

The Influence of Digital Literacy and Reading Interest on Students' Critical Thinking Skills at SMAN 4 Bukittinggi

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Abstract

This study addresses the low level of students' critical thinking skills in increasingly complex digital learning environments. It aims to examine the effects of digital literacy and reading interest on students' critical thinking skills. A quantitative approach with a correlational research design was employed. The participants were students of SMAN 4 Bukittinggi, selected through proportional random sampling. Data were collected using validated questionnaires measuring digital literacy, reading interest, and critical thinking skills. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis, including the F-test and coefficient of determination. The findings reveal that digital literacy has a significant effect on students' critical thinking skills ($F = 79.405$; $p < 0.05$), and reading interest also significantly influences students' critical thinking skills ($F = 3.244$; $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, digital literacy and reading interest simultaneously have a significant effect on critical thinking skills ($F = 64.425$; $p < 0.05$). The Adjusted R Square value of 0.646 indicates that 64.6% of the variance in students' critical thinking skills is explained by digital literacy and reading interest. These findings demonstrate that both digital literacy and reading interest play an important role in strengthening students' higher-order thinking skills. The study contributes to

educational practice by highlighting the need to integrate digital literacy development and reading-habit cultivation into learning activities to enhance students' critical thinking skills in the digital era.

Keywords: Critical Thinking Skills; Digital Literacy; Reading Interest; Secondary Education; Multiple Regression Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The era has entered the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the 21st century. This is due to the rapid development of science and technology in society, both in information and communication technology. Referring to this, education will be required to maintain a balance between technological development and learning. This is in accordance with Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 1, paragraph 2, concerning the National Education System, which states, "National Education is education based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which is based on religious values, Indonesian national culture, and is responsive to the demands of the times." Furthermore, this learning also requires mastery of various skills needed in the 21st century to keep up with advances in science and technology.

One of the skills needed in the 21st century is critical thinking. Critical thinking is one of the skills included in High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). Critical thinking is a higher-order thinking activity that applies rationally through analysis, synthesis, problem identification, problem solving, conclusions, and conclusion by presenting the problem (Prameswari et al., 2018). Another opinion says that critical thinking is a process that leads to mental activities such as problem-solving skills, learning to make decisions, analytical skills and conducting scientific research (Khoiriyah et al., 2018).

Critical thinking in learning is carried out by students who are able to answer questions about how and why by using principles and concepts. Critical thinking skills are the ability that a person has to solve a problem effectively with arguments that can help someone to analyze, evaluate, and make decisions about what to believe or do (Wardhani et al., 2016).

Table 1. Indonesia's Education Ranking According to the PISA Survey

Year of Study	Rated aspect	Score Obtained	Indonesia's ranking	Number of Participation
2018	Reading	371	74	79
	Mathematics	379	73	
	Science	396	71	

The survey results reflect that Indonesian students are not yet able to solve questions that require high-level thinking skills, including critical thinking skills (Putra et al., 2018). This is due to the learning approach implemented, such as memorizing and answering questions, which does not develop critical thinking skills. Because the answers to the questions are easily found in textbooks, students prefer to copy them without using critical analysis.

This may occur because the Indonesian curriculum does not apply Bloom's Taxonomy to the education system in daily classroom learning and is only applied during final exams. However, Bloom's Taxonomy reflects the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) found in C4 (analyzing) and C5 (evaluating).

One reason for the low level of critical thinking is the low participation of the public in digital literacy in using digital media (Kurnia & Wijayanto, 2020). In society, particularly among school-level students, digital literacy participation is relatively low because Information and Communication Technology (ICT) subjects were removed from the 2013 Curriculum in the Indonesian education system, preventing them from mastering digital literacy skills effectively. Consequently, these participants in digital literacy practice primarily use digital media to seek information and rarely engage in critical thinking skills such as analysis, verification, and evaluation in responding to the information and issues they encounter.

To address this, efforts to improve critical thinking skills can be made through reading. Several approaches to improving critical thinking include reading, listening, observation, and analysis (Norhasanah, 2018). Reading activities as an effort to improve critical thinking skills can be achieved through digital literacy.

Digital literacy requires more than just reading skills, but also reading with meaning and understanding the text (Akhirfiarta, 2017). According to Atmazaki, digital literacy is the knowledge and skills to use digital media, communication tools, or networks to find,

evaluate, use, create information, and utilize it in a healthy, wise, intelligent, careful, precise, and lawful manner in order to foster communication and interaction in everyday life (Akhirfiarta, 2017).

