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The Role of Reading Literacy in Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills in the Digital Era

Lubna 'Ufairoh^{1}, Desti Ana Ananda Kusuma²*

^{1,2}Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Dakwah Mohammad Natsir, Surakarta, Indonesia

^{1*}lubeenaufai@gmail.com, ²destianaanandakusuma@gmail.com

Abstract

Objective: This study aims to analyze the role of reading literacy in improving critical thinking skills in the digital era, which is characterized by the abundance of information flowing through the internet and social media. **Theoretical framework:** This research is based on the concept of reading literacy, which includes the ability to understand, analyze, evaluate, and reflect on information, as well as critical thinking theory that emphasizes the individual's ability to assess the validity of information, identify arguments, and make rational decisions. The two concepts are seen as having a close relationship in shaping individuals who are able to face information challenges in the digital era. **Literature review:** A literature review shows that various previous studies have discussed the importance of reading literacy and critical thinking skills separately. However, there are still limitations to studies that specifically review the relationship between the two in the context of the development of digital technology and the phenomenon of information flooding. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining the relationship between reading literacy and critical thinking skills based on various relevant academic sources. **Method:** The method used is library research with a descriptive-qualitative approach. Data were obtained from books, scientific journals, research articles, and other academic documents related to reading literacy, critical thinking, and the digital era. All data were analyzed through the process of identification, classification, interpretation, and synthesis to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the topic studied. **Results:** The results of the study show that reading literacy has a significant role in improving critical thinking skills. Individuals with a good level of reading literacy tend to be better able to understand information in depth, distinguish facts and opinions, evaluate the credibility of sources, and avoid the influence of hoaxes and disinformation. On the other hand, low reading literacy has the potential to reduce a person's ability to make a critical assessment of the information they receive. **Implications:** The implications of this study emphasize the importance of strengthening reading culture through the family environment, educational institutions, and society as an effort to build a generation that is critical and adaptive to technological developments. **Novelty:** The novelty of this study lies in an integrative analysis of the relationship between reading literacy and critical thinking skills in the context of the digital era, which is still relatively limited in previous studies.

Keywords: reading literacy, critical thinking, digital era, islamic education, digital media

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has brought very significant changes in people's lives. The presence of the internet, social media, and various

*Corresponding Author: lubeenaufai@gmail.com



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digital platforms allows every individual to access information quickly and easily without being limited by space and time. This convenience provides many benefits, such as expanding insights, accelerating the learning process, and facilitating communication [1]. However, on the other hand, the digital era also presents various challenges, especially related to the rapid flow of information circulating in society. The information available does not always have the same level of accuracy and credibility, so people are required to have the ability to sort, understand, and evaluate information appropriately [2].

One of the skills that is needed in dealing with these conditions is the ability to think critically. Critical thinking is a person's ability to analyze information rationally, evaluate arguments, identify facts and opinions, and make decisions based on logical and objective considerations [3]. This ability has become increasingly important in the digital era because individuals are faced with various information that is not necessarily true, including hoaxes, disinformation, and various forms of information manipulation that can affect people's ways of thinking and behavior [4]. Without adequate critical thinking skills, it will be easier for a person to receive raw information without doing the verification and analysis process first.

In an effort to improve critical thinking skills, reading literacy has a very important role. Reading literacy is not only interpreted as the ability to read texts mechanically, but also includes the ability to understand, interpret, analyze, evaluate, and reflect on information obtained from various reading sources [5]. Through reading activities, individuals can expand their knowledge, enrich their perspectives, and develop the ability to connect the various information received. Thus, reading literacy is one of the main foundations in the formation of a critical and reflective mindset [6].

Although important, the level of reading literacy in Indonesia is still a concern for various groups. The development of digital media has changed people's information consumption patterns from in-depth reading to short, fast, and instant content [7]. Many individuals are more accustomed to obtaining information through social media posts, short videos, or news clips without doing comprehensive reading. This condition has the potential to reduce the ability to analyze and evaluate the information received. As a result, society becomes more vulnerable to the spread of invalid information and finds it difficult to distinguish between facts and opinions [8].

