



The Relationship Between Reading Culture and Critical Thinking Skills of High School Students

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Abstract: Background Reading culture has an important role in developing students' critical thinking skills, as reading activities can broaden their horizons and improve their analytical skills. By reading regularly, students can train their brains to think more sharply and structurally, thus improving the quality of their critical thinking. This study aims to collect empirical evidence or facts regarding the relationship between reading culture and critical thinking skills. The participants in this study were 77 students. This research design uses a quantitative approach with a correlational method. Data analysis was done using the Pearson correlation test. The results showed a highly significant relationship with a positive correlation level of 0.976, a very strong correlation, and a 95% confidence interval between 0.80 and 1.000. This study concludes that reading culture and students' critical thinking skills have a positive and significant relationship. The findings indicate that improving reading culture among students can contribute to developing their critical thinking skills, which has important implications for educational practices in improving the quality of learning in secondary schools.

Keywords: critical thinking skills, reading culture

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INTRODUCTION

One sign that Indonesian education has failed to generate a generation of self-sufficient learners is the poor quality of the country's human resources. Since learning determines the extent to which a person changes after following the process of learning in lectures, learning will have the power to alter a person (Narca & Caballes, 2021). A person who undergoes the learning process will undoubtedly have an independent spirit since learning can alter attitudes and enable one to stand alone. When someone's mindset changes, they become capable of learning independently without assistance from others. A noble culture will produce a high standard of living. The cultural accomplishments of a country are the foundation of its noble civilization. A scientific tradition fostering the growth of individual qualities through religious and cultural values is the single most significant element in the nation's civilization; society does not forget the religion, norms, morals, and values it values (Damaianti et al., 2017). Compared to people or groups with low reading proficiency, literacy skills in academia promote scientific advancement, which means that each person's reading and level of solution, particularly in solving problems in their lives, will be higher (Yulianingsih et al., 2024). In a strong reading culture, reading is more than just a passive pastime; it is a means to improve the quality of life, shape character, and encourage innovation and creativity. Establishing a good reading culture requires an important role from the government, educational institutions, and the community to provide easy access to books and useful reading materials (Kovalova & Shalman, 2024).

People believe reading is essential for personal growth and development in a world that is constantly changing. It plays a significant role in developing a person's emotional, cultural, educational, and psychological facets of life. Establishing reading habits early on is anticipated to enable the kid to turn to books or other reading materials for comfort, support, and encouragement when dealing with real-life issues like boredom and frustration (Samuel, 2022). As a result, the reader, the text, and the context all work together to create meaning when reading. Students who cultivate positive attitudes are more likely to have a positive reading culture. A person's passion for reading does not emerge overnight; it grows over time based on factors like time, context, goal, and reading materials. The reader's experience could be included in the context (Debrah & Baah, 2023). In addition, an effective reading culture improves academic performance by teaching pupils new vocabulary and structures, linguistic and literary topic understanding, and necessary abilities. The assertion is consistent with Ramolula and Nkoane (2023), who claim that a reading culture fosters lifelong learning abilities, including critical thinking and problem-solving skills, enhancing pupils' necessary abilities. The reading habit of school students does not occur on its own. A person's reading habits are significantly influenced by their surroundings. Various

factors, such as family, friends, and school, influence good reading habits. The closest of these three environments is family, which significantly impacts one's reading habits (Darmawan et al., 2024). Schools play a critical role in helping kids develop their cultural literacy. Because that school has to be able to help pupils build their skills and abilities in literacy activities. According to Article 4, paragraphs 3 to 5 of System Law Education National No. 20 of 2003, education is seen as a process of civilization and empowerment for participants who continue studying. Because of this regulation, the government mandates that schools implement a literacy movement program, which is carried out with the goal of increasing interest in reading and educating participants (Prasetia & Adlan, 2022). Reading is the process of interpreting written symbols or the reader's capacity to comprehend the writer's meaning. Accordingly, reading is a process of looking for fresh concepts, solace, or knowledge to meet a particular need; it can also assist people in learning certain words, their pronunciations, and how to use them generally (Samuel, 2022).