In general, digital literacy is defined as the ability to use digital media such as iPads, tablets, gadgets, laptops, and other screen-based media, rather than print (books or paper). Digital literacy does not necessarily replace the importance of traditional (print) literacy as a stage. Therefore, digital literacy is more about the ability to read, write, and analyze digital objects typically presented on screens rather than in print (Hairul, 2017). The availability of various communication and information networks within digital literacy activities can improve students' critical thinking skills, enabling them to respond to information and issues in a healthy and wise manner. Digital literacy provides students with training in analyzing and responding critically to information and issues. Therefore, digital literacy and critical thinking skills are closely linked and interconnected, as digital literacy is a component that requires critical thinking.

Literacy activities can be conducted anywhere, both in and outside of the classroom. Essentially, literacy activities aim to acquire information skills, namely collecting, processing, and communicating information. The ability to explore and find information is a skill that students need to master. The primary goal of digital literacy is to provide students with opportunities to develop themselves as competent communicators in multi-context, multi-cultural, and multimedia environments by leveraging their multiple intelligences.

The most fundamental aspect of literacy practice is reading. Reading skills are the foundation for learning various things (Wandasari, 2017). Reading skills are crucial for students' intellectual growth. Reading is a crucial aspect of the teaching and learning process, and it is also a crucial step in determining the success or failure of the learning process. Through reading, students can absorb knowledge and explore or apply it in their daily lives.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reports that Indonesians have a reading interest of only 0.001%. This means that only one out of 1,000 Indonesians enjoys reading. A separate study, titled "World's Most Literate Nations Ranked," conducted by Central Connecticut State University in March 2016, ranked Indonesia 60th out of 61 countries in terms of reading interest.

Meanwhile, based on a 2020 National Library data study, the reading interest index among the people of West Sumatra (Sumbar) remains very low, at only 9.8 percent. This figure places West Sumatra in 24th place out of 34 provinces across Indonesia. The Head of the West Sumatra Library and Archives Service, Wardarusmen, stated that the reading interest index is assessed based on the number of libraries, books, facilities, and infrastructure. This also includes support for budget policies, regional policies, and community involvement.

A micro-survey conducted by the West Sumatra Intellectual Society (S.I.S) on the reading interests of high school students across West Sumatra Province showed that out of 100 students, 70% read, spending less than an hour a day. This survey further demonstrates the low level of reading interest among high school students in West Sumatra. Reading has not yet become a tradition for acquiring knowledge and information.

The data above shows that literacy and reading interest remain issues that need to be addressed in Indonesia. Literacy and reading skills are vital to human life, as they are prerequisites for a society capable of critical thinking and modernity.

Schools are the primary target for developing critical thinking skills, as they are still in their developing stages and easily accessible. Implementing digital literacy can help students fulfill their responsibilities as learners, as utilizing digital literacy facilitates learning. This is in line with previous findings that digital literacy can increase the effectiveness of learning activities, resulting in improved student achievement through the appropriate and effective use of technology (Wardani et al., 2020).

Digital literacy competency and reading interest are reviewed from the thinking aspect, which is one of the most important things because what is found on the internet will be responded to with critical thinking and critical evaluation and can be applied in life (Sutrisna, 2020). Digital literacy and reading skills must be cultivated from an early age because they play a crucial role in students' lives and have a significant impact on their attitudes and behavior.

SMAN 4 Bukittinggi is one school that has implemented a culture of literacy. Some of its digital literacy programs include a digital library and school television. This program has received numerous accolades, including winning first place and representing West Sumatra Province in a national library competition organized by the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, Jakarta.

Meanwhile, the researcher's observations indicate that digital literacy has not been utilized effectively by all stakeholders in schools. Digital literacy is not yet supported by adequate technology and facilities, including the limited number of digital collections in the library, which discourages students from visiting the library. The internet connection is suboptimal, hindering access. Teachers also rarely utilize the library in the learning process. Furthermore, students' reading skills face several challenges, including a lack of reading habits (literacy) at school, a school environment that is not rich in text, underutilization of the school library, and students' preference for online games and social media.