Data from the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia shows that the level of reading interest among Indonesians has increased in recent years. However, the challenges of literacy in the digital era still require attention due to the high exposure to information that is not necessarily valid. A number of previous studies have shown that reading literacy has a close relationship with critical thinking skills. Individuals who have good reading habits and literacy tend to be better able to understand a problem from various perspectives, identify the weaknesses of an argument, and make more rational decisions [9]. However, most of the research still discusses reading literacy and critical thinking separately, so a more comprehensive study of the relationship between the two is needed in the context of current digital technology developments [10].

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the role of reading literacy in improving critical thinking skills in the digital era. This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the importance of strengthening reading culture as one of the strategies in forming an intelligent, critical society and being able to face various information challenges in the digital era [11]. In addition, the results of this research are expected to be a reference for educators, students, and policymakers in designing efforts to improve reading literacy that are relevant to the needs of the 21st century [12].

Furthermore, the implications of this study extend across educational, social, and policy dimensions. From an educational perspective, strengthening reading literacy requires a paradigm shift from traditional decoding toward critical media analysis within school curricula. Educational institutions must equip learners with practical strategies to evaluate

source credibility, detect cognitive biases, and actively engage with complex, long-form content. Socially and culturally, fostering a robust reading environment within family units and community spaces serves as a crucial defense mechanism against mis- and disinformation, ultimately strengthening democratic discourse. Policymakers are thus urged to establish comprehensive literacy programs that integrate digital technology into active reading initiatives rather than treating technology merely as a passive medium for information consumption [12].

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative conceptual framework, which explicitly links classical reading literacy dimensions—such as deep comprehension, interpretation, and reflection—with modern critical thinking requirements under the unique condition of digital information flooding. While existing literature frequently treats reading literacy and critical thinking as isolated educational domains or focuses predominantly on technical digital skills, this study critically addresses how deep text-based reading directly conditions an individual's cognitive capacity to process, filter, and evaluate rapid, fragmented digital content. By analyzing this structural synergy within the contemporary media landscape, this paper provides a fresh theoretical bridge and actionable insights for advancing 21st-century educational reform. Ultimately, it underscores the strategic imperative of nurturing textual depth as a cognitive antidote to digital superficiality [12].

