CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The main objective of this study is to investigate the leisure reading habits and interests among the secondary school students in Sri Lanka. The variables considered are obtained from the literature described in chapter two. This section presents the model, which describes possible factors related to the habit of leisure reading and interests among secondary school students. The model indicates four factors, which are related to reading habits, and the following sub-sections will describe the factors. These factors will be studied with the purpose of relating them to the main issues under investigation. The questionnaire is designed to gather information from respondents concerning their interests and habits of reading and the environment such as their library use and awareness; their home environment; attitude towards reading; their personal variables which contribute to such interest and habit.

3.1.1 Home and Leisure Reading

An environment in which parents are seemed to be reading and valuing the activity seems to be influential for the child. The reading habit cannot be inculcated in a day or a week. Nor can the training of a child in the skill of reading be achieved likewise. A foundation for the reading habit ought to be laid at home. A child remains in the custody and company of their parents till he or she comes to the school going age of
5 or 6 years. So, while the parents have the bigger responsibility of encouraging their child’s reading, they are clearly important socializing agents. Parents who spend time reading to their children give them the best possible start on the road to literacy. The children who do best in literacy skills at school are those who come from homes, where there are books and their parents spend time reading to them, and where children see their parents and older siblings engage in reading activities.

The success of inculcating leisure reading habits is related to the following parental responsibility such as:

- Involvement in the planning of national campaigns to achieve national reading skills.
- Providing the right atmosphere for reading by taking steps in the early years to train the child to love books.
- Creating a learning environment by setting up a mini reading corner filled with reading materials.
- Visiting the library, bookshops and awarding book prizes or giving books as gifts on birthdays.

Reading skills are very important to succeed in school. Reading helps children to develop a love for reading. Parents too can set a good example by reading. Parental effects on children’s reading are among the most consistent findings of previous studies, which have identified five major kinds of influence.

- The value the parents place on literacy.
• Parents 'pressure' for academic achievement.
• Availability of reading materials at home.
• Amount of time parents spend reading with their children
• Children's opportunities for verbal interactions at home.

For the current study the following parental and home variables are considered:

• Parents educational background
• Number of books available at home
• The number of magazines and newspapers available at home
• Parental support in providing and recommending reading materials

3.1.2 School Library Use and Awareness and its Relation to Leisure Reading

The school library plays an important role in promoting students reading interests and the teacher librarian has the responsibility to create an environment, which encourages personal reading for pleasure as well as promote emotional and intellectual development. Encouragement is given by providing a range of reading materials and organizing reading related activities such as story telling.

The school library helps promote among readers a pleasant and positive attitude towards reading. Through reading programmes teacher librarians should be able to:

• Develop desirable attitudes among students towards reading and learning process.
• Introduce students to the library in such a positive way so that they feel confident in their use of the library.

• Give students enough opportunities to broaden their reading experiences and develop their reading abilities.

• Teach pupils how to use of library resources effectively and reinforce with information retrieval skills.

• Emphasize the importance of the library across the curriculum.

• Provide instructions in reading and the use of technology to foster love for reading so as to achieve life long learning, and make informed decision.

For this current study the school library use and awareness refer to:

• Total number of borrowed materials

• Frequency of library visits

• Use of locating aids to locate reading materials

• Awareness of organization of reading materials in the library

• Borrowing pattern

3.1.3. Attitudes and Values towards Reading

The attitude and values here refer to:

• Students attitude towards the school library and reasons for library visits

• Students attitude towards reading as an activity

• Purpose for reading
It is supported that students' attitude and values may be related to students' leisure reading interests and habits.

3.1.4 Personal/ Demographic variables in the current study:
The personal variables that are considered are gender, and students' academic streams.

3.1.5 Reading Interests and Habits Variables
The outcome of home environment, supportive school library reading programmes, positive attitude towards reading and personal variables would help indicate:

- Student acquired habit for reading as indicated by the amount of time allowed to reading outside school hours.
- Students acquired interests for reading as indicated by types of subject and type of stories preferred to be read for leisure.

All the above variables are presented in a model provided in Figure 3.1
Figure 3.1: Selected Variables Related to Reading Interest and Habits
3.2 Research design

This section describes the following research design:

Population and sample; demographic characteristic; survey instrument; administration of the questionnaire; The research methodology was established to achieve the research objectives which is described in chapter one and the data collected was used to examine and fulfill the research objectives.

The study employs the sample survey method using a structured questionnaire that elicits demographic information about respondents, their attitudes and perceptions concerning their reading habits. Wiersma (2000) noted that the survey method can be used to measure attitudes, opinions, achievements or any number of variables in natural settings. The survey method allows generalizations to be made about the characteristics, opinions, beliefs, attitudes of the entire population being studied. This survey method involved the following stages:

(a) Development of the survey instrument.

(b) Selection of the sample of schools involved in the study.

(c) Obtaining consent and support from the relevant education authority.

(d) Piloting the questionnaire to 10 respondents in a particular school.

(e) Distributing the questionnaire to the sample of students in the selected schools.