The aim of the study was to determine how much influence digital literacy and reading interest have on students' critical thinking skills at SMAN 4 Bukittinggi.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a correlational research design to examine the effect of digital literacy and reading interest on students' critical thinking skills (Jailani, 2023). The research was conducted at SMAN 4 Bukittinggi over a specified period during the academic year. The population of this study consisted of all students at SMAN 4 Bukittinggi, while the sample was selected using a proportional random sampling technique to ensure adequate representation. The participants included students who were actively engaged in the learning process and had access to digital learning resources. Data were collected using structured questionnaires developed based on established theoretical frameworks. The digital literacy variable was measured through eight indicators: functional skills and beyond, creativity, collaboration, communication, ability to find and select information, critical thinking and evaluation, cultural and social understanding, and e-safety. Reading interest was assessed using four indicators: enjoyment, time utilization, reading motivation, and effort to read. Meanwhile, students' critical thinking skills were measured through four indicators: providing explanations, building basic skills, drawing conclusions, and making further explanations. All instruments were validated through expert judgment and reliability testing prior to data collection. The data collection process was carried out by distributing questionnaires directly to the respondents. The collected data were then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive analysis was used to present the distribution of scores, including mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation. Inferential analysis involved multiple regression analysis

to test the research hypotheses. The F-test (ANOVA) was used to examine the simultaneous effects of independent variables on the dependent variable, while the coefficient of determination (Adjusted R Square) was employed to determine the magnitude of the contribution of digital literacy and reading interest to students' critical thinking skills.

RESULTS

Simultaneous Significance Test (F Test)

Table 2. F-Test Results

Variables	F-Statistic	F-Critical	Sig.
Digital Literacy	79,405	3,05	0,000
Reading Interest	3,244	3,05	
Critical Thinking Skills	64,425	3,05	

Based on table 2 F-Test Results, the findings can be summarized as follows:

1. For Ha1, the calculated F-value is 79.405, which is greater than the F-critical value of 3.05, with a significance level of 0.000. Therefore, H01 is rejected.
2. For Ha2, the calculated F-value is 3.244, which exceeds the F-critical value of 3.05, with a significance level of 0.000. Therefore, H02 is rejected.
3. For Ha3, the calculated F-value is 64.425, which is greater than the F-critical value of 3.19, with a significance level of 0.000. Therefore, H03 is rejected.

Coefficient of Determination

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0,646	0,417	0,411	4,957

Based on Table 3 Coefficient of Determination above, it can be observed that the Adjusted R Square value is 0.646, indicating that the contribution of the independent variables (X1) and (X2) to the dependent variable (Y) is 64.6%. Therefore, Digital Literacy and Reading Interest have a significant effect on Critical Thinking Skills.

DISCUSSION

1. The Effect of Digital Literacy on Students' Critical Thinking Skills

The results of the ANOVA (F-test) in this study indicate that digital literacy has a significant effect on students' critical thinking skills. Specifically, for H_{a1} , the calculated F-value is 79.405, which is greater than the F-critical value of 3.05, with a significance level of 0.000. Therefore, H_{01} is rejected. These findings demonstrate that digital literacy significantly influences students' critical thinking skills.

This result is consistent with the findings of (Rochmatika & Yana, 2022) who reported that digital literacy has a positive effect on students' critical thinking skills in economics subjects at SMA Negeri 1 Tukdana. This finding indicates that students who are able to effectively utilize digital literacy, when adequately supported, demonstrate improved abilities in understanding both learning materials and the problems presented during the instructional process. Consequently, students are better equipped to generate alternative solutions to the challenges they encounter.

Furthermore, the study conducted by Dhita also reveals that digital literacy has a positive effect on students' critical thinking skills (Dhita, 2021). This finding suggests that students who are able to effectively utilize digital literacy, when adequately supported, tend to exhibit enhanced abilities in comprehending both instructional materials and the problems presented during the learning process. Consequently, they are more capable of formulating alternative solutions to the challenges they encounter. Furthermore, the findings of Dhita's study also confirm that digital literacy exerts a positive and significant influence on students' critical thinking skills (Debby et al., 2021). Digital literacy has become a crucial factor for students, enabling them to confidently process and disseminate information. This variable comprises eight research indicators: (a) functional skills and beyond, (b) creativity, (c) collaboration, (d) communication, (e) the ability to find and select information, (f) critical thinking and evaluation, (g) cultural and social understanding, and (h) e-safety. The findings reveal that each of these indicators contributes to students' critical thinking skills, with a minimum score of 61, a maximum score of 83, and a mean of 73.18, alongside a standard deviation of 3.503. Among the eight indicators, creativity demonstrates the strongest influence (47%), whereas e-safety shows the lowest contribution (0.7%). Thus, creativity emerges as the most influential aspect in enhancing students' critical thinking skills.