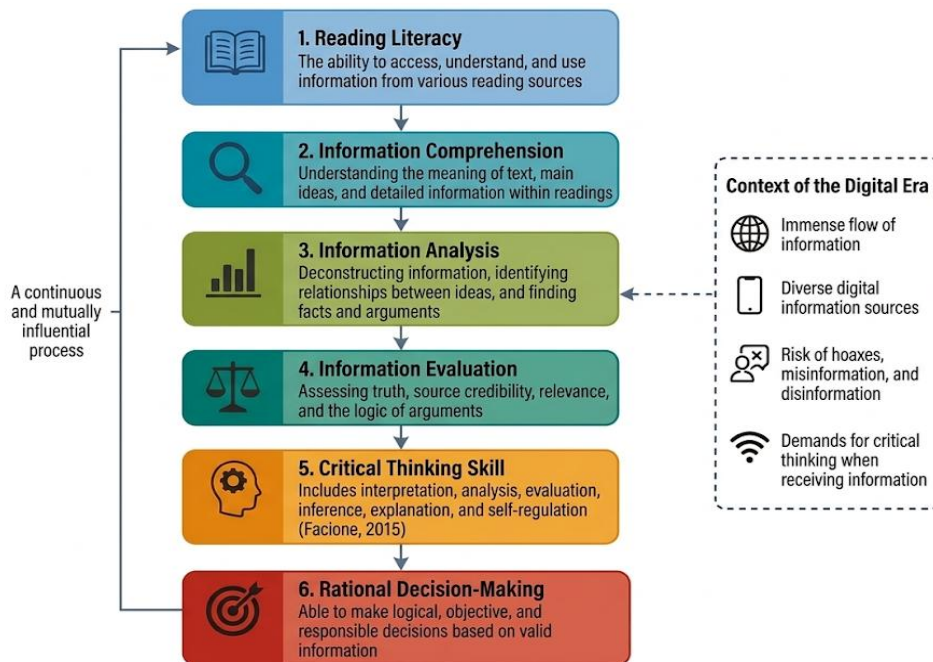


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates a process showing how reading literacy contributes to the development of critical thinking and rational decision-making in the digital era. The framework consists of six interconnected stages that operate as a continuous and mutually influential process. The first stage, reading literacy, refers to the ability to access, understand, and use information obtained from reading sources. This competence provides the foundation for subsequent stages because individuals need literacy to engage with information.

The second stage is information comprehension, which involves understanding the meaning, main ideas, and details contained in a text. Once information has been understood, the third stage, information analysis, enables individuals to examine relationships among ideas, identify relevant information, and distinguish facts from claims. The fourth stage, information evaluation, focuses on assessing the truthfulness and credibility of sources, relevance of information, and consistency of arguments. These processes contribute directly

to the fifth stage, critical thinking skills, which include interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation [13].

The final stage is rational decision-making, in which individuals use evaluated and reliable information to make objective, responsible, and evidence-based decisions. The figure also emphasizes that these stages are not strictly linear. The arrows indicate a continuous process in which each stage can influence and reinforce the others. Meanwhile, the digital-era context introduces a large flow of information, diverse digital sources, risks of hoaxes, misinformation, and disinformation, and the need to remain critical when receiving information. Thus, Figure 1 demonstrates that reading literacy functions as a foundation for developing critical and responsible information practices in society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading Literacy in the Digital Era

Reading literacy is the ability of individuals to understand, interpret, evaluate, and use information obtained from various reading sources. According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) framework, reading literacy includes not only the ability to understand texts, but also the ability to reflect and use information to achieve certain goals. In the digital era, the concept of reading literacy has evolved into the ability to understand information available in various digital formats, including online articles, social media, e-books, and other information platforms [13]. Several studies have shown that reading literacy skills play an important role in helping individuals cope with the rapid flow of digital information. Individuals with good reading literacy levels tend to be better able to understand the content of information in depth, identify relevant information, and avoid misinterpretation of the information received [14].

Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking skills are the ability to analyze, evaluate, and draw conclusions based on logical and objective evidence [15]. Facione explained that critical thinking includes the ability to interpret, analyze, evaluate, infer, explain, and self-regulate. This ability is becoming one of the key skills needed in the 21st century as individuals are required to be able to make rational decisions in the midst of the complexity of available information [16]. In the context of education, critical thinking helps students develop problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills on various information obtained from the learning environment and digital media [17].

The Relationship between Reading Literacy and Critical Thinking

Various studies have shown a positive relationship between reading literacy and critical thinking skills. Reading activities not only provide new knowledge, but also train individuals to understand arguments, evaluate information, compare different points of view, and draw logical conclusions. Therefore, reading literacy is seen as the main foundation in the development of critical thinking skills [18]. The higher a person's ability to understand and evaluate readings, the better his or her ability to assess the validity of information and make appropriate decisions based on that information [19].

The Challenges of the Digital Era to Literacy and Critical Thinking

The digital era presents various challenges in the form of the rapid dissemination of information, the emergence of hoaxes, disinformation, and the phenomenon of information overload. These conditions require the public to not only have access to information, but also the ability to verify and evaluate information before trusting or disseminating it [20]. Strong

reading literacy is an important instrument to improve critical thinking skills so that individuals are able to sort out credible information and avoid various forms of information manipulation that develop in the digital space [21].