(f) Analysis of data.
3.3 Population and Sample

The population for this study comprises of Sinhala medium secondary schools in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is made up of nine provinces and twenty five districts. The Western Province comprises three districts. Gampaha, Kalutara, and Colombo. The Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka has classified secondary schools into National, IAB, and 1C schools. This study focuses on ten secondary schools in National, IAB and 1C. The main reason for selecting this population for this study is to represent urban, semi urban, and rural schools. Using a simple random sampling technique, ten secondary schools from fifteen Education Zones in the Western Province are selected. A total of 300 students are identified from the ten secondary schools, comprising those in grade 12 and 13. This included 15 students from each class (both art and science streams).

3.4 The Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was constructed in the form of a structured questionnaire. It began with questions on personal and home background, followed by questions on reading preference and finally by questions on library utilization. As far as possible, questions were aimed at eliciting factual information on the respondent’s behaviour and the subsequent questions aimed at investigating feelings and opinions.

Busha, (1980) showed that the questionnaire as a method of data collection has proven consistently popular and it offered objective data. The instrument used to measure responses in the study is a 30 item questionnaire. In this study preference
has been given to the ‘closed type’ question, as they have the advantage of being easy to answer. Closed type questions also ensure that answers are given a frame of reference that is specifically relevant to the purpose of the study.

Nearly all the questions require the respondents to check the multiple choice statements which follow the questions or part of the questions. A second type of question requires check answers in the dichotomous responses of simply yes or no or not sure. A third type of question is a two way inventory, some times referred to as ‘grid’. This is a simple and straightforward means by which to collect information without having to ask many questions, such as frequency of reading in relation to types of reading materials, and frequency of reading in relation to interest preferences. The other type of check answer requires the respondents to choose from a list of phrases that best represent their individual situation. Questions asking for data on reading selection in terms of reading matter in books and magazines, and preferences of news items, and the library also require the respondents to choose from a list of attitude statements that represents their individual personal feeling on the issues. The questionnaire was originally designed in English (Appendix B) and then translated to Sinhala (Appendix C). Only the Sinhala version was administered in Sinhala medium schools selected as the sample.
Based on the system model the questionnaire aims to provide the following data about the four variables:

(a) **Home Environment**

Home environment is an important variable that strongly influence for the students leisure reading habits. The following home variables are considered:

- Parents’ level of education – question no. 4
- Occupation of parents – question no. 5
- Time spend by parents reading – question no. 6
- Availability of books at home - question no. 9
- Availability of magazines at home – question no. 10
- Number of newspapers bought daily in their home – question no. 11
- Source of reading materials which obtain parental support – question no. 12

(b) **Library use and Awareness**

Library is a core educational center in the school organization. The students need to be aware of the library programmes. The library awareness refer to:

- Frequency of library visit – question no. 21
- Purpose of visiting the library – question no. 22
- Number of books borrowed – question no. 23
- How the books borrowed are located – question no. 24
- Teacher librarians in teaching catalogue – question no. 25
- Awareness of library classification and arrangement – question no.26
- Use of the library catalogue – question no.27
(c) Attitude towards Reading and the School Library

The school library helps promote positive attitudes towards reading. It refers to:

- Feelings about reading – question no. 17
- Who encourage them to read – question no. 18
- Purpose of reading – question no. 19
- Perception of the library – question no. 28
- Feelings about school library – question no. 29
- Perceived problems – question no. 30

(d) Personal Variables

- Gender and
- Academic streams – question no. 1

(e) Reading Interest and Habits

The current status of students' reading interests and habits are gauged by the following questions:

- Perceived self rating of reading habits – question no. 3
- Amount of time spend on reading at home (based on hours) – question no. 7
- Types of materials obtained - question no. 8
- Favorite type of books read for pleasure – question no. 13
- Favorite type of stories read for pleasure– question no. 14
- Favorite type of magazines – question no. 15
- Section of newspapers read – question no. 16
3.5 Administration of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher with the aid of ten school principals after the first term of the school calendar and the mid term break. The administration of the questionnaire, therefore, took place from 10th March 2004 until 25th of March 2004, through ten days, at one day in each school. The researcher was personally present to administer the questionnaire. This was done to overcome any problem regarding the questionnaire and to ensure a high return rate.

The questionnaire was administered to all the subjects in a class at about the same time. The questionnaire is essentially self-explanatory as it contains a short introductory explanation regarding the nature and purpose of the investigation. The subject who had problems in understanding the instructions or was unclear about sections in the questionnaire such as the distinction between text books and non-fiction books were clearly explained. There was sufficient time for the students to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was made as simple and clear as possible in order to ensure maximum co-operation from the subjects, and administered without any problem to the satisfaction of the researcher.

The questionnaire was pre-tested by distributing it to 10 respondents. There are no ambiguities in the questions given and the respondents had no difficulty in answering the questions and statements.
3.6 Data Analysis

The findings are presented under five sub headings based on the research questions. The first part describes the demographic background of the sample and their home environment. The second part considers the habits of leisure reading and third part describes the reading interests among pupils, the next describes the usage of school library and feelings and attitudes about school library. The collected data from the responses to the questionnaire were analyzed; the results were presented in the form of tables. The cross tabulation procedure was computed with the joint frequency distribution in table form and the statistical test of significance used was the chi-square score ($\chi^2$).

3.7 Summary

The study employs a sample survey method that elicits demographic information about respondents and their leisure reading habits and interests. This chapter describes the research method employed in this study. It explains the research design sample instrument, and data analysis.