Lebanese) and 30.8% (French) and the percentage of those who never or rarely read is 14.8% (Lebanese) and 15.4% (French). Furthermore, 36.7% (Lebanese) and 23.8% (French) like to read and 33.6% (Lebanese) and 30% (French) sometimes like to read. Develey (2019), based on a study by the National Book Centre and Ipsos on 1,000 people in France, reported that 31% of the French are great readers in strong agreement with the aforementioned finding.

The overall results expressed above are quite negative for the Lebanese and the French, with nearly half of respondents (48.4% Lebanese and 45.4% French) stating that they do not enjoy reading (sometimes, rarely and never). Surprisingly, results are somehow better than the study performed in the USA among 214 middle school (Hughes-Hassell & Lutz, 2006) students which revealed that 37% enjoyed reading, and more than 58% responded sometimes, and 4% stated that they never enjoy it (or 62% not enjoying reading).

Other results include answers to the question "How often do you read books (online or print)?" whereby for the Lebanese a shocking figure of only 13.1% of the respondents read on a daily basis with 11.5% who never read at all. While the results are much better for the French with 28.5% who read daily and 3.8% who never read. Results also show that the difference between Lebanese and French decreases when revealing that 33.0% of the Lebanese respondents versus 28.4% of the French fall in the category never read or read few times a year which practically implies that they do not read too.

Another unexpected finding is expressed in the answers to the question "Have you read more or less than last year?" whereby respondents admitted their decline in the reading habits where 48.0% of the respondents (Lebanese) and 44.2% (French) conceded that they had read more in the previous year as compared to the current

and only 29.1% (Lebanese) versus 39.5% (French) declared that they have read less. Also, 21.3% (Lebanese) versus 16.3% (French) claim they read about the same. Again, this finding is similar to other studies that have raised the warning flag of diminishing reading habits (The Nation, 2012).

On asking "How many hard copy books do you own? The answers depicted in Table 3 demonstrate the tragic finding for the Lebanese that 15.39% of the respondents do not own a single paper book versus the much better situation for the French with 2.4% and those who own less than 10 books are 39.23% (Lebanese) and 11.54% (French) of the respondents which is again an alarming result for the Lebanese which requires further exploration. Likewise, the average and median numbers of books owned by the respondents were 25.31 and 10 books for the Lebanese and 255.15 and 60 for the French, respectively. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that 46.10% of the French own between 41 to 320 books versus 15.38% of the Lebanese owning the same amounts.

Table 3: Answers to the question "How many books do you own? (Hard copy).

How many books do you own? (hard copy)	Lebanon		France	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Zero [0]	20	15.39	3	2.40
1 – 10	51	39.23	15	11.54
11 -20	22	16.92	9	6.92
21 – 30	7	5.38	12	9.23
31 – 40	4	3.08	4	3.07
41 – 80	9	6.92	21	16.16
81 - 160	8	6.15	23	17.70
161 - 320	3	2.31	16	12.30
321 – 640	0	0	4	3.07
641 - 1280	0	0	8	6.16
More than 1280	0	0	4	3.07
Missing Answer	6	4.62	11	8.47
Total	130	100.00	130	100.00

Furthermore, on asking "How many books (hard copies) have you read during the past 12 months?" Table 4 shows that 21.6% (Lebanese) and 2.3% (French) of the respondents never read a single book during the last 12 months which is again an alarming figure for the Lebanese. Likewise, 16.9% (Lebanese) and 11.5% (French) read on average one book a year. Interestingly, 27% of the French read between 11 and 60 books during the past year versus 6.9% of the Lebanese. The average and median number of printed books read by the respondents during the past 12 months were 19.75 and 2 books for Lebanese and 24.51 and 5 for French, respectively. The aforementioned outcome reveals that French read more than the amount of books that Lebanese read. Worth mentioning that Ghriss et

al. (2016, pp. 18-19) report in their study that Lebanese read 11 books in a foreign language and 20.4 books in Arabic.

Table 4: Answers to "How many books (hard copies) have you read during the past 12 months?"

	Lebanon		France	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Zero [0]	28	21.6%	3	2.30%
1	22	16.9%	15	11.50%
2	23	17.7%	12	9.20%
3	11	8.50%	17	13.10%
4	9	6.9%	13	10.0%
5	10	7.70%	12	9.20%
6	2	1.50%	6	4.60%
7	8	6.20%	5	3.80%
8	2	1.50%	1	0.80%
9	1	0.80%	1	0.80%
10	2	1.50%	7	5.30%
11 - 60	9	6.9%	35	27.0%
More than 60	1	0.80%	1	0.80%
Missing Answer	2	1.50%	2	1.50%
% of Total [Tot. = 260]		50.00%		50.00%
Total	130	100.00	130	100.00

On asking "How many books (Online) have you read during the past 12 months?" Table 5 shows that 40.8% (Lebanese) and 17.7% (French) of the respondents never read a single online book during the past year with the once more upsetting outcome that in the current digital age, only 57% (Lebanese) and 31.5% (French) of the respondents had read at most one online book in a time span of one year. Interestingly, Develey (2019) contends that, the NBC-Ipsos 2019 survey in France shows that the rate of readers of digital books is always higher in the 15-24 age group. They are 47% to have read at least one in the course of the last twelve months. The average and median number of online books read by the respondents during the past 12 months were 7.39 and 1 books (Lebanese) and 19.56 and 2 books (French), respectively.