Table 1. Literature Review

Study Topics	Key Findings Focus	Reference Source	Relevance to this research
Reading Literacy	Reading literacy includes the ability to understand, evaluate, and use information effectively.	OECD; PISA Framework	It is the conceptual foundation of research in defining reading literacy.
Critical Reading in the Digital Age	Critical reading skills help individuals filter out digital information and avoid hoaxes.	Fauziah	Supports the argument that reading literacy is necessary in the face of the digital age.
The Relationship of Reading and Critical Thinking	There is a positive relationship between reading ability and critical thinking skills.	Fatoni	It is the theoretical basis for the relationship between research variables.
Literacy and Critical Thinking of Students	Good literacy improves students' ability to analyze, evaluate, and reason.	Putri, Agusdianita, & Desri	Provide empirical evidence on the impact of literacy on critical thinking.
Digital Literacy and Critical Thinking	Digital literacy contributes to critical thinking and problem-solving skills.	Cynthia & Sihotang	Explain the context of literacy development in the digital era.
Critical Thinking through Reading	Regular reading activities encourage better analytical and reflective skills.	Cahyani, Hutagalung, & Harahap	Strengthening the argument that reading is a means of developing critical thinking.
Information Overload	The flood of digital information demands the ability to evaluate and verify information.	Various current digital literacy studies	Explain the urgency of research in the context of the digital era.
Research Gaps	Most studies have addressed reading literacy or critical thinking separately, while studies that integrate the two in the context of the digital era are still limited.	Synthesis of the entire literature	It is the basis for the novelty of this research.

Table 1 presents a synthesis of relevant literature concerning reading literacy, critical reading, critical thinking, and digital literacy. The reviewed studies establish that reading literacy involves not only understanding texts but also evaluating and using information effectively. Previous research further indicates that critical reading and literacy contribute to individuals' abilities to analyze information, evaluate arguments, solve problems, and develop reflective thinking. The literature also highlights the increasing importance of these competencies in the digital era, where individuals encounter abundant information from diverse sources and face risks associated with hoaxes, misinformation, and disinformation. Studies on information overload emphasize the need for effective verification and evaluation skills. Overall, the reviewed literature provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding the relationship between reading literacy and critical thinking. However, the literature synthesis indicates that integrated discussions of both concepts within the contemporary digital information environment remain limited, providing the basis for this study.

Research Gap

Based on various previous studies, it can be concluded that reading literacy has an important contribution to the development of critical thinking skills. However, most of the research still focuses on aspects of reading literacy or critical thinking skills separately. In addition, studies that specifically integrate the relationship between reading literacy and critical thinking skills in facing the challenges of the digital era are still relatively limited. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by comprehensively analyzing how reading literacy plays a role in improving critical thinking skills in the midst of the rapid flow of digital information.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a *library research* method with a descriptive qualitative approach. Literature research is a research method that utilizes various written sources as the main data to study and analyze a phenomenon in depth. In this study, the phenomenon studied is the role of reading literacy in improving critical thinking skills in the digital era. A descriptive qualitative approach is used to provide a systematic picture of the relationship between reading literacy and critical thinking skills based on various theoretical studies and relevant previous research results.

Data Source

The data used in this study are secondary data obtained from various scientific sources relevant to the research topic. Data sources include:

1. Articles in national and international scientific journals.
2. Books that discuss reading literacy and critical thinking.
3. Reports of educational and research institutions, such as the OECD and PISA.
4. Proceedings of seminars and other academic publications relevant to the digital era, literacy, and critical thinking.
5. The selection of sources is carried out based on the criteria of relevance, credibility, and novelty of publications, with priority given to sources published in the last five years.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique was carried out through a document *study*. Researchers collected various literature related to reading literacy, critical thinking skills, and challenges of the digital era through academic databases such as Google Scholar, Garuda, SINTA, ResearchGate, and various relevant scientific journals. The data obtained were then selected based on the suitability of the research theme, the quality of the publication, and its contribution to the development of the study being carried out.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out using content analysis techniques. The stages of analysis include:

1. Data Reduction, which is to select and group literature that is relevant to the focus of the research.
2. Data Presentation, which is compiling the results of the study in the form of narratives and literature synthesis tables.