Reading is a conscious effort to comprehend and acquire knowledge. It is also a deliberate, methodical job of acquiring accurate knowledge aimed toward a criterion. Reading is essential to a literate person's everyday existence and a student's scholastic progress. A person cannot handle the pressures and rigors of academic life if they are illiterate (Adekunjo & Unuabor, 2024). The reader gains greater control, autonomy, and a sense of self-assurance due to reading culture. To encourage pupils to read, libraries maintain reading materials and make them available for free. Furthermore, libraries offer reading programs, which are reading campaigns they run to raise awareness of the availability of reading materials (Muthee & Wamae, 2021). Reading allows people to broaden their knowledge base, discover, share, become more conscious, and develop a greater understanding of the world, other people, and themselves. Reading extensively is crucial in the educational setting since all learning activities require reading comprehension, and student's academic progress also heavily relies on their reading proficiency (Jeromes & Ifeyinwa, 2022). Reading culture refers to a set of reading behaviors encompassing both the frequency and purpose of reading. There is a strong relationship between culture and habits; habitual behaviors shape that culture. In this context, "culture" and "habit" are used interchangeably to reflect the broader patterns of reading engagement (Cekiso, 2024).

Studies by Vicherková and Malach (2022) have validated our findings and demonstrated how the synthesis and balancing of internal and external factors arising in communication and actor-oriented behavior from the cultural, economic, environmental, and social context affect reading attitudes, reading culture, reading level, and digital strategies, or the overall quality of reading. As a result, literacy-focused activities at all educational levels and their study and career orientations should include teaching reading skills. Therefore, student's reading culture develops when they get used to it. They frequently peruse books and other informational resources that are not strictly essential to growing their line of work, primarily on their critical thinking abilities (Rugyema, 2023). Critical thinking skills are essential because students can build quality thinking to develop good learning. This statement emphasizes how important it is for students to think critically during the learning process because it allows students to follow learning that has been adjusted according to expectations and understand and master the material that is or is currently being studied. They have been studied, as explained by the teacher and studied by themselves, so student learning outcomes are more optimal (Janah et al., 2024).

Learning Critical thinking is crucial because it teaches students to observe the situation, pose questions, develop hypotheses, make observations, gather information, and draw conclusions. Students who practice critical thinking are also taught to think logically and to reject ideas without question. Analytical thinking is a component of critical thinking skills, a higher-order thinking style that can create thinking frameworks like memory and metacognition (Negoro et al., 2023). Understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and producing are some steps in this critical thinking staircase. These phases serve as the foundation for a useful language course design that aids in the growth of students' critical thinking abilities. Teachers can create classes that help students develop and increase their critical thinking abilities from one level to the next (Purnamaningwulan, 2022). The process of critical thinking involves individual human beings assessing questions based on facts, drawing conclusions, and then using these questions to generate responses. Reasoning and a methodical approach to comprehending the connections between concepts or facts are fundamental components of critical thinking. Measures of an individual's critical thinking abilities include self-regulation, interpretation, analysis, evaluation, conclusions, and explanations (Arini et al., 2023). Students need to strengthen their critical thinking abilities to be ready for success in life. Students will be more equipped to collaborate with others, think critically and analytically, communicate clearly, and solve problems in the workplace if they possess these abilities (Nor & Sihes, 2021). The application of cognitive skills and talents that raise the likelihood of a desired result is known as critical thinking. It is goal-directed, logical, and intentional. It is the type of thinking that goes into problem-solving, drawing conclusions, estimating probabilities, and coming to conclusions. Critical thinkers employ these abilities appropriately, spontaneously, and typically with awareness (Dumitru & Halpern, 2023). Indeed, the benefits of critical thinking extend beyond classroom settings to real-world, everyday circumstances, which is significant because critical thinking is required for a range of social and

interpersonal contexts where sound judgment and problem-solving skills are required daily (Dwyer, 2023). However, developing pupils' critical thinking skills is not always straightforward. Many different instructional resources are available that deal with critical thinking, as this paper will explain, and numerous theoretical works that describe the range of methods that can be used in the classroom (Golden, 2023).