In fact, the results of both Tables 4 and 5 reveal that in general the median number of books read by all the respondents is 2 for paper books and 1 for online books (Lebanese) versus 5 for paper books and 2 for online books (French). These figures are well below the American median extracted from a sample of 1,520 adult respondents which is 4 for all books being online or paper (The American figures per gender are: 3 for men and 5 for women) (Perrin, 2016).

Table 5: Answers to "How many books (Online) have you read during the past 12 months?"

How many books (Online) have you read during the past 12 months?	Lebanon		France	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Zero [0]	53	40.80%	23	17.70%
1	21	16.20%	18	13.80%
2	8	6.20%	28	21.50%
3	6	4.60%	7	5.40%
4	6	4.60%	7	5.40%
5	2	1.50%	14	10.80%
6	1	0.80%	4	3.10%
7	3	2.30%	5	3.80%
8	0	0.00%	2	1.50%
9	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
10	9	6.90%	9	6.90%
11 - 60	17	13.00%	11	8.50%
More than 60	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Missing Answer	4	3.10%	2	1.50%
% of Total [Tot. = 260]		50.00%		50.00%
Total	130	100.00	130	100.00

Results that correspond to the question "Did or do either of your parents read frequently?" showed that 61.5% (Lebanese) and 63.6% (French) of the respondents answered yes, 28.7% (Lebanese) and 33.3% (French) answered no, 0.8% (Lebanese) and 2.3% (French) answered some times, and 0% (Lebanese) and 0.8% (French) do not know. Furthermore, the results that correspond to the question "Did your parents read to you as a child?" showed that 69% (Lebanese) and 58.5% (French) of the respondents answered yes, 28.7% (Lebanese) and 41.5% (French) answered no, 1.5% (Lebanese) answered some times, 0.8% don not know. Other results to the question "Did your parents encourage you to read when you were younger?" revealed that only 21.5% (Lebanese) and 20.9% (French) of the respondents admitted that their parents did not encourage them to read, while 78.5% (Lebanese) and 79.1% (French) confirmed. The aforementioned outcome is more encouraging than previous results since a research done in England to study the reading habits of 1,500 adults conducted by DJS Research for Booktrust (Flood, Mar 2014) reveals the "significant" link between a family's reading habits and a child's future attitude to reading, with 89% of the respondents whose parents read to them as children reading regularly to their own children, compared to 72% of respondents whose parents didn't read to them.

On asking "Yesterday, how much time did you spend reading a printed or online book/ magazine/ newspaper?" Table 6 illustrates that 39.2% (Lebanese) and 14.6% (French) of the respondents replied zero minutes,

while 27.7% (Lebanese) and 24.6% (French) spent 60 minutes and 6.9% (Lebanese) and 21.5% (French) spent 120 minutes. The average and median for yesterday's reading time came to be 66.56 and 30 minutes (Lebanese), and 121.92 and 60 minutes (French), respectively. Again the numbers here reveal that the French spend more time reading as compared to Lebanese.

Table 6: Answers to "Yesterday, how much time did you spend reading a printed or online book/ magazine/ newspaper?

	Lebanon		France	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Zero [0]	51	39.20%	19	14.60%
5 – 25 minutes	10	7.70%	10	7.70%
30	10	7.70%	16	12.30%
40 - 50	0	0.00%	1	0.80%
60	36	27.70%	32	24.60%
90	3	2.30%	0	0.00%
120	9	6.9%	28	21.50%
180	4	3.10%	9	6.90%
240	2	1.50%	7	5.40%
300	0	0.00%	2	1.60%
420	1	0.80%	0	0.00%
480	1	0.80%	0	0.00%
600	1	0.80%	0	0.00%
Missing	2	1.50%	6	4.60%
% of Total [Tot. = 260]		50.00%		50.00%
Total	130	100.00	130	100.00

Surprisingly, when the respondents were asked about how much time they feel should be spent on reading daily, Table 7 shows that 43.8% (Lebanese) and 46.2% (French) indicated one hour and 26.2% (Lebanese) and 17.7% (French) went to two hours. Does this mean that people are aware of the importance of reading but they are unable to apply that in their life styles?

Maybe the case applies to the Lebanese and to some extent to the French as revealed next with the mean and median values. Here, the average and median for the subjective estimated reading time were 135.95 and 60 minutes (Lebanese) and 127.83 and 60 minutes (French), respectively. However, at least the majority of the respondents were conscious about the importance of reading.

Now based on the aforementioned average of 66.56 minutes (Lebanese), and 121.92 minutes (French) for yesterday's reading time and the estimated respondents' daily average reading time of 135.95 minutes (Lebanese) and 127.83 minutes (French); it is worth to mention that it has been reported that to become a "reading nation", the number of hours that must be dedicated to reading during school years should be something like 2,373 hours; these

are based on 30 minutes (half an hour) per day for the thirteen years of school education (Thomure, 2011). Surprisingly, it looks that the numbers of this current study exceed the proposed norms and standards. Though the aforementioned results could include "wishful thinking' as pertains to the respondents' feeling about reading time.

Table 7: Answers to "How much time do you feel should be spent on reading daily?"

	Lebanon		France	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Zero [0]	1	0.80%	0	0.00%
5 – 29 minutes	4	3.1%	9	6.90%
Around 30	7	5.40%	5	3.80%
Around 60	57	43.80%	60	46.20%
Around 90	2	1.50%	3	2.30%
Around 120	34	26.20%	23	17.70%
Around 180	6	4.60%	8	6.10%
Around 240	8	6.10%	7	5.40%
Around 300	3	2.30%	1	0.80%
Around 360	1	0.80%	1	0.80%
It Depends	6	4.60%	6	4.60%
Missing	1	0.80%	7	5.40%
% of Total [Tot. = 260]		50.0%		50.0%
Total	130	100.00	130	100.00

Asking about the time spent on reading per week, results depicted in Table 8 reveal that in a week 24.8% (Lebanese) and 14.6% (French) of the respondents never read and nearly 63% (Lebanese) and 49% (French) of the respondents read between one and four hours. Further, 9.3% (Lebanese) and 14.6% (French) read 5 to 8 hours and 3.1% (Lebanese) and 21.5% (French) reach 8 to 11 hours.

