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The Role of Library Management in Supporting Students' Literacy and Critical Thinking

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Abstract: This study aimed to explore in depth the strategic role of school library management in supporting the development of literacy and critical thinking skills of students. This study was conducted through a comprehensive literature study, by analyzing various scientific sources such as academic journals, reference books, and relevant national education policy documents. The results of the study indicate that school libraries that are managed professionally and systematically are able to become effective learning resource centers, and make significant contributions to creating a conducive literary environment for active learning and the development of high-level thinking. Several managerial aspects that have been proven to have an important role include the management of relevant and actual collections, the use of information technology in library services, and increasing the capacity and competence of librarians as literacy facilitators. With proper management, the library not only functions as a place to store books, but also as a learning space that supports the achievement of 21st century education goals, especially in fostering students' information literacy and critical thinking skills. These findings emphasize the need to strengthen the function of libraries in the education ecosystem through supportive policies and managerial practices that are adaptive to the times.

Keywords: Critical thinking, literature review, literacy, library management.

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INTRODUCTION

In the Globalization and information era, literacy and critical thinking skills are essential skills that must be possessed by students. These literacy and critical thinking skills should be possessed by every student (Anisa, et. al., 2021). To support 21st century learning, literacy and critical thinking skills are the main things, so they need to be improved and cultivated. Furthermore, the school library, as one of the centers of learning resources, has a strategic role in supporting the development of these two competencies (S & Adityarini, 2024). The existence of a library is very necessary for educational institutions from elementary to higher levels, because with the existence of a library, students can easily find references for each curriculum material taught by their teachers or lecturers to further

broaden their knowledge of the courses they receive (Hidayah, et. al., 2024). In the library, students can more easily collect information about various disciplines, as long as the library is ideal and can provide books in accordance with the learning environment of the institution (Sari, et. al., 2022). School libraries have an important role in improving student literacy, but often face challenges in the form of limited facilities and access to adequate reading materials (Krashen, 2004). These limitations make the role of libraries minimal, even less popular, even though they can support the development of literacy and critical thinking in the digital era (Wasilah, et. al., 2025). However, this role can only be realized if it is supported by effective library management that is responsive to the needs of students and the curriculum (Nurmayuli & Zuhra, 2023).

Educational transformation also emphasizes the importance of critical thinking skills, namely high-level thinking skills that include the ability to evaluate arguments, solve problems, and make reasoned decisions. In this context, students are required to not only be consumers of information, but also to become producers of knowledge who are able to select and verify information independently. With the use of appropriate technology, libraries not only function as places to store books, but also as centers of literacy that are adaptive to the development of the times (Sari, et. al., 2022). In the long term, this effort is expected to create a literate, creative generation that is ready to face global challenges. Meanwhile, to realize literate and critical learning, support is needed from various elements of education, one of which is the school library. A library that has adequate facilities and infrastructure and is managed professionally can become a center for learning resources that can foster a culture of literacy and critical thinking among students (Rahmadani, et. al., 2025). By providing a variety of reading materials, accessible information services, and well-designed literacy activities, libraries have the potential to become strategic partners in the 21st century learning process (Sari, et. al., 2022).

Considering the importance of the existence of school libraries as a source of learning for students, their existence will be useless without planned management and good administration (Nurmayuli & Zuhra, 2023). Library management is an effort to empower existing resources, including human resources and infrastructure (Juldial & Haryadi, 2024). This means that motivation to work together is an important part of a program for efficient and effective activities. This can be achieved through well-established cooperation through infrastructure such as unique facilities and resources. Therefore, it needs to be managed in the form of a library program that is realized and structured.

Research conducted by Sari (2022) stated that the library revitalization program at SDN Sukamulya 01 has succeeded in creating a comfortable and functional library on the 2nd floor, replacing the space previously used as a warehouse. Through the creation of bookcases, physical renovation of the library space, procurement of new books, and installation of dream boards, this program has created a conducive and attractive learning environment. These steps significantly increase students' interest in reading and support the development of their literacy skills. Library management training for teachers and school staff has succeeded in increasing the capacity to manage the library. All of these achievements show that the library has become a dynamic literacy center, playing an important role in building a culture of literacy and interactive learning in the school community. The success of this program opens up opportunities for sustainability and further development. Schools are advised to continue to prepare human resources (HR) through further training for teachers and library staff so that they can manage the library more effectively and innovatively. In addition, efforts need to be made to build awareness among all parties in the school regarding the importance of supporting literacy programs.

