CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at identifying various research on reading habits. Printed sources such as periodicals, journal articles and dissertations were first examined. Electronic resources such as Internet, ERIC database, Proquest Digital Dissertation, and Dissertation Abstracts on Disc (DAO) were consulted. The key words that were used to retrieve the literature were leisure reading habits, reading interests, students, schools, and a combination of these.

Reading is one aspect of education which has received increasing attention in educational research studies in recent years with the wide spread of literacy and the increasing availability of reading materials. The questions of how often and to what effect people use such materials have become important issues in reading research.

Many research studies have focused their attention on the status of reading among the literates. This chapter will describe studies that are categorized in the following sub sections; (a) Leisure reading habits and interests; (b) Home environment and reading; (c) Gender differences and reading (d) Attitude and motivation and reading and (e) School libraries and the promotion of leisure reading.
2.2 Leisure Reading Habits and Interests

Rudman (1957) stated the important role of students reading interests in the learning process. He added that research seemed to indicate the following:

- Interest is a factor which enabled a learner to select among many experiences and to reject some and accept others.
- The presence of interest shows that an intellectual process is taking place.
- Interest indicates a learner’s readiness to learn.

The belief that good reading habits should be nurtured at an early age has led to numerous studies on primary grade children (Krashen, 1996). These studies noted that children liked animal stories, humor, fantasy, fairly tales, and nature stories. Peterson (1981) confirmed that animal stories were most popular with lower grade children. The numerous studies on children’s leisure reading interest seemed to indicate a common trend of interest. Zainab (1977) pointed out that the majority of boys and girls (between ages 11-15) are light and moderate readers. In other words, they read from 1 to 4 books during the specified period. The significant difference between the genders lies in what was read. The boys read more non fiction than girls. However, as a whole, for both genders non fiction reading is less while fiction forms the bulk of what was read. A close look at the titles showed a high predominance of light literature, while others comprises romances, horror stories, and books popularized by the mass media.

Based on his extensive study Reyhene (1998) concluded that when children read for pleasure, they acquired involuntarily and without conscious effort language skills. Bignold
(2003) suggested that they became better readers because of their practice. If children spend as much time reading as they did shooting hoops or watching television, they would be good readers. For children to spend a lot of time on reading, they needed to be encouraged, and they have to find reading an enjoyable and entertaining experience. The encouragement must come from their family, friends, and teachers and the enjoyment of reading depended upon children having access to materials of high interest.

In his research Bullent (2000) investigated reading levels and library usage habits of children between the ages of 11 to 12. The sample consisted of 108 secondary school students in Turkey. He found that:

- Heavy reader reads 24 books or more per year (2 books per month)
- Moderate reader reads 7-23 books per year (one book per month)
- Rare reader reads 1-6 books per year (1 book or less per 2 months)
- Non reader does not read

This research clearly showed that most of the students did not have well developed reading habits. Non readers and those who read only rarely together accounted for 80% of the population while heavy readers accounted for only a small percentage of the population. According to this research, the reading habit was not the only factor that affected the educational achievement of the students.

Ralph (1978) emphasized the leisure reading habit under modern condition of life and highlighted urgent task for the teacher. The teacher must try to develop the habit of reading
for pleasure in pupils and he must control this reading. Most children will read as soon as they can read, and the teacher needs only to put suitable books within their reach.

Process and motivation are intertwined in complex ways. Reading engagement (Guthrie and Wigfield, 1997) consisted both an acknowledgement that reading is worth doing and a belief that the reader has the skills and strategies needed to successfully complete the task. Similarly, a reader’s transaction with a text includes both the content of the text and the difficulties, confusion, and pleasurable insights experienced while reading. If these experiences with literature have been satisfying, the college student and adult reader would seek to read classics and significant contemporary books. In addition to these established purposes for reading, the mature reader would obtain an aesthetic experience and would take pleasure from the writing itself.

2.3 Home Environment and Leisure Reading

Some research specifically looked at the relative importance of different factors on reading development in children. According to Carrel (1968) it was revealed that poor readers may have in common a particular sort of IQ profile. This may indicate a sensory defect a history of poor teaching exposure to unsuitable reading materials or a particular sort of home background. As part of this study when average and retarded readers were matched on intelligence, gender and social class, it was found that both mothers and fathers of average readers read books, magazines and newspapers significantly more often than those of retarded readers.
An exploratory sociological study in Brazil on the influences which produce reading habits was conducted by the Latin American center of research. This study investigated the influence of the family on reading (De Medina, 1976). In this study, fifty families of varying socio economic levels, varying sizes, and with children of different ages were carefully studied, and their reading of various types were analyzed. Several factors emerged as having significant influence on the habit of reading. First was the existence of privacy in which reading could take place. Since reading is relatively a solitary activity, it requires some degree of concentration. This finding was not a surprise. The second was the purchase of books by adults. The third element which was believed to condition reading habits, as measured in the study, was the presence of at least one adult who lives with the family, or who visits the family regularly who reads frequently.