Table 8: Answers to "How much average time do you spend reading books (online or print) during a week?"

		Address		Total
		Lebanon	France	
0 Hours	Count	32	19	51
	% within Address	24.8%	14.6%	19.69%
1 - 4 Hours	Count	81	64	145
	% within Address	62.8%	49.2%	55.98%
5 - 8 Hours	Count	12	19	31
	% within Address	9.3%	14.6%	11.96%
8 - 11 Hours	Count	4	28	32
	% within Address	3.1%	21.5%	12.37%
	Count	129	130	259
Total	% within Address	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	49.81%	50.19%	100.0%

On comparing the aforementioned results with some other findings such as the study performed in Hungary and

Serbia (Szentgyörgyvölgyi, Novotny, & Szabo', 2017), 31.75% of the Hungarian respondents read for 3-4 hours a week for school work versus 30.25% of the Serbian students spending more than 10 hours reading for school tasks; 21% (Hungarian) read 5-6 hours a week, and 19% read for 7 hours or more while for Serbians, 12.25% read 7-8 hours a week for school work, 14.5% read 5-6 hours, and 19.25% read 3-4 hours per week and those who read for less than one hour were only 3%. The same study revealed that in their free time, 26% of the Hungarians spent 3-4 hours reading books, 18.5% spent 5-6 hours and 7.5% spent 7-8 hours. Additionally, 20.75% of the Serbian students spent 3-4 hours reading in their free time (similar to the Hungarian students), 21.75% declared 1-2 hours, 10% claimed that they read between 7 and 8 hours during their free time and 11.5%.of the Serbians read for less than one hour for pleasure.

Next, the current study shows that the respondents were asked about their rationale for reading. The answers obtained show that the main reasons are to develop knowledge (58.9% Lebanese and 40.8% French) and to comply with academic demands (27.9% Lebanese and 40% French). A noticeable figure is that the percentage of respondents who read for pleasure, entertainment and fun does not exceed 10.9% and finally 2.3% do it to pass time (Lebanese) while the numbers are 15.4% and 0% for the French. It is worth noting that the NBC-Ipsos study conducted in France in 2019 about reading books revealed that 88% of the respondents do it for learning, 96% for pleasure and 73% to feel happy and fulfilled (Develey, 2019). However, the sample of the aforementioned study consists solely from book readers.

As for the question "How well do you think you read?" the respondents' answers are as follows: 50% (Lebanese) and 52.3% (French) declared their excellent reading ability, 23.4% (Lebanese) and 30% (French) were above average, 20.3% (Lebanese) and 11.5% (French) were average, 4.7% (Lebanese) and 6.2% (French) were below average and with only 1.6% (Lebanese) and 0% (French) admitting about their poor reading skills. Here, a clear controversy appears among the reading habits of Lebanese respondents who claimed excellent reading abilities (50% herein) disagrees first with low reading habits (24.8% never read per week), and secondly with the desire to read (only 14.8% answered: Extremely I like to read).

On the other hand, the French respondents showed more congruency in their reading habits, who claimed excellent reading abilities (52.3% herein) agrees first with low reading habits (14.6% never read per week), and secondly with modest desire to read (30.8% answered: Extremely I like to read).

When respondents were asked about the major impediments for reading, the answers were as presented in Table 9 which reveals that time is the main obstruction (57% (Lebanese) and 42.3% (French) indicated that they

don't have enough time to read) followed by loss of interest which applies more to the Lebanese than the French (19.5% (Lebanese) versus 9.2% (French) informed that there is nothing of interest to read to them). In a study administered to middle school students (Hughes-Hassell & Lutz, 2006), 30% indicated that they are too busy and do not have time to read. Furthermore, Connexion Journalist (2017) report that a French study found out that the French love reading but need more time. Similarly, Develey (2019) asserted that the first impediment to the reading is lack of time.

Table 9: Answers to "What is the greatest Obstacle that prevents you from reading books (online or print)?"

What is the greatest Obstacle that prevents you from reading books (online or print)?		Address		
		Lebanon	France	Total
No enough time	Count	73	55	128
	% within Address	57.0%	42.3%	49.6%
Nothing to read that interest me	Count	25	12	37
	% within Address	19.5%	9.2%	14.3%
No one to share books with or to talk to about books	Count	7	3	10
	% within Address	5.5%	2.3%	3.8%
Nothing stands in my way	Count	20	56	76
	% within Address	15.6%	43.1%	29.5%
Other	Count	2	4	6
	% within Address	1.6%	3.1%	2.4%
I don't read	Count	1	0	1
	% within Address	0.8%	0.0%	0.4%
Total	Count	128	130	258
	% within Address	100.0%	100.0%	00.0%
	% of Total	49.6%	50.4%	00.0%

Respondents were questioned about their preferences in reading newspapers and magazines either online content or paper printed material. Answers reveal that Lebanese respondents share the same preference for both, online, at 36.4% and 34.9%, and print 31.8% and 35.7%, respectively and French respondents also share similar trend for both, online 70% and 65.1%, and print 23.8% and 26.4%, respectively. Again those who insisted that they do not read either came out to be 20.2% and 17.8% each (Lebanese) while the French only 2.3% do not read magazines online or paper. Worth noting that the French outnumber the Lebanese in their reading of print or online newspapers and magazines, almost double the numbers.