3. Analysis and Interpretation, which is to identify the relationship between reading literacy and critical thinking skills based on findings from various sources.
4. Conclusion Drawn, which is to formulate research findings on the role of reading literacy in improving critical thinking skills in the digital era.

Research Analysis Framework

This research departs from the assumption that reading literacy is one of the factors that affect the critical thinking ability of individuals. Good reading skills allow a person to understand information more deeply, evaluate the source of information, and draw logical conclusions. In the context of the digital era marked by an abundance of information, this ability has become increasingly important to deal with hoaxes, disinformation, and various forms of invalid information. Through the analysis of various relevant literature, this study seeks to explain the conceptual relationship between reading literacy and critical thinking skills and its implications in the lives of digital society.

Research Flow

1. Identify research problems.
2. Collection of relevant literature.
3. Selection and classification of data sources.
4. Analysis of the content of the literature.
5. Preparation of a synthesis of study results.
6. Drawing conclusions and research recommendations.

With this method, the research is expected to be able to provide a comprehensive picture of the importance of reading literacy as a means of developing critical thinking skills in facing the challenges of the digital era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Reading Literacy in Improving Critical Thinking Skills

Based on the results of the literature review, reading literacy has a significant role in improving individual critical thinking skills [22]. Reading literacy is not only related to the ability to understand texts, but also includes the ability to identify information, analyze the content of the reading, evaluate arguments, and draw conclusions based on available evidence. These abilities are the main elements in the critical thinking process [23]. Cahyani, Hutagalung, and Harahap's research shows that reading activities are able to encourage individuals to carry out the process of identifying information, analyzing the content of the reading, and evaluating the arguments contained in the text. Individuals who have good reading habits tend to be able to see a problem from various points of view, resulting in a more objective assessment [21].

The findings are in line with the critical thinking theory put forward by Facione, which states that critical thinking consists of six main components, namely interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. Reading activities allow the development of these six components because readers are required to understand the meaning of information, connect new information dengan pengetahuan, and evaluate the validity of an argument before accepting the information as truth [24]. The results of the synthesis of various studies show that the higher a person's reading literacy level, the better his critical thinking skills are. Thus, reading literacy can be seen as the main foundation in the formation

of critical thinking skills needed to deal with the complexity of information in the digital era [25].

Reading Literacy as a Means of Digital Information Evaluation

The development of information technology has increased public access to various digital information sources. Although these conditions provide many benefits, the ease of access to information is also accompanied by an increase in the spread of hoaxes, misinformation, and disinformation that have the potential to mislead the public [26]. Fauziah's research shows that critical reading skills are a very important skill in dealing with this phenomenon. Individuals who have critical reading skills tend to be better able to verify the source of information, evaluate the credibility of the information content, and identify biases or manipulations in digital content.