Parental effects on children’s reading achievement are among the most consistent documented findings in educational research. Hess and Holloway (1984) have identified five major kinds of influence namely the value parents placed on literacy, parents ‘pressure’ for academic achievement, availability for reading materials at home, amount of time parents spent reading with the child, and children’s opportunities for verbal interactions at home.

Blackwood (1991) in his study examined how much time college students spent reading for pleasure when they did their leisure reading and whether or not parental encouragement plays a role in their leisure reading habits. The study found that most students did read for pleasure and parental encouragement, occupation and educational status had no significant effect on the students’ leisure reading habits.
According to Criscuolo (1991) parents were extremely interested in the reading achievement of their children. They wanted to know what they could do at home to reinforce their children’s reading skills. Parents are the child’s first teacher, and they serve as role models for their children’s behavior especially as it applies to reading. Building a literate, supportive atmosphere in the home can do a great deal to nurture a child’s attitude and enthusiasm for reading. Wise classroom teachers capitalized on the interest of parents in the reading programme during parent teacher conferences. They can offer concrete specific ways for parents to help their children in reading. The teacher parent approach can yield good results and serve to form a strong home school partnership. Criscuolo pointed out that they have always to bear in mind that any program for improving the reading standards was successful only up to the extent they were understood, accepted and capable of being applied by teachers in the classrooms. Parents could play an important role in encouraging their children to read by providing suitable reading materials and reading stories to them at home.

Goldenberg (1992) saw a positive relationship between the rate of literacy on fathers’ involvement in their reading and their children’s reading test scores. Laosa (1982) found that fathers had greater effect on their sons’ reading achievement than mothers did.

An environment in which parents were seen to be reading and evaluating the activity seemed to exert an influence on the child. However, there was a connection between social class and parental reading in the general population. In a survey carried out by Speddey (1992) in the UK, 68% of professionals responded “yes” to the question whether they had read a book at least once in the last 4 weeks compared with only 42% and 40% of the skilled and unskilled
manual classes, respectively. A study by Goldenberg (1992) had also shown that parental environment was important in determining the extent to which children were positive about reading. The study found that the socioeconomic-status of the child had bearing on his or her ability to read. The labor class environment was acknowledged as having a detrimental effect on a child's endeavor to read. Generally labor class environment have a effect and therefore the incidence of poor reading is very much related to class.

Kather (1996) showed that fathers could have a remarkable influence on their children's literacy and school achievements. The 1996 National Household Education Survey indicated that children were more likely to participate in extracurricular activities, enjoy school and are less likely to repeat a grade if their fathers were involved in their schools.

The role of parents extends beyond reading bed time stories. Parents can influence their children's reading behavior as they grow up to be adolescents. Fink (1999) discovered a connection between those who avoid reading and their reading relationships with their parents. Fink found that popular fiction was a medium of communication for parents and their teens in her study. This helped students to see reading as an enjoyable activity that they could be shared with their parents. It also illustrated the difference between home reading and school reading. Home reading involved choosing texts that were of interest while school reading did not.

Marrie (2002) in his study found that children within the age group of 11-15 years had positive memories of early literacy experience at home. Marrie also found that the majority
of students who have negative memories of their early reading experiences are those in grade 1 and 2. Demise (2001) pointed out that parents role were needed to promote a model and to encourage reading for leisure among their children. Teachers need to be enthusiastic about those children with positive early reading experience at home and continue to promote the joy of reading in school.

A particular parental influence is the expectation of children’s future achievements. A report on intergenerational literacy programme conducted by Nickse (1990) noted that parental attitude toward education and aspirations for the child, in addition to conversations and reading materials in the home contributed more directly to early reading achievements than socio-economic-status. Staille and Brown (2003) found that interest in school readings and a desire for a closer relationship with their children motivated father-child literacy activities. Demise (2001) described a program for improving abilities and attitudes for ‘at-risk’ students. The targeted population consisted of second and fourth grade classes in a low-income community. The problem of low parental involvement, lack of books at home, low motivation and lack of consistency in reading programmes had contributed to the low level of readers.