Being at the core of the digital age, and knowing that 52% of the Arab "screen-agers" indicated they prefer to read on screen compared with 32% who preferred print (Al Bawaba, 2011), in addition to the facts reported by Verma and Malviya (2014) who contend that "although the library has provided modernized digital resources for many years,

the percentage using the digital library is far less than 50 percent and there are still over 25 percent of readers who, because of their reading habits, always use physical resources" (p. 4), it was an obvious concern to ask the respondents about their digital reading activity among eBooks, websites and other online contents. The daily frequencies of this reading activity depict that 26.3% rarely and never read, 38% sometimes read and 35.7% regularly do read (Lebanese) as compared to the French whose reading activities depict that 18.5% rarely and never read, 27.70% sometimes read and 53.90% regularly do read. On the other hand, 44.6% (Lebanese) and 34.6% (French) prefer reading online content instead of print copies. Moreover, 11.6% of Lebanese never read digital material compared to 5.4% for French.

To assess the reading habits for pleasure and entertainment, respondents were questioned if they read newspapers and magazines either in print or online. The collected answers illustrate that 20.2% (Lebanese) and 0% (French) of the respondents never read newspapers being in print or online; likewise, 17.8% (Lebanese) and 2.3% (French) of the respondents never read magazines of any form.

4.2. Demographics

The number of collected surveys was 130 for each nationality. The average age of the Lebanese respondents came up to be 26.75 years (27.19 years for males and 26.38 years for females), the median was 24 years for both genders. While the average age of the French respondents came up to be 31.89 years (31.71 years for males and 32.08 years for females), the median was 30 years for both genders (33 years for males and 29.5 years for females). Moreover, Table 10 shows the demographics characteristics of the respondents in what relates to gender (Lebanese: 45.5% males and 54.5% females; French: 50.8% males and 49.2% females), academics (Lebanese: 58.50% students and 41.50% non-students; French: 53.50% students and 46.50% non-students), marital status (Lebanese: 63.3% single and 34.4% married; French: 51.20% single and 43.20% married), educational level attained (Lebanese: 34.9% school level and 65.1% higher education; French: 18.9% school level and 81.1% higher education), and employment (Lebanese: 46.2% versus French: 19.2% unemployed).

The demographics figures can easily help recognize four main features of the respondents:
- The respondents come from a highly educated sample since 65.1% (Lebanese) and 81.1% (French) hold at least a university level degree.
- High percentages of the respondents were unemployed (Lebanese 46.2% and French 19.2%).
- The grand majority of the respondents are students.

Table 10: Demographics of the respondents

	Lebanon	France
Gender		
Males	59 (45.5%)	66 (50.8%)
Females	71 (54.5%)	64 (49.2%)
Age		
Average	26.75	31.89
Student [Yes]	76 (58.5%)	69 (53.5%)
Marital Status		
Single	81(63.3%)	64(51.2%)
Married	44 (34.4%)	54 (43.2%)
Other	3 (2.3%)	7 (5.6%)
Education Level		
School	45 (34.9%)	23 (18.9%)
University	62 (48.1%)	27 (22.1%)
Graduate	22 (17.0%)	72 (59%)
Occupation		
Unemployed	60 (46.2%)	25 (19.2%)
Education	13 (10.0%)	19 (14.6%)
Worker	29 (22.3%)	21 (16.2%)
Business	14 (10.75%)	27 (20.7%)
Other	14 (10.75%)	38 (29.3%)

The three aforementioned features added to the fact that the average age is about 27 (Lebanese) and 32 (French) years imply that the sample under study is mainly formed of young adults who are highly educated, majority single, and with high unemployment rates.

4.3. Gender Cross Tabulations

The Chi-Square Test of Independence (Chi-Square Test of Association) was used to perform a series of cross tabulations among the different survey answers to questions. The assumption of the chi-square test is that the expected value in each contingency table cell is greater than 5. Thus, in this study when the expected values are too low, categories will be merged in order to comply with the guidelines suggested by Cochran (1954). Moreover, if the expected values continue to be too low, then a Fisher's Exact test is to be used (Grace-Martin, 2018). However, the chi-square approximation is good if "no more than 20% of the expected counts are less than 5 and all individual expected counts are 1 or greater (Yates, Moore, & McCabe, 1999).

On using the "Fisher exact test", it was observed that a non-significant association exists between "Do you read when travelling?" and gender ($p = .774$ [Lebanon] and .544 [France]) indicating that reading habits while travelling are not gender sensitive. This is possibly due to that fact that males and females are almost equally divided as well as their specific descriptive statistics result for such a question. So, based on the frequency differences expressed in Figure 1 related to "Do you read when travelling?" are significant so there is visual evidence that when travelling females tend to read more than males. The feature that females are better leisure readers than males has been