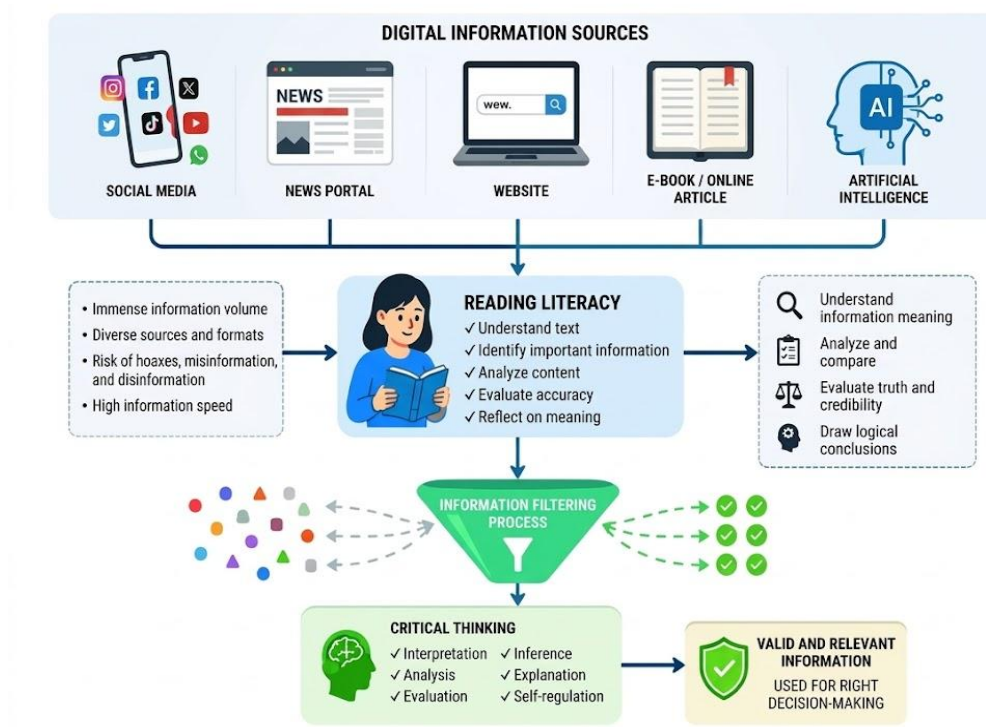


Figure 2. The Role of Reading Literacy in Filtering Digital Information

Figure 2 illustrates how digital information sources are processed to reach valid decisions. Information originates from social media, news portals, websites, online articles, and artificial intelligence. Users face immense volume, rapid speed, diverse formats, and misinformation risks. Developing reading literacy allows individuals to understand text, identify important information, analyze content, evaluate accuracy, and reflect on meaning. Consequently, readers can comprehend meaning, compare data, assess credibility, and draw logical conclusions. Next, the information filtering process refines raw content using core critical thinking competencies. These include interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. Filtering eliminates unreliable data while isolating valid, relevant facts. Ultimately, this systematic cognitive framework empowers users to transform complex online content into actionable knowledge needed for right decision-making outcomes every day.

These findings show that reading literacy no longer only functions as a means of acquiring knowledge, but also as an instrument to evaluate the quality of information. In the context of the digital era, individuals who have good reading literacy skills will not passively receive information, but rather carry out a verification and reflection process before believing or

disseminating it to others [27]. The results of this study show that reading literacy plays a role as an information filtering mechanism. This ability is becoming increasingly important given the high flow of digital information that is often mixed between facts, opinions, and unverified information [28].

The Relationship between Reading Literacy and Critical Thinking Skills in the Digital Era

Based on the results of the literature synthesis, it was found that there was a positive relationship between reading literacy and critical thinking skills. Research by Fatoni (2023) shows that good reading skills contribute to the improvement of an individual's analytical skills, evaluation, and logical reasoning. The relationship can be explained through the cognitive processes that occur during reading activities. When reading information, individuals not only understand the content of the reading, but also interpret, compare the information with previous knowledge, and evaluate the validity of the arguments presented. The whole process is part of critical thinking activities [29]. These findings reinforce the view that reading and critical thinking are two interrelated and inseparable abilities. Reading literacy provides the materials and information needed in the thinking process, while critical thinking functions to evaluate and process the information rationally [30].