Students' creativity can be developed through reading activities, particularly by fostering innovative approaches to reading, such as designing specialized services that enhance reading interest. Continuous encouragement and habituation of reading practices can cultivate a creative mindset. This development occurs when students are willing and able to apply the knowledge gained from the books they read. Moreover, books can serve as references that inspire further development of ideas, ultimately fostering students' critical thinking abilities.

Critical thinking itself is a reflective and rational thinking process directed toward determining what to believe or what actions to take. It is not arbitrary nor does it lead to unfounded conclusions; rather, it guides individuals toward well-reasoned and optimal decisions.

This concept is closely related to literacy skills. Through literacy activities such as reading or engaging with information and narratives, individuals can discover effective ways to solve problems. This process encourages analytical thinking, which ultimately contributes to the formation of a critical and reflective character.

2. The Effect of Reading Interest on Students' Critical Thinking Skills

The results of the ANOVA (F-test) in this study indicate that reading interest has a significant effect on students' critical thinking skills. Specifically, for Ha2, the calculated F-value is 3.244, which exceeds the F-critical value of 3.05, with a significance level of 0.000. Therefore, H02 is rejected.

Based on the findings, reading interest demonstrates a significant influence on students' critical thinking skills. This result complements and strengthens previous research conducted by (Sariyem, 2016), who found that reading interest has a positive and significant relationship with the critical reading abilities of upper-grade elementary school students in public schools in Bogor Regency.

Furthermore, the findings of Shokhibul Arifin also indicate that reading interest has a significant influence on students' critical thinking skills (Arifin, 2019). Reading interest provides meaningful experiences for students. It not only facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and experience but also enhances students' competencies, particularly their

critical thinking skills. Students' critical thinking abilities are fostered through a reading culture that stimulates and strengthens their cognitive processes.

The reading interest variable in this study comprises four indicators: (a) enjoyment, (b) time utilization, (c) reading motivation, and (d) effort to read. The findings indicate that each of these indicators contributes to students' critical thinking skills, with a minimum score of 64, a maximum score of 88, and a mean of 76.09, alongside a standard deviation of 4.813. Among the four indicators, enjoyment demonstrates the strongest influence (52.7%), while time utilization shows the lowest contribution (0.9%). Thus, enjoyment emerges as the most influential factor affecting students' critical thinking skills.

A sense of enjoyment can generate a strong interest that encourages students to engage in reading activities voluntarily. This intrinsic motivation leads to repeated engagement in reading practices. Therefore, fostering enjoyment in reading should be accompanied by the creation of a supportive and pleasant learning environment, as well as engaging collaborative activities. Such conditions can naturally cultivate a reading culture among students without coercion.

Through reading, individuals develop broader ways of thinking, enabling them to connect various aspects of problems and identify appropriate solutions. Students should be encouraged and provided with opportunities to learn independently through direct interaction with diverse sources of information. This process allows them to acquire and expand their knowledge, construct new understanding, and ultimately enhance their critical thinking skills.

Knowledge is largely acquired through reading habits. These habits significantly influence critical thinking, as such skills are often derived from exposure to various reading materials. The more extensive the reading experience, the broader the knowledge base, which in turn shapes and develops one's thinking patterns.

Furthermore, Heny Friantari also emphasized in her study that reading ability plays a crucial role in improving individuals' thinking skills, particularly in fostering critical thinking (Friantary, 2019). Reading broadens one's horizons; with broader knowledge, thinking patterns develop more effectively, and reading proficiency continues to improve.

3. The Effect of Digital Literacy and Reading Interest on Students' Critical Thinking Skills

The results of the ANOVA (F-test) in this study indicate that digital literacy and reading interest simultaneously have a significant effect on students' critical thinking skills. Specifically, for H_{a3} , the calculated F-value is 64.425, which exceeds the F-critical value of 3.19, with a significance level of 0.000. Therefore, H_{03} is rejected.

Based on these findings, both digital literacy and reading interest collectively exert a significant influence on students' critical thinking skills. This result is consistent with the findings of Kholili Zailani, who stated that digital literacy and reading interest play a crucial role in enhancing students' critical thinking, as these skills enable individuals to think rationally and select the most appropriate alternatives in decision-making.

Furthermore, (Simbolon et al., 2022) also confirmed in his study that digital literacy and reading interest significantly influence students' critical thinking skills. Therefore, digital literacy and reading interest need to be given serious attention in efforts to enhance students' critical thinking skills.