extensively covered in the literature (Howard & Jin, 2004), (Wong, 2018), (Scales & Rhee, 2001) (Manuel & Carter, 2015), (Perrin, 2016) (García-Delgado, 2011), (Hughes-Hassell & Lutz, 2006) and (Develey, 2019). One may observe that when considering both genders irrespective of address, the evidence of non-significant differences is shown clearly (Figure 1.a), however, when taking the address in consideration salient differences are clearer in the Lebanese sample (Figure 1.b) as compared to the French sample (Figure 1.c) especially in the ranges of "every time", "almost every time", and "sometime."
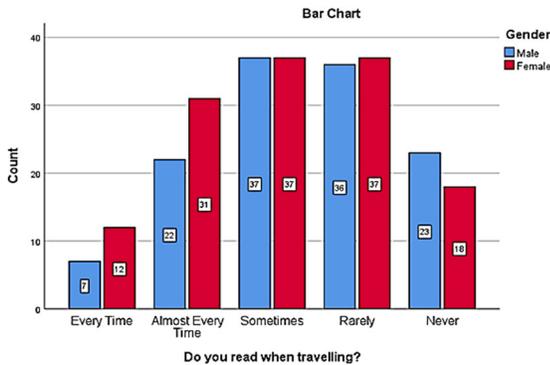
Figure 1.a. "Do you like to read when travelling?' versus Gender.
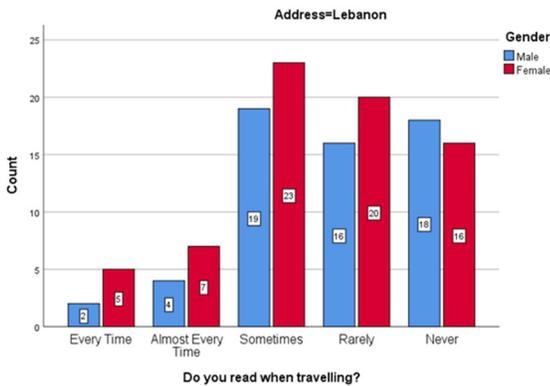
Figure 1.b. "Do you like to read when travelling?' versus Gender considering address=Lebanon.
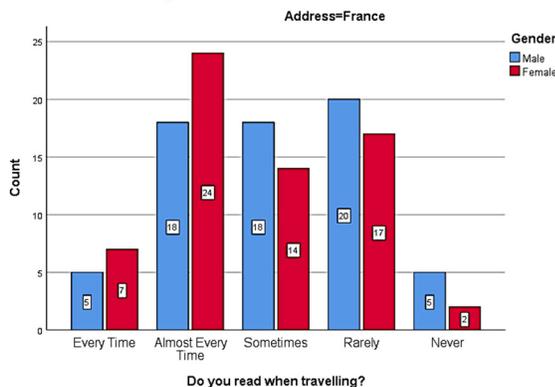

Figure 1.c. "Do you read when travelling" versus Gender considering address=France.

The question "How well do you think you read" has been cross-tabulated versus "Gender" leading to the finding that there is no statistical significant association between the two with $\chi^2(4) = 2.421$, p = .714 (Fisher's Exact = 2.127, p =.646). However, looking at Figure 2, one may observe that Females have the upper hand when it comes to excellence in reading and almost equal with males when comparing above average and average reading.
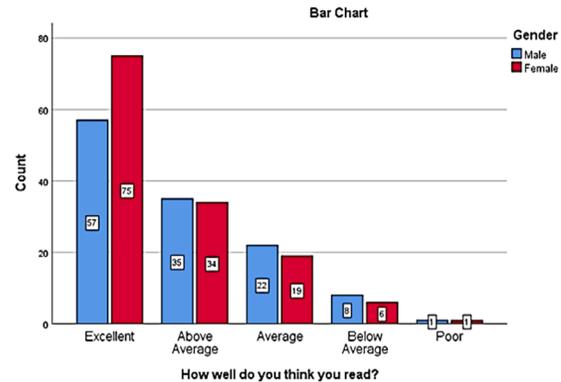

Figure 1. Frequency of responses to "How well do you think you read?"

Similar results were reported in a Lebanese study administered to 3,997 respondents from the Lebanese population where females believed they could read better ($\chi^2(4) = 28.256$, p = 0.000) (Hejase et al., 2017). In fact, the reading gap between genders was reported in the literature with the emphasis that it appears to be widening and the reading habit is declining with age (Howard & Jin, 2004; Wong, 2018; Anderson, 2020).

4.4. Territory Cross Tabulations

The sample data composed of 260 respondents was divided equally among Lebanese and French with 50% each (130 respondents). Both the Fisher's Exact test and the Chi-Square Test of Association were used to test if a dependency exists between "Address" and several statement questions related to reading. Table 11 shows a summary of the results.

"Do you prefer reading online content or print copies" The finding shows that there is a difference in this dimension between Lebanese and French where 35.7% regularly do read (Lebanese) as compared to the French whose reading activities depict that 53.90% regularly do read online as compared to print.

As for the next two dimensions, "Have you read more or less than last year" ($\chi^2(3) = 5.098$, p = 0.150) and "How well do you think you read" ($\chi^2(4) = 6.517$, p = 0.164), there is no statistical evidence that there is a difference between the Lebanese and the French". Looking at the first question, results show that respondents have read more last year in comparison to a year after. As for the

second question, an overall average show that both they read well.

nonparametric median test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the habit of reading

Table 11. Territory Cross-tabulation tests

Questions Vs. Address	Chi Square	p-value	Fisher value	p-value	Result
Do you prefer reading online content or print copies	$\chi^2(3) = 19.150$	.000	20.503	.000	Accept the hypothesis that there is an association with the address
Have you read more or less than last year	$\chi^2(3) = 5.098$	.150	4.713	.164	Reject, no association with the address
How well do you think you read	$\chi^2(4) = 6.517$	.164	4.713	.164	Reject, no association with the address
How often you read books (online or print)	$\chi^2(5) = 15.693$	.008	15.651	.005	Accept
Do you read digital material	$\chi^2(4) = 12.947$	.011	12.957	.011	Accept
Greatest obstacles	$\chi^2(5) = 27.404$	.000	27.695	.000	Accept
Ave. time you spend reading	$\chi^2(3) = 24.884$	.000	26.299	.000	Accept
Time you feel should be spent on reading	$\chi^2(4) = 11.208$	.635	10.712	.662	Reject, no association with the address
In general, do you like to read	$\chi^2(4) = 11.028$	.025	11.113	.024	Accept

"How often you read books (online or print)"; "Do you read digital material" and "Average time you spend reading". The finding was that there is statistical evidence that there is a difference between Lebanese and French. If one explores further in detail, one finds that Lebanese read more on short term basis (or shorter periods of time or less than 4 hours per week) as compared to the French who read for longer periods of time (more than 5 hours per week).