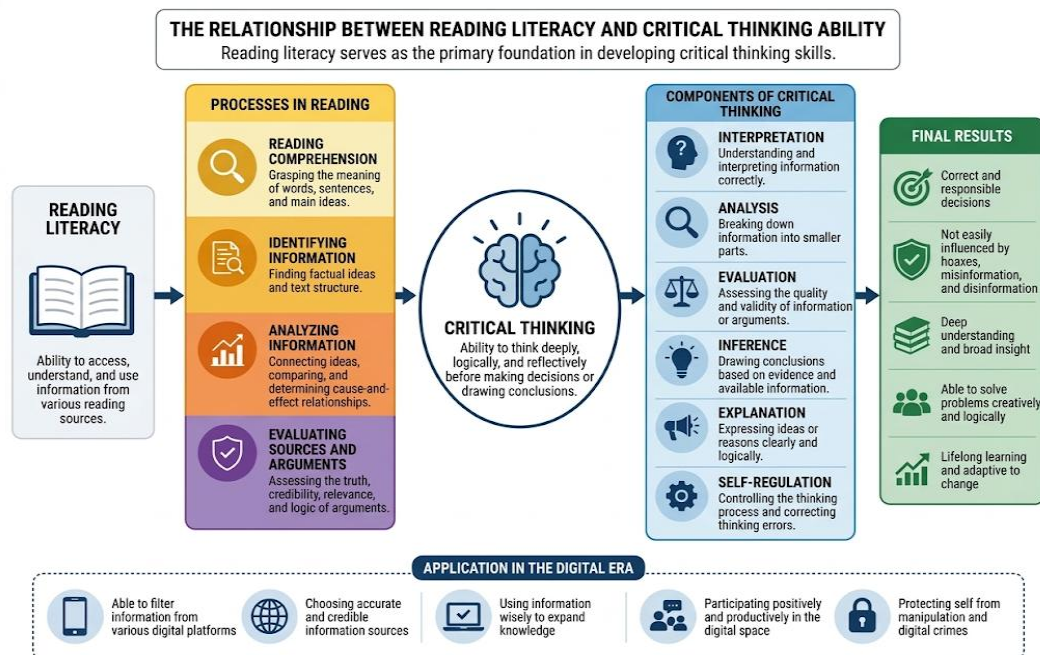


Figure 3. The Relationship between Reading Literacy and Critical Thinking Skills

Figure illustrates the relationship between reading literacy and critical thinking ability. Reading literacy provides the foundation for developing critical thinking through four processes: reading comprehension, identifying information, analyzing information, and evaluating sources and arguments. These processes enable learners to understand meanings, locate factual ideas, compare information, recognize cause-and-effect relationships, and assess credibility and relevance. The concept, critical thinking, involves thinking logically and reflectively before making decisions or drawing conclusions. It consists of interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation.

The process ultimately supports responsible decision-making, resistance to misinformation, deeper understanding, creative problem-solving, and lifelong learning. In the digital era, these abilities help individuals filter information, select credible sources, use information wisely and effectively, participate online, and protect themselves from

manipulation and digital risks. In the context of the digital era, the relationship between reading literacy and critical thinking is becoming increasingly relevant. Today's society is faced with a huge volume of information, and it continues to grow every day. Therefore, good reading skills are an important prerequisite for individuals to be able to choose relevant information, understand the context of the information, and make decisions based on valid facts and evidence [31].

Challenges of Developing Reading Literacy in the Digital Era

Although digital technology provides greater access to a wide range of reading resources, the development of reading literacy still faces a number of challenges. One of the main challenges is the change in people's information consumption patterns that tend to prioritize short and instant content over in-depth reading [32]. Social media, short videos, and various digital platforms have changed people's habits in obtaining information. As a result, some individuals become less accustomed to reading long texts that require concentration and in-depth analysis. This condition has the potential to reduce the ability to reflect, analyze, and evaluate, which is an important part of critical thinking [33].

In addition, the phenomenon of information overload causes people to receive a very large amount of information every day. Without adequate reading literacy skills, individuals will have difficulty distinguishing relevant, accurate, and trustworthy information from invalid information [34]. The results of the study show that increasing access to technology is not necessarily followed by improving the quality of reading literacy. Therefore, a systematic strategy is needed to build a reading culture through formal education, family environment, and society so that critical thinking skills can be developed optimally [35].