Building positive reading habits in students requires teaching them critical and active reading techniques. Teachers should help students with text annotation, chapter summarization, and recognizing important ideas and points of contention (Darmawan et al., 2024). Investigating concepts and reflecting on oneself are essential components of critical thinking. A skilled critical thinker can break down a big idea into several smaller ones. They can consider all the factors, confront prejudices, and come to a just conclusion. This difficult task requires everyone to practice (Caldoza et al., 2024). In order to meet the challenges of the modern world, learners are encouraged to cultivate critical thinking abilities. The value of helping pupils develop their critical thinking skills has been recognized by educational institutions worldwide. Numerous research studies on critical thinking have demonstrated its importance in improving academic achievement, which, in turn, leads to improved professional development later in life (Hakim et al., 2021). Since critical thinking is crucial for resolving issues about students' learning, it is impossible to isolate critical thinking from educational institutions, particularly higher education institutions, which are equipped to handle issues about human resource development by putting teaching and learning materials into practice (Witarsa & Muhammad, 2023).

From the explanation presented, the connection between reading culture and the degree of critical thinking is very close because reading habits not only improve the ability to understand texts but also encourage the growth of people's critical thinking abilities. Students can expand their perspectives, conduct in-depth analyses of knowledge, and hone their problem-solving skills through reading. Strong reading cultures in schools can develop people who can think critically, creatively, and analytically, eventually raising the caliber of human resources. Therefore, educational institutions need to facilitate the establishment of a good reading culture and integrate the teaching of critical thinking in each step of the instructional process to produce a generation that is more independent, innovative, and ready to face global challenges.

METHODS

The correlational research method was chosen because The researcher's goal is to comprehend the connection between school culture and critical thinking skills (Aryanto et al., 2023). When examining the existence, Correlational research design is commonly used to determine the existence, strength, and direction of a relationship between two variables. This correlational research design employed a quantitative approach (Ghanad, 2023), concentrating on numerical and objective data. In order to achieve better generalization, this research requires a bigger sample size. Additionally, a quantitative method yields conclusions based on a more representative sample. Without modifying or controlling any variables, the correlational research design looks at how variables relate to one another (Miot, 2018). Before conducting a correlation analysis, it is crucial to use the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test to verify if the data is normal. This is significant because correlation testing requires normally distributed data, particularly when employing parametric techniques like Pearson correlation. Additionally, the linearity test is used to ascertain whether or not there is a linear relationship between two variables. The linearity test is crucial in correlation research to ensure that a straight line adequately reflects the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The degree to which the independent variable may predict the dependent variable and the strength of the link between the two are then assessed using the linear regression test. Lastly, using a correlation coefficient (r) value between -1 and $+1$, the correlation test assesses the degree of linear relationship between two variables (Rusu et al., 2021). Overall, this data analysis process provides a clear picture of how reading culture can influence critical thinking skills and provides a strong basis for developing educational policies or interventions to improve the quality of human resources through literacy culture (Prasojo et al., 2019).

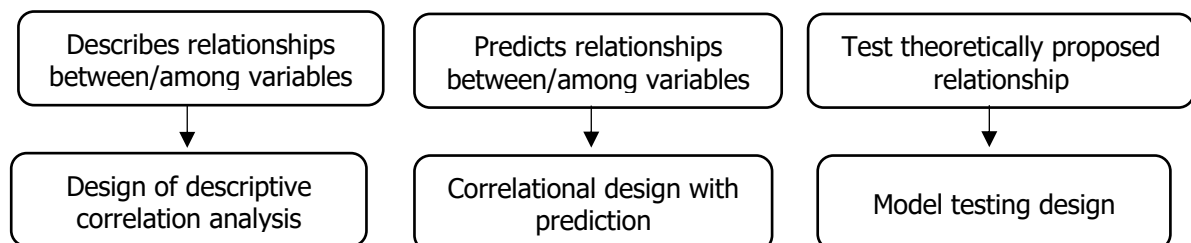


Figure 1. Correlational Design Type

Makowski et al. (2020) state that when researchers are uncertain about the type of relationship between