"What is the greatest obstacle that prevents you from reading books (online or print)?" The finding was $\chi^2(5) = 27.404$, p = 0.000 with 0 cells having expected count less than 5 which indicates that there is significant evidence that the French have differences as compared to the Lebanese. The Lebanese are affected more with the factor of time availability (57% versus 43% for the French), however the French believe that nothing stops them from reading (43%) compared to 15.6% for the Lebanese who believe that they are subject to certain factors. The factor of lack of time is confirmed by Anderson (2020), Develey (2019) and Connexion Journalist (2017).

"In general, do you like to read". The finding was $\chi^2(4) = 11.028$, p = 0.025, with 0 cells having expected count less than 5 which indicates that there is statistically significant evidence that the French like to read more than Lebanese. In fact the Teller Report (2019) and the Connexion Journalist (2017) assert that the French are still keen readers.

Moreover, the median for "Do you read when travelling" was *rarely* for the Lebanese respondents (Median = 4) and *Sometimes* for the French respondents (Median = 3). For checking if the populations represented by the two nationalities have the same median on the ordinal variable "Do you read when travelling"; a

while travelling between the Lebanese and French respondents, $\chi^2(1)$ with Yates' continuity correction = 9.763, p = 0.002. In fact, the data showed better reading habits among the French nationals.

Table 12: Percentage answers for the question "Do you read when travelling?"

Do you read when travelling?	Nationality	
	Lebanese	French
Every Time	5.4%	9.2%
Almost Every Time	8.5%	32.3%
Sometimes	32.2%	24.6%
Rarely	27.7%	28.5%
Never	26.2%	5.4%
Total	100%	100%

Now, for checking if the populations represented by the two nationalities have the same median on the ordinal variable "How often do you read books (online or print)"; the nonparametric median test showed that there was no statistically significant difference (at 5% level of significance) with $\chi^2(1)$ with Yates' continuity correction = 0.646, p = 0.422. This clearly indicates that both the Lebanese and French respondents do not differ in what relates to the frequency of reading books. In fact, taking each of the two nationality samples alone induced the reality that each group has a median of 3 coded as "A few times a month".

The median time for "How much time do you feel should be spent on reading daily?" came up to be equal to 60 minutes for each of the Lebanese and French respondents. In addition, the median test showed that $\chi^2(1)$ with Yates' continuity correction = 1.152, p = 0.283. This

clearly indicates that both the Lebanese and French respondents do not differ (at 5%) in what concerns the time that should be daily dedicated to reading.

Table 13 reveals the statistical data for both the

there was no statistical significant association between "Do you read when travelling?" and being a student on an overall scale or not considering the country ($X^2(4) = 7.716$, $p = 0 .107$; Fisher Exact: 7.564, p =.108). However, when

Table 13: Non-parametric testing for Lebanese and French respondents

Address		How many books do you own?(hard copy)	How many books (hard copies) have you read during the past 12 months?	How many books (Online) have you read during the past 12 months?	How much time do you feel should be spent on reading daily?	Yesterday, how much time did you spend reading a printed or online book/ magazine/ newspaper?
Lebanon	Mean	25.31	19.75	35.43	135.95	66.56
	N	124	130	130	129	130
	Std. Dev.	47.508	123.270	172.561	179.410	145.379
	Median	10.00	2.00	1.00	60.00	30.00
France	Mean	255.15	24.51	19.56	127.83	121.92
	N	119	130	130	123	130
	Std. Dev.	611.262	123.237	123.008	191.376	205.879
	Median	60.00	5.00	2.00	60.00	60.00
Total	Mean	137.786	22.13	27.50	131.990	94.24
	N	243	260	260	252	260
	Std. Dev.	443.357	123.038	149.769	180.524	180.019
	Median	25.00	3.00	2.00	60.00	60.00
Are distributions significantly different		Yes (Wilcoxon P=0.000)	Yes (Wilcoxon P=0.000)	Yes (Wilcoxon P=0.008)	No (Wilcoxon P=0.258)	No (Wilcoxon P=0.000)

Lebanese and French groups of respondents. Nonparametric Wilcoxon sum rank tests were performed to check the null hypotheses that the distributions across both nationalities are the same for each of the five questions. The decision was to reject the null hypothesis for each test where the p-values are indicated at the bottom row of Table 13. Thus, in general French outperforms a Lebanese in the number of books owned (255 versus 25 books); a French reads per year on the average more printed books than a Lebanese (25 versus 20 books); a Lebanese reads per year on the average more online books than a French (35 versus 20 books); a Lebanese feels that more reading time should be devoted per day than a French (136 versus 128 minutes); and a French has read yesterday more than a Lebanese (128 versus 67 minutes).