This is in line with research conducted by Hasriani (2025), the library at SMK Negeri 12 Kolaka plays an important role in improving the quality of education and student learning achievement. The existence of libraries that continue to grow despite challenges in their management, shows that libraries are one of the important components in supporting the teaching and learning process. Libraries provide invaluable learning resources for students and teachers, which are very important in improving reading, writing, critical

thinking, and communication skills. However, the development of library facilities and infrastructure is still a challenge that needs to be addressed immediately so that facilities can support the optimization of library functions in supporting the learning process.

In addition, research conducted by Nurmayuli (2023) showed that the planning carried out by the library in improving student literacy at MAN 1 Lhokseumawe, with a strategy of habituating reading to all students, forming a literacy club and participating in planned programs such as book reviews, seminars, discussions and also public speaking that support improving student literacy was very good and in accordance with the planning that has been designed. In implementing programs in the process of improving student literacy, all elements in the madrasah are involved, with the person in charge of the literacy club mentor who has been agreed upon. Meanwhile, this study will explore in depth the strategic role of school library management in supporting the development of literacy and critical thinking skills of students.

METHODS

This study was a library research which aims to analyze in depth the role of library management in supporting the development of literacy and critical thinking skills of students. The literature review was conducted by tracing and reviewing various relevant scientific sources, such as national and international journals, reference books, research reports, and educational policy documents related to library management, literacy, and critical thinking. The type of research was descriptive qualitative based on literature review, which aims to explore concepts, findings, and theoretical and practical perspectives from various library sources, to formulate a comprehensive understanding of the topic being studied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Libraries have a very important role in supporting the educational process in schools, especially in efforts to improve the quality of student learning (Intelek, et. al., 2025). As a learning resource center, the library not only provides reading materials, but also creates an environment that supports independent learning, literacy development, and the improvement of critical thinking skills. In order to carry out its functions optimally, the library requires an effective and focused management system. The concept of library management includes a series of activities that include planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising all library resources, whether in the form of library material collections, manpower, physical facilities, or service programs offered (Sma & Berau, 2025). Therefore, effective library management is characterized by a clear vision and mission, the application of the principle of user-centered services, and the implementation of regular evaluations of service performance and collection relevance.

Effective library management is characterized by a clear vision and mission that is in line with the educational goals of the educational unit (Anisa, et. al., 2021). This vision and mission are the basis for the direction of library development in supporting learning and developing students' potential. In addition, the application of the principle of user-centered services is a key aspect that places students, teachers, and education personnel at the center of all library service policies and activities. This includes the selection of collections that are in accordance with students' interests and learning needs, the provision of facilities that support comfort and accessibility, and the development of digital services that are adaptive to the development of information technology (Mustika, et. al., 2025). Responsive management also involves conducting regular evaluations of service performance and the relevance of available collections. This evaluation includes not only the number of visits and book circulation, but also the effectiveness of literacy programs, user satisfaction, and the extent to which the library contributes to the achievement of learning objectives. With systematic evaluations, library managers can identify strengths and weaknesses in

management, and make continuous improvements. It can be said that professional and directed library management not only supports the sustainability of library functions, but also becomes an important foundation in creating a learning environment that supports the development of literacy and critical thinking of students.

A professionally managed school library will be able to become a driving force in strengthening a culture of literacy and meaningful learning in the educational environment (Rahmadani, et. al., 2025). School libraries play a central role in supporting the development of student literacy by providing diverse and contextual reading materials, ranging from fiction and non-fiction books, popular scientific articles, to various types of digital media that are relevant to students' learning needs (Swandari & Jemani, 2023). They also states that the diversity of this collection is an important foundation in forming reading interests and sustainable learning habits. In addition, the library is also a space for implementing various literacy activities such as joint reading programs, book clubs, creative writing competitions, literacy discussions, and community-based literacy projects that actively involve students. These activities not only encourage emotional and intellectual student involvement, but also train the ability to understand, assess, and interpret information from various sources critically. Thus, libraries play a strategic role in supporting the achievement of 21st century education goals, namely producing a generation that is literate, reflective, and adaptive to changes in the times.

Literacy and the Role of Libraries

Literacy in the context of modern education is no longer limited to basic reading and writing skills alone, but includes more complex abilities, such as understanding, evaluating, and using information effectively in various life situations (OECD, 2019). It also includes digital, visual, numeracy, and media literacy dimensions, all of which are important to equip learners to face the challenges of the 21st century. In this framework, literacy is understood as a set of competencies that enable individuals to think critically, communicate effectively, and make informed decisions based on valid information. Therefore, developing literacy is not only the responsibility of teachers in the classroom, but also requires support from various elements in the educational environment, including the school library (Sari, et. al., 2022). It can be said that literacy is a basic skill that is cross-disciplinary, so its development must be carried out comprehensively and continuously through various approaches and collaborations. School libraries have a strategic role in this regard, because they provide access to various sources of information that can enrich knowledge, broaden horizons, and encourage students' interest in reading.