A very recent survey sponsored by the National Assessment of Educational Program (NAEP 2002) found a relationship between parental education level and students’ reading achievements. Students whose parents had some post high school education were more likely to read for fun than students whose parents had not graduated from high school or had no education beyond high school. It was found that in 1994, 25% of the 12th graders whose
parents had graduated from college and another 22% of 12th graders whose parents had some education after high school read for fun on a daily basis.

A love for reading is more important for children's academic success than their family's wealth and class according to research carried out by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2002). Children from deprived backgrounds performed better in tests than those from more affluent homes if they enjoyed reading books, newspapers, and comic books, in their spare time. The OECD study found that, 15 year olds from impoverished backgrounds who enjoyed reading, scored higher in literacy tests than those of well-off professionals who had little interests in reading. The poorer youngsters attained 540 points in the tests, compared with 491 for the affluent children. 15 year old students who are highly engaged readers and whose parents have the lowest occupational status achieve significantly higher average reading scores than students whose parents have the highest occupational status, but who were poor readers.

These findings are of paramount importance from an educational perspective. It is reassuring to know that while socio-economic background plays a role, it is not a dominant factor. The study found that availability of books at home also played a key role. Students who have access to a larger number of books have a tendency to be more interested in reading a broader range of materials. There was also some evidence that reading newspapers, magazines, articles, politics, and current affairs with their children also helped boost their literacy skills.
2.4 Gender Differences

Differences in the habit of reading between the genders have been reported in many research studies. According to Abilock (2002) girls read books about males or females, but boys predictably choose fiction about males. This same pattern was exhibited in nonfiction topic selection. Although girls read more than boys, they choose narrative fiction and neglect other genres. Simpson (1998) found that sex differences play an important role in reading preferences. His study of junior students indicated that boys preferred adventure and girls at the ages of 12 to 15 enjoyed reading animal stories. Girls are also more interested in stories about teenage problems, while boys preferred to read sports stories.

A survey conducted by Shelly (1999) examined the reading interests of middle school students. This study examined 6th, 7th and 8th grade students in a metropolitan middle school in a southeastern state. Students indicated a strong preference for the humor and horror. They were also interested in mystery, historical fiction, adventure, and science fiction and the non-fiction category of animals. This study showed that there were different interests between the genders. The female students preferred romance, friendship, animal stories, adventure and historical fiction, while the male students strongly preferred the categories of sports and science fiction.

In a study on youth and reading, Moffitt (1992) found that a sport was the preferred activity of both females and males. For females, reading was the third most popular activity after sports and being with friends. Measurement of the favourite types of leisure reading revealed that the romance novel was the most popular type of leisure reading for female students. As
the first choice, the romance novel was nearly 4 times as popular as the second ranked preference which was adventure. Male readers however, preferred different types of books than females. These included fantasy, myth, science fiction and sports as reading materials.

A survey conducted by the Herald (1997) in United Kingdom, revealed that newspapers were popular with teenagers. He noted that 70% of teenagers read newspapers but again there were significant differences between the genders. More than 3/4 of the boys spent an average of 10 minutes per day reading newspapers with the sports pages being the most popular. Only 13% of the boys read the whole newspaper. Only 63% of the girls claimed to be readers of newspapers while 16% of the read the whole paper, 12% used the newspapers for the TV pages and 11% noted the sports section as the most important. The survey revealed that nearly 80% of teenagers read magazines. The average girl spent one hour and 35 minutes every week reading through a magazine and 17% of the girls said that they spent more than 3 hours a week reading through magazines. The survey further revealed that 17% of the girls spent more than 3 hours every week reading the articles in their favourite magazines.

Demise (2001) in his study concluded that a difference between boys and girls reading interests occurs in late childhood and continues through late adolescence. The survey noted that gender is the most influential factor which attains its maximum influence during the junior high school years. As a group, boys of early and middle adolescence prefer books with predominantly male characters, much action, and no sentiment. On the other hand girls during the same period prefer books with romance. The girls at this stage read books written for boys but boys at the same period seldom read books written for girls. However as boys and girls approach adulthood the tendency for girls to read books written for boys disappears.
A research published to coincide with World Book day (2002), found that teenage boys still lagged well behind girls in the amount of leisure time used for reading. The World Book Day survey was conducted amongst two crucial adolescent age groups, i.e. those who have just entered the secondary school system at age 11-12 and 14-16. The vast majority of teenagers do read books for pleasure. Among those who were surveyed, 81% of the 11-12 year olds and 76% of the 14-16 year olds read books for pleasure. Boys in grade 7 (aged 11-12) spent about one hour a week which was less than girls reading books for enjoyment by the time they reached grade 11 (age 14-16), boys read on average, almost 2 hours less than girls a week. Girls aged 11 to 16 were much more likely to read a book on the recommendation of friends. Boys of both age groups were influenced in their choice of reading matter mainly by school. The books they read have either been recommended by their teachers or were found in the school library.