4.5. Student status Cross Tabulation

The charts in Figure 3 demonstrate that Lebanese students possess in general less reading habits when comparing the categories "almost every time and sometimes" than non-students whereby the categories "Never", "Rarely" and "Sometimes" are dominated by nonstudents when compared to students., while the case is reversed for French students. The categories "Never", "Rarely" and "Sometimes" are dominated by students when compared to nonstudents. To see if this domination is significant, on using a "Chi-square test" for dependency,

considering the country, there was significant association for Lebanon at 10% statistical significance ($X^2(4) = 9.276$, $p = 0.052$; Fisher Exact: 8.956, $p = 0.057$). While there was significant association for France at 5% statistical significance ($X^2(4) = 12.270$, $p = 0.013$; Fisher Exact: 12.383, $p = 0.012$).

5. Findings:

The study aimed to compare reading habits between Lebanon and France. At this level of the study, it became evident that an empirical assessment should be made to either support or negate the common statements related to reading habits in Lebanon and France. For this purpose, the findings of this research together with similar results extracted from the literature are used to explain Table 14. Five issues are considered, mainly:

- How much average time you spend reading during a week?
- Why you read?
- Tendency of reading as years go by.
- Books read per year.
- The reading habit.

Practically, Lebanon has a lower average reading time as compared to France as shown in Table 14 and asserted by the respondents whereby Lebanese read about an hour versus the French's 2 hours when asked how much time they spent on reading the day before.
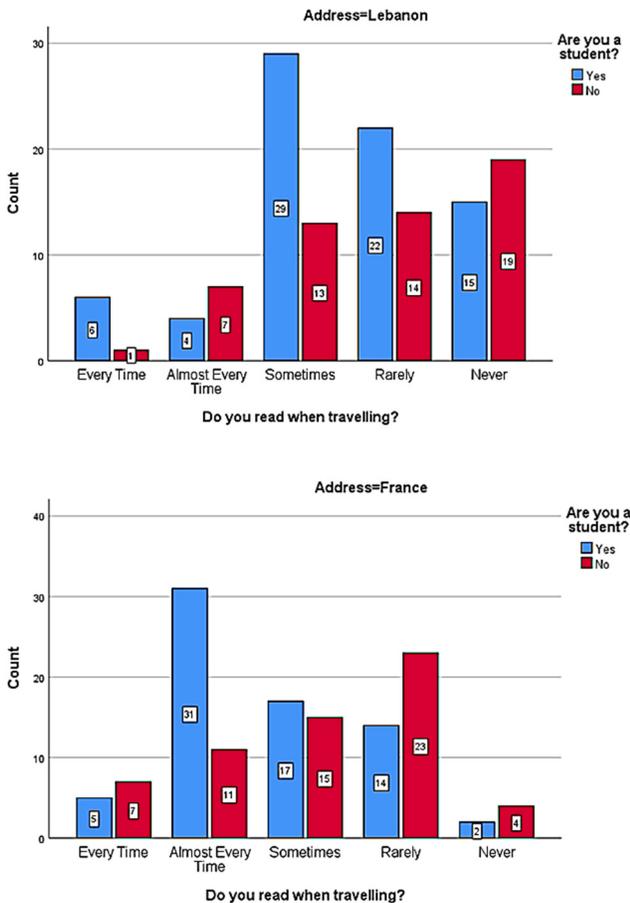
Figure 3. Crosstab results for student status versus "Do you read when travelling?"

Table 14: Reading habits in Lebanon and France

	How much average time you spend reading during a week?	Why you read?	Tendency of reading as years go by	Books read per year	Reading habits
Lebanon (from current study)	62.8% [1-4 hrs] 9.3% [5-8 hrs] 3.1% [8-11 hrs]	58.9% to be well informed and developed. 27.9% for work or school. 10.9% for pleasure	48% read less than last year, 29.1% more than last year.	Mean=19.75 Median=2	11.5% never read
France (from current study)	49.2% [1-4 hrs] 14.6% [5-8 hrs] 21.5% [8-11 hrs]	40.8% to be well informed and developed. 40.0% for work or school. 15.4% for pleasure.	44.2% read less than last year, 39.5% more than last year.	Mean=24.51 Median=5	3.8% never read

compared to the literature show that Lebanon and France are among the group that includes USA (Huang, Capps, Blacklock & Garza, 2014; Perrin, 2016; Hejase et al., 2019) and Portugal (Yubero, Larrañaga & Pires, 2014; Hejase et al., 2019) where the majority of the people mainly read to get informed, keep updated, research a topic, and to be well developed. Another group (Hejase et al., 2019) includes Spain, Mexico, England, Australia and Canada where the majority of the people read for pleasure and entertainment.

As for the general trend of reading as years go by; reported research demonstrates that except for the USA which has maintained a constant reading percentage over the last years (Perrin, 2016), all other countries are suffering from a decline in reading and readers (Hejase et al., 2019; Mexico News Daily, 2016; Rendeiro, 2010; Education standards research team, 2012; Garcia-Delgado, 2011). The share of Americans who reported not reading any books in the past 12 months was 19% in 2011. This hit a high point of 27% in 2015. This year, 24% of America's adults say they have not read any book in any format in the past 12 months (Perrin, 2018). Moreover, considering the number of books read per year by an average reader; Lebanon and France occupy a high position among the countries where a Lebanese reads an average of 20 and a French reads 25 books per year. As a matter of fact, Australia looks to rank first (36 books per year) (Throsby, Zwar & Morgan, 2017) and England goes after Lebanon and France with an average of 10 books (YouGov plc, 2014). Thus, if truth is to be told, on the matter of books read per year, Lebanon and France rank better than Spain, USA, Mexico, Portugal and Canada. Finally, as for the