The variable of students' critical thinking skills in this study consists of four indicators: (a) providing explanations, (b) building basic skills, (c) drawing conclusions, and (d) making further explanations. The results indicate that each of these indicators contributes to students' critical thinking skills, with a minimum score of 34, a maximum score of 68, and a mean of 55.30, accompanied by a standard deviation of 5.592. Among these indicators, "providing explanations" shows the strongest influence (67%), while "drawing conclusions" has the lowest contribution (0.9%). Thus, the ability to provide explanations emerges as the most dominant aspect in shaping students' critical thinking skills.

A positive emotional state, particularly a sense of enjoyment, plays an important role in supporting students' learning development. Students who experience feelings of comfort, calmness, and enjoyment tend to demonstrate better engagement in learning activities. Such positive feelings contribute significantly to educational progress, as students become more motivated to utilize digital literacy resources and develop an interest in reading various learning materials. This condition ultimately fosters a stronger inclination toward knowledge acquisition and intellectual growth.

The ability to effectively use digital devices as learning tools is an integral component of students' digital literacy. Students with strong digital literacy skills are able to access, manage, and utilize diverse sources of information more efficiently and within a broader scope. This enables them to develop various competencies and expand their knowledge base. In line with this, the findings of Safitri highlight that the development of digital literacy constitutes an essential educational indicator, with significant implications for both social and cultural dimensions in the contemporary digital era (Safitri et al., 2020).

Furthermore, digital literacy that influences students' reading interest can be observed through their ability to operate communication tools and effectively utilize digital media in participating in learning activities. Students are able to search for various sources of information on the internet—such as texts, images, and videos—to better understand online learning materials. This indicates that digital literacy enables students to develop critical thinking skills while simultaneously acquiring knowledge, attitudes, and competencies through learning activities that are more effective, efficient, accessible, and engaging.

Students who possess critical thinking skills tend to continuously question and reflect upon every problem they encounter in order to determine the most appropriate course of action. Moreover, individuals with well-developed critical thinking skills internalize these abilities as part of their character and personality, which are consistently manifested across various aspects of their lives.

Research implications. The findings of this study imply that strengthening digital literacy and fostering reading interest are strategic efforts to enhance students' critical thinking skills. Schools should integrate digital literacy into the curriculum through technology-based learning activities that promote analysis, evaluation, and problem-solving. In addition, cultivating a positive reading culture—supported by engaging learning environments and access to diverse reading materials—can significantly improve students' cognitive development. Teachers are also encouraged to design instructional strategies that combine digital resources with reading activities to optimize learning outcomes.

Research limitations. This study has several limitations. First, it was conducted within a single school context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Second, the use of self-reported questionnaires may introduce response bias. Third, the study only examined two independent variables, namely digital

literacy and reading interest, while other potential factors influencing critical thinking skills were not included.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that: 1) Digital literacy has a significant effect on students' critical thinking skills. Specifically, for Ha1, the calculated F-value is 79.405, which exceeds the F-critical value of 3.05, with a significance level of 0.000. Therefore, H01 is rejected. This indicates that digital literacy at SMAN 4 Bukittinggi significantly influences students' critical thinking competence. 2) Reading interest has a significant effect on students' critical thinking skills. Specifically, for Ha2, the calculated F-value is 3.244, which exceeds the F-critical value of 3.05, with a significance level of 0.000. Therefore, H02 is rejected. This indicates that reading interest significantly influences students' critical thinking skills. 3) Digital literacy and reading interest simultaneously have a significant effect on students' critical thinking skills. For Ha3, the calculated F-value is 64.425, which is greater than the F-critical value of 3.19, with a significance level of 0.000. Therefore, H03 is rejected. This implies that digital literacy and reading interest jointly have a significant influence on students' critical thinking skills. Furthermore, based on the results of the coefficient of determination test, the Adjusted R Square value is 0.646, indicating that the contribution of the independent variables (X1) and (X2) to the dependent variable (Y) is 64.6%.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the significant role of digital literacy and reading interest in enhancing students' critical thinking skills. It also enriches the literature by integrating these variables within an educational context, particularly in secondary education, and offers a comprehensive analytical model using multiple regression.

Future researchers are recommended to expand the scope of the study by including larger and more diverse samples across different educational levels. Additionally, incorporating other variables such as learning motivation, teaching methods, or socio-cultural factors may provide a more comprehensive understanding. The use of mixed methods or experimental designs is also suggested to obtain deeper insights and establish causal relationships.

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