2.5 Attitude and Motivation towards Leisure Reading

Research on the effect of attitude on reading has received little attention. Downing and Leong (1982) remarked that, “very little use has been made in the field of reading research of the scientific concept of attitude”. They added that research related to attitude as well as to other effective and connective factors in reading is likely to yield substantial contribution to our emerging understanding of the complex process that we call reading.

In Smith’s (1991) definition, an attitude is a predisposition to move toward or away from a particular subject. In this case, Gillet (1984), pointed out that both attitude and motivation are
prerequisites to actual reading. If a child has a positive attitude towards books and is motivated (will act), he will want to pick up materials to read. The motivation for reading prompts a reader to read with the intention of realizing certain objectives. This should lead the reader to select the reading materials, which will presumably help him to achieve his purpose for reading. The selection is done perhaps on the recommendation of his or her parents, librarian, teacher or friends.

Lim (1974) in his study stated that the most important motivating factor was self or personal interest. His sample also shows that more females have a favourable attitude towards reading than males and more arts students have a favourable attitude towards reading than science students. The reading habits thus reflect the student’s general attitude towards reading as a function rather than a recreative activity.

Terry (1996) conducted his study on the self reported attitudes and behaviors of high school students in a small southern industrial community. He examined the attitudes towards reading and related the findings to gender, grade, and achievement level. Females reported more positive attitude towards reading for individual development and enjoyment purposes than males. However, both male and female students scored highest on the utilitarian measure, suggesting that they valued reading most highly for the purpose of achieving success at school. Students in grade 12 reported more positive attitude towards reading for individual development than students in grade 9. Students in achievement levels 3 and 4 reported significantly stronger attitude towards reading for utility than students in achievement levels 1 and 2. Students in level 4 had a significantly more positive attitude
towards reading for individual development than students at level 3. In general, students valued reading most for it contributions to school success, least for their own enjoyment and reported low levels of voluntary reading.

Ellen's (1994) study identified that the variables in the home literacy environment of grade 9 students influenced their attitudes towards reading. The sample of the study consisted of 101 students from two 9th grade classes at two metropolitan high schools in Florida. The researcher developed a 30 questions inventory of their home literacy environment. The results of the study indicated that the students' reading attitudes were dependent upon the following variables:

- Being read to as a child.
- Being read to by more than one person
- Public library use
- Receive books as gifts
- Parental book collections
- Personal book collections
- Subscriptions to magazines
- Television watching restrictions

Findings suggested that the literacy environment of the home is an important influence on the attitude towards reading of 9th grade students. It is reflected in their participation in reading and reading related activities’ especially personal book collections and interaction with peers who value books.
Attitude changes towards reading have also been observed. Wiesendanger (1994) noted that student develop more positive attitudes towards reading in schools with Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). Valari (1995) who incorporated SSR in her study found that the majority of students felt that SSR had a positive influence on their attitude towards reading. They had read a lot more since SSR was implemented in their reading classes. This survey indicated that SSR had the greatest positive effect on students of average reading ability.

Beers (1996) observed and interviewed students in two 7th grade classrooms for one year, and identified three distinct types of illiterate readers namely dormant, non-committed, and unmotivated. Dormant readers were those who liked to read and considered themselves readers but did not take the time to read regularly and update their knowledge. For this group illiteracy is not related to a negative attitude towards reading, but rather to outside factors which seemed more pressing, such as sports, social life and school work. Dormant readers would voluntarily read during certain periods, such as during school break or after completing major projects. These students were confused that their teacher believed they had a negative attitude towards reading. Both non-committed and unmotivated readers have a negative attitude towards reading. They don’t like to read and define reading as a skill rather than a pleasurable activity. Beers found that non-committed readers were open to the idea of learning to enjoy books more in the future and may have positive feelings about other readers. The unmotivated readers have no future plans to begin reading and have negative feelings towards people who do read.
In the literature, some researchers have discussed affective and motivating factors that can influence reading engagement. Some researchers assessed children’s attitude towards reading, which is defined generally as an individual’s feelings towards reading. Anderson and Wilson (1988) stated that these feelings about reading influenced the degree of individual involvement in reading. Thus an attitude towards reading is related to individual motivation for reading. McKenna (1994) stated that an individual’s attitude towards reading will differ across subject areas.