The findings of this research of reading time for both France and Lebanon is well below the world figures whereby McCarthy (2016) asserts from his research findings that India occupied the first place with an average of 10.42 hours of reading per week, followed successively by Thailand (9.24 hours), China (8 hours), and Philippines (7.36 hours). Further, results of this research when

general reading habits, an estimated 11.5% of the Lebanese and 3.5% of the French residents do not read. This figure is much higher than in Mexico, France and Australia (Australia Council, 2017) but much better than in Spain (40.3%, Federacion de Gremios de Editores de Espana-FGEE, 2018), USA (26%, Perrin, 2019), Portugal (44.8%,

Yubero & Larranaga, 2015), England (18%, Flood, 2014), and Canada (19%, Harkonen, 2018).

6. Conclusions:

The outcomes of this research show that Lebanon and France like many other countries are suffering from the poor reading habits (though each to a different extent); thus, immediate remedial action is needed but more urgently by all Lebanese sectors at all levels. Other countries have put plans to overcome the reading crisis and Lebanon should do the same. Moreover, it is worth to highlight that according to Hanafy (2007), statistical surveys related to reading should be considered carefully in the Arab world simply because respondents seek to present an image of themselves as educated readers, as is the case for the Lebanese where when asked "How much time do you feel should be spent on reading daily?" the response was an average of 135.95 minutes (the French 127.83 minutes) versus when they were asked "Yesterday, How much time did you spend reading a printed or online book/magazine/newspaper?" the response was much less for the Lebanese (66.56 minutes) and the French (121.92 minutes) showing that the Lebanese were unrealistic as compared to the French who almost had similar responses for both questions.

Another important outcome that addresses independent reading concerns as asserted by Martin, Martins and Naqvi (2017) who contend in their research that one major "challenge for independent reading does not feature prominently among social traditions in the Arab region" (p. 3377). More specifically as indicated in Bendriss & Golkowska (2011) that one in four students (Qatari) had not been read to as a child and 28% never or rarely saw their parents read for pleasure. Also, Diab (2015) asserts that, "To become efficient readers requires one to adopt reading as a habit, from primary years of schooling up until high school, and should be an ongoing process" (p. 58). The aforementioned dimension was researched in the current study by asking respondents (Lebanese and French), "Did or do either of your parents read frequently?" "Did your parents read to you as a child?," and "Did your parents encourage you to read when you were younger?" Results showed that 61.5% (Lebanese) and 63.6% (French) of the respondents answered yes, 28.7% (Lebanese) and 33.3% (French) answered no, to the first question. Furthermore, the results that correspond to the second question showed that 69% (Lebanese) and 58.5% (French) of the respondents answered yes, 28.7% (Lebanese) and 41.5% (French) answered no. And as for the third question, results revealed that only 21.5% (Lebanese) and 20.9% (French) of the respondents admitted that their parents did not encourage them to read, while 78.5% (Lebanese) and 79.1% (French) confirmed. These results are highly encouraging, at least to the Lebanese, who are considered part of the Arab world, and as for the French being part of the western world that

is accustomed to the fact that parents read to their kids. The aforementioned results fit the English DJS Research for Booktrust (Flood, 2014) which reveals the "significant" link between a family's reading habits and a child's future attitude to reading, an observation also confirmed by Jordanian researchers Banihani & Abu-Ashour (2015), as well as the concern for the youngsters reading habits in Pakistan (Khan, 2012).

This research has shed light on "Reading Habits" that is considered of high priority for the intellectual health of the society and the "economic, social and political health of a country" (Wijesiri, 2012). "Reading Habits" nowadays is a potential value for the upbringing of the next generations in any country. Therefore, nations across the globe are involved in strategic initiatives to boost literacy and reading among its citizens. For example, the national strategic plan 2017-2027 of Portugal aims among other objectives to "promote reading, as a key competence and an inherent right to the human condition and citizenship" (Republic of Portugal, 2017, p. 12). Further, according to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rachid Al Maktoum quoted in the UAE Cabinet (2017), "A reading nation creates generations that inherit wellness, forgiveness and righteousness. Such a nation faces challenges with hope, perseverance, and determination. A reading generation will be able to build, create and interact positively with their surroundings and the world" (Para 6). As a result, "The Arab Reading Challenge" has been initiated and today, "a record involvement of 21 million children in the 5th edition of the Challenge is taking place including 96,000 schools from 52 countries are participating, marking a 55% increase in the level of participation since last year" (Scene Arabia, 2020).

The outcomes of this research are commensurate with the general objective to assess, explore and compare the reality of "Reading Habits" in Lebanon and France so that generated empirical results may be used to help establish an objective and reliable platform to be used for policy makers in the Lebanese/French governments, educational institutions and academic researchers for immediate management of future programs directed at influencing the status quo of reading habits and to motivate purposeful change for the sake of future generations and the future leaders of the nations. According to Ghriss et al. (2016), "Reading is undoubtedly one of the gateways to knowledge and development. As the extent of reading among individuals in a given society becomes higher, they gain access to better opportunities, more aware about the world around them, and become more capable of engaging in continuous self-learning and self-development." And finally, from a leadership point of view, Coleman (2012) stresses the fact that "business leaders believe that deep, broad reading cultivated in them the knowledge, habits, and talents to improve their organizations" (Para 4), and "the leadership benefits of reading are wide-ranging.

Evidence suggests reading can improve intelligence and lead to innovation and insight" (Para 5).

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