Implications for 21st Century Education

The results of this study show that reading literacy has a strategic role in supporting the development of 21st-century skills, especially critical thinking skills. This ability is one of the main competencies needed to face the challenges of life, education, and the world of work in the digital era [36]. Therefore, educational institutions need to develop literacy programs that not only focus on improving basic reading skills, but also on strengthening critical reading skills. Students need to be trained to analyze the content of the reading, evaluate the author's arguments, compare various sources of information, and draw conclusions based on valid evidence [37]. In addition to schools and colleges, families also have an important role in building a reading culture from an early age. Family support for reading activities can form sustainable learning habits and encourage the development of critical thinking skills in students [38]. Thus, strengthening reading literacy can be one of the effective strategies in forming a generation that is able to think critically, adaptively, and responsibly in utilizing information in the digital era [39].

Research Novelty

The novelty of this research lies in an integrative analysis that links reading literacy and critical thinking skills in the context of the digital era [40]. In contrast to previous studies that generally discussed the two variables separately, this study shows that reading literacy not only functions as the ability to understand texts, but also as the main foundation in the development of critical thinking skills needed to face digital information challenges, such as hoaxes, disinformation, and information overload [41]. In addition, this study offers the perspective that strengthening reading literacy culture can be a preventive strategy in improving the quality of community decision-making in the midst of the rapid flow of digital information in the 21st century [42].

The findings demonstrate that reading literacy and critical thinking are closely interconnected competencies, particularly within the rapidly changing digital environment.

Reading literacy extends beyond understanding written texts; it involves identifying relevant information, analyzing arguments, evaluating source credibility, and constructing evidence-based conclusions [43]. These processes directly correspond with the major dimensions of critical thinking, including interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. The analysis also indicates that digital information overload creates both opportunities and risks. While technology expands access to knowledge, it simultaneously increases exposure to misinformation, disinformation, biased content, and superficial reading practices [44]. Therefore, reading literacy functions as a cognitive filter that enables individuals to transform abundant information into reliable knowledge. The findings further suggest that educational institutions, families, and communities should collaboratively promote critical reading habits. Integrating digital literacy with critical reading instruction can strengthen learners' ability to evaluate information, make responsible decisions, solve problems, and participate constructively in society [45].

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the literature review, reading literacy plays a fundamental role in enhancing critical thinking skills in the digital era. Reading literacy extends beyond the ability to understand written texts; it encompasses the abilities to interpret, analyze, evaluate, compare, and reflect on information obtained from diverse sources. These competencies provide an essential foundation for developing logical, objective, rational, and evidence-based thinking when individuals encounter increasingly complex information and problems in digital environments. The synthesis of previous studies indicates a positive relationship between reading literacy and critical thinking skills. Individuals with stronger reading literacy tend to demonstrate greater capacity to distinguish facts from opinions, identify assumptions, assess the credibility of information sources, recognize biased or misleading content, and formulate conclusions based on relevant evidence. Conversely, inadequate reading literacy may increase individuals' vulnerability to hoaxes, disinformation, misinformation, and various forms of manipulation disseminated through digital media. Reading literacy therefore serves not only an educational function but also an important protective mechanism against the negative consequences of uncontrolled information consumption. Furthermore, this study highlights that reading literacy is increasingly important in addressing information overload, which has become a defining characteristic of the digital era. The ability to select, process, verify, and critically interpret information enables individuals to use digital resources more effectively and responsibly. Consequently, strengthening reading literacy should become a continuous and collaborative effort involving families, educational institutions, communities, and government. Educational practices should encourage students to engage with diverse texts, question information critically, verify evidence, and develop reflective reading habits. In conclusion, reading literacy represents a strategic foundation for developing critical thinking competencies required in the twenty-first century. Strengthening reading literacy can contribute to the formation of individuals who are knowledgeable, critical, adaptive, responsible, and capable of navigating complex digital information environments. Future educational initiatives should therefore integrate reading literacy with critical thinking and digital literacy to prepare individuals to respond constructively to emerging social, educational, and technological challenges.

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Author Contribution

Both authors contributed to research conceptualization, literature review, analysis, manuscript preparation, critical revision, final approval, and accountability for the published work.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this research, including financial, institutional, professional, personal, or other competing interests.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI tools were used only for language refinement and grammar checking. The authors independently verified, revised, and approved all manuscript content.

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