2.6 Teachers Role in Leisure Reading

Greanney (1993) suggested that education is not seen as bearing a direct, simple or casual relationship to the reading pattern, but rather as a clue to the social role, which is a determinant of the reading pattern, within the educated population. Perhaps they could be called ‘book-leavers’ and some have been conditioned in school to avoid reading. This condition has not been deliberate on the part of teachers or school authority, but it could have taken place subtly, through peer influence, through lack of appropriate materials in the teacher activity. Panda (1996) has pointed out that ‘it is important for teachers to have knowledge of the reading interests of their students.

Moore (1999) from the International Reading Association asserted that adolescents deserved instructions that would build both the ability and the desire to read from increasingly complex texts. Beers (1996) lamented the child who could read but choose not to do so. Herz (1996) asserted that teachers should consider students’ stages of development and select
materials and methods that support them. All readers moved among a range of stages depending on subject matter interest and individual reading ability and habits.

School is the one place where children have the opportunity to break out of the mold (Zanaria, 1999). In school, disadvantaged students could develop and find the resources to overcome what they lack at home. The challenge to inspire children to become learners and readers falls on the hands of educators. They have to make students aware of the opportunity that has become available with learning and reading. They have to make students aware of what they would lose, if they do not read. Improving reading habits among students is essential to create a learning culture.

Cole (1999) in his study revealed that the students were motivated to read by totally different factors and exhibited their own distinctive literacy personalities. The desire of the classroom teacher then was to become more responsive to the literacy personalities of students and provide a classroom culture that fostered their strengths, honored their voices and met their needs. His study could provide some practical ideas for classroom teachers who are motivated to discover and value their own students’ literacy personalities and promote an intrinsic motivation to read in their classroom. He suggested the following:

- It was crucial to offer students with a rich, array of books that represented a variety of topics, levels, and genres of literature that would to capture students’ interests
- A wide variety of reading experiences could foster engaged reading
• Arranging opportunities for students to be engaged in social interactions was essential.

In a survey conducted by Mia (2002), it was found that, students enjoyed being allowed to self select the reading material they would read for class. She noted that 46% of the students did not mind if teacher selected books for them. These students noted that these books were not picked at random but rather they were usually current titles that the teacher had enjoyed reading.

2.7 School Libraries and Leisure Reading

Quillan (1997) had examined the available evidence from a number of studies on the effect of incentives on reading in school library programmes among secondary school students. Although some studies indicated an increase in reading activity when incentives were used there was no clear causal relationship found in any of the studies conducted so far between the use of rewards and improvement in reading attitudes, achievements and habits.

In 1989 the Asian development Bank recommended the necessity of the school library programmes in Sri Lanka. Its recommendation also consisted of plans to improve students reading habits. Students needed to be given more time and attention to reading under the guidance of teacher librarians. The report also recommended the strengthening of school libraries to enrich the students’ requirements.

American Library Association (2004) suggested that the developing skills and providing experience to select relevant information to share and cultivate the reading habit and to
encourage a spirit of enquiry and independence in learning. Developing the skills needed for the independent use of reading as a leisure time activity. According to Yapa (2002) the school library must encourage the students with a range of materials and activities. Range of reading for leisure material could include:

- Poetry
- Short stories
- Local materials and stories
- Bibliographies
- Tapes stories with text
- Videos

The encouragement activities such as:

- Story telling Reviews ‘book club’
- Local or national library day or weeks
- Reading events
- Story club
- Library clubs and committees

Banda (2000) observed that the reading habit of students in Sri Lanka is not deep rooted. This is primarily due to the lack of proper library support, which is considered the most important instrument that reflects the reading habits among students.

Wijethunga (2000) proposed the ways of promoting leisure reading habits by school libraries. The activities should be integrated as follows:
• Silent reading is the easiest way is to devote daily where students read anything they choose.
• Story telling has proven to be one of the most effective means to instill the joys of reading.
• Literature circle is a more co-operative, responsible and pleasurable climate, while encouraging growth of reading.
• Book share involves social interaction and active participation of students which stimulate love of books among students.

2.8 Summary
The chapter has presented the literature review in five sections this includes (a) Gender differences and reading, (b) Purpose of leisure reading an attitude towards reading, (c) conducive environment and leisure reading, (d) Reading for leisure, (e) Role of the school library reading for leisure.

This study has focused on existing literature of the leisure reading habits in secondary school students in Sri Lanka. A review of literature was carried out to determine and refine the research area, research questions and the objectives of the research. From the various literature cited above, it can be seen that reading research has been explored in great depth in more developed countries. In contrast the same has yet to be undertaken in Sri Lanka. Studies on readers of secondary school students should unfold findings that might prove vital for the betterment of our society.