Libraries can be active partners with teachers in designing literacy-based learning activities, such as integrated reading projects, simple research, and literature exploration that supports the curriculum (Apriyanti, et. al., 2023). With the support of librarians who have pedagogical and information literacy competencies, the library is not only a complement to learning, but also a center for developing students' independent learning competencies. Therefore, synergy between teachers, librarians, principals, and parents is very necessary so that literacy programs can be run effectively and efficiently. In this framework, the library not only functions as an information provider, but also as an agent of change in forming a strong literacy culture in the school environment. Sulistyowati (2013) said that libraries play a strategic role in supporting the strengthening of student literacy by providing access to various sources of credible and relevant information. Through collections of books, magazines, scientific articles, digital sources, and online platforms, libraries provide space for students to develop reading interests while practicing critical and reflective thinking skills.

At last, the library is also a place where various literacy programs are designed to increase active student involvement, such as regular reading programs, digital literacy classes, information search training, and book discussions and reviews. Thus, the library not only functions as a repository of knowledge, but also as a center for developing contextual and applicable literacy skills (Sari, et. al., 2024). When managed professionally and based

on student needs, libraries can be a major catalyst in forming a strong and sustainable literacy culture in the school environment. Activities such as literacy debates, reflective writing, and research-based essay writing assignments are examples of learning practices that can be supported by libraries in forming critical thinking habits among students (Rahmadani, et. al., 2025).

Critical Thinking and the Role of Libraries

Critical Thinking is the ability to analyze, evaluate, and conclude information logically. Libraries that provide valid sources of information and support discussion activities or reflective writing can facilitate the development of this ability (Intelek, et. al., 2025). It is one of the essential skills in 21st century education, which includes the ability to analyze information objectively, evaluate arguments logically, draw appropriate conclusions, and make decisions based on evidence and rational thinking. This ability is not only important in academic contexts, but also in everyday life, where individuals are required to filter complex and diverse information before taking action. Therefore, the development of critical thinking is one of the main goals in a holistic and meaningful education process.

Then, the school library has a very strategic role as a facilitator in developing students' critical thinking skills. A well-managed library not only provides access to various valid and reliable sources of information, such as scientific books, journal articles, encyclopedias, and digital sources, but also creates an intellectual space that encourages exploration and reflection. Through literacy activities such as book discussions, scientific debates, reading reviews, essay writing, and small research projects, students are given the opportunity to hone their abilities in understanding, criticizing, and conveying ideas in a structured manner.

Next, libraries can also provide information literacy training that equips students with skills in assessing the credibility of sources, distinguishing between facts and opinions, and recognizing bias or false information. Thus, libraries not only function as information providers, but also as active learning spaces that foster a culture of critical thinking among students. When supported by competent librarians and programs that are integrated with the curriculum, libraries can be an important catalyst in producing a generation of critical, independent, and intellectually responsible learners.

School libraries can also facilitate the development of critical thinking skills by providing credible sources of information, open discussion spaces, and collaborative learning activities. School libraries have great potential in facilitating the development of students' critical thinking skills through various strategic approaches. One of the main ways is by providing access to credible, current, and diverse sources of information, both in print and digital form. The availability of rich and relevant reading materials allows students to explore various perspectives, compare arguments, and build a deeper understanding of an issue or topic. By providing reliable sources, libraries help students not only passively receive information, but also test the validity and logic of the information they obtain.

In addition to providing information resources, school libraries can also be open spaces that encourage intellectual interaction through discussion forums, debates and reflective dialogue (Aryani & Purnomo, 2023). This discussion room provides an opportunity for students to express their opinions, listen to other people's points of view, and practice their ability to convey and defend arguments logically and politely. This kind of discussion is very effective in fostering critical thinking patterns because it encourages students to evaluate information in more depth, and consider various possibilities in solving problems to express opinions, listen to other people's points of view, and practice their ability to convey and defend arguments logically and politely (Sani & Al-Qadri, 2024).

Furthermore, libraries can also develop collaborative learning activities, such as group research projects, literacy clubs, creative writing classes, or text analysis workshops. These activities not only encourage collaboration between students, but also hone their skills in formulating questions, formulating hypotheses, seeking evidence, and conveying findings and opinions argumentatively. In a collaborative and exploration-based learning

atmosphere, students are more encouraged to think reflectively, openly, and critically about the various information they encounter. Therefore, libraries that are managed with a participatory approach and oriented towards the formation of 21st century skills can be a very effective space in growing and developing students' critical thinking skills in a sustainable manner (Harumningtyas, 2022).

Programs such as debate clubs, mini-research projects, and reflective writing play an important role in stimulating students to develop higher-order thinking skills. Through debate clubs, students are encouraged to explore current issues, analyze various points of view, and construct and defend arguments logically and systematically. These activities require careful assessment of information, courage in expressing opinions, and openness to criticism, all of which are key components of critical thinking. Meanwhile, mini-research projects provide space for students to formulate questions, collect data, interpret findings, and draw conclusions based on valid evidence. This process directly trains investigative, analytical, and reflective skills that are essential for meaningful learning.

On the other hand, reflective writing activities allow students to reflect deeply on their learning experiences, relate new knowledge to previous understanding, and structure their thoughts in a structured and meaningful way. Facione (2011) emphasized that the ability to think critically involves the skills of evaluating information, making reasonable inferences, and constructing and defending arguments based on logical reasoning. This means that the integration of these programs in library literacy activities and classroom learning can provide real contributions in fostering critical thinking patterns among students. When supported by an open learning environment and adequate resources, these programs will be even more effective in shaping students into active, reflective, and resilient learners in the face of intellectual challenges. In addition, libraries can also work with teachers to design assignments that integrate information literacy and critical thinking skills into the subject matter (Swandari & Jemani, 2023).

Libraries can also work with teachers to design learning tasks that integrate information literacy and critical thinking skills in each subject. This collaboration is important so that the library is not just a place to borrow books, but also an active part of the meaningful learning process. Through this collaboration, teachers and librarians can design learning activities that encourage students to search for, evaluate, and interpret information from various sources critically. For example, in Social Sciences subjects, students can be asked to research social issues by utilizing the collection of books and digital articles available in the library, then develop arguments based on the data found.

In language subjects, for example, essay or report writing assignments can be linked to reading sources provided by the library, so that students are accustomed to citing, referencing, and evaluating the reliability of information. This approach also encourages students to not only receive information passively, but also to process it reflectively and logically. Thus, the library and teachers act as facilitators who guide students to build information literacy and critical thinking skills simultaneously. This partnership is in line with the principles of 21st century learning that emphasize collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking as the main competencies that students must have.

It is increasingly evident that library management plays a vital role in supporting the development of students' literacy and critical thinking skills (Sari, et. al., 2022). School libraries no longer function only as a place to store books, but have transformed into a center for learning resources that are oriented towards developing 21st century competencies. This means that increasing managerial capacity in library management is very important, including strategic planning, organizing resources, developing services based on student needs, and evaluating programs on an ongoing basis.

In addition, strengthening collaboration between principals, teachers, librarians, and parents is a synergistic step that can strengthen the role of libraries as centers of school literacy. The active involvement of all stakeholders will encourage the formation of a learning ecosystem that supports the growth of a culture of literacy and critical thinking. Furthermore, the integration of literacy programs and critical thinking development

activities into the school curriculum, both intra and extracurricular, is a key strategy in making libraries an integral part of the learning process. With supportive policies, librarian training, and the use of information technology, school libraries can contribute significantly to forming a generation of literate, reflective learners who are ready to face global challenges.

CONCLUSION

Effective library management plays a strategic role in supporting the development of literacy and critical thinking skills of students. In the context of 21st century education, literacy does not only include the ability to read and write, but also includes the skills to understand, evaluate, and use information from various sources effectively. School libraries, through professional management and responsiveness to student needs, are able to become dynamic literacy centers by providing credible sources of information, access to digital media, and various programs that encourage active student involvement.

More than just a place to store books, the library serves as an intellectual space that allows students to develop reading interests, reflective skills, and high-level thinking skills. Activities such as book discussions, scientific debates, essay writing, and small research projects are important means facilitated by the library to train critical thinking skills. In addition, the library also helps students in assessing the validity of information, distinguishing facts and opinions, and understanding different perspectives, all of which are integral parts of critical thinking. Thus, it can be concluded that a well-managed school library with the support of competent librarians, relevant collections, and integrated literacy programs has great potential as a catalyst in building a culture of literacy and critical thinking among students. The library is not only a complement to the education ecosystem, but an important pillar in realizing a meaningful, contextual learning process that is oriented towards the development of 21st century competencies.

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