variables, suspect a relationship but are unaware of its nature, or are uncertain about the strength of the association between variables, they usually choose correlational designs. A conceptual framework or explanation of the rationale and methods used by the researcher to believe that certain variables are related is required for all correlational designs. The fundamental presumptions of this design are that the variables are real, that a sample (probability sampling) represents the population, that the variables can be accurately measured, and that the variables are not manipulated. This study employed the product moment analysis technique with the aid of SPSS26 for Windows to ascertain the relationship between Yogyakarta students' reading culture and critical thinking abilities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study was carried out at secondary schools in Yogyakarta Special Region Province and employed the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test to determine whether or not the data was normal. The normality test's objective is to determine whether or not the variable data is close to the population with a normal distribution. Under analysis follows a normal distribution. No. The normality test is also necessary before choosing the statistics to be applied while analyzing research data to ascertain the relationship between the variables under investigation. This study's normality test was carried out using SPSS26, and the criterion for making decisions was that a variable is considered normally distributed if $\text{sig} > 0.05$. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, also known as the K-S test or the KS test, is a non-parametric test of a continuous equation and one-dimensional probability distribution used in statistics. It can be used to compare two samples (the two-sample K-S test) or one sample with a reference probability distribution (the one-sample K-S test).

Table 1. Normality Test Results

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
		Unstandardized Residual
N		77
Normal Parameters^{a,b}	Mean	0.0000000
	Std. Deviation	648922548
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	0.162
	Positive	0.160
	Negative	-0.162
Test Statistic		0.162
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.093 ^c

The normality test results for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov model showed a significant value of 0.093. Given that the sig value is higher than 0.05, it is feasible to conclude that the two variables have a normal data distribution. The following figure provides a clearer view of the normalcy test results:

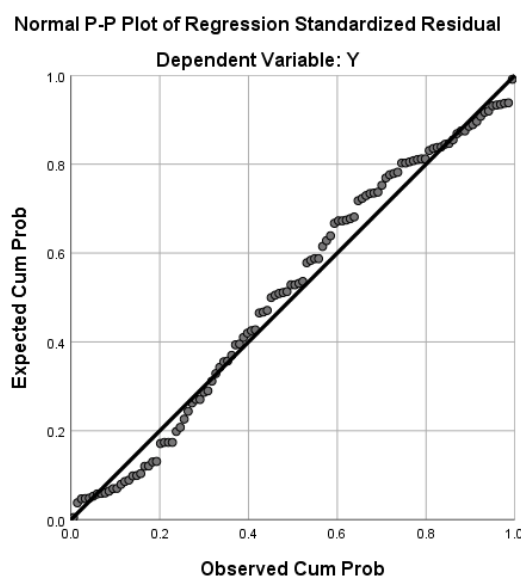


Figure 2. P-Plot Normality Test

The goal of the linearity test is to determine whether or not there is a significant linear relationship

between the two or more variables under study. Usually, regression analysis or linear correlation use this test as a prerequisite. The linearity test depends on a probability value of greater than 0.05 to determine whether the connection between variables (X) and (Y) is linear. Based on Figure 1 above, it can be seen that the dots spread around the diagonal line and follow the diagonal line, meaning that the data obtained is normally distributed. The analysis's findings are displayed in the following table:

Table 2. Linearity Test Results

		ANOVA Table					
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Reading Culture and Critical Thinking Skills	Between Group	(Combined)	25412,700	14	1016,508	8,049	0,028
		Linearity	24696,675	1	24696,675	195,553	0,000
		Deviation from Linearity	716,025	13	29,834	0,236	0,990
	Within Groups		505,167	62	126,292		
	Total		25917,867	76			

According to the linearity test results, the deviation from the linearity row had a sig value of 0.990. It is possible to conclude that there is a linear relationship between the two variables because the sig value is greater than 0.05. To determine if the distribution or variation of means in the explanatory variables, either separately or in combination, has significantly explained the variation of the variables presented, the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is utilized. The degree of freedom (df) for the denominator (df₂) is found using the formula $df_2 = n - k$ after the degree of freedom (df) for the numerator (df₁) has been established using the formula $df = k - 1$ and a significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), where k is the total number of variables (independent + dependent) and n is the amount of data. The values in this investigation are $n = 77$ and $k = 2$. This study's df₁ values are $df_1 = 2 - 1 = 1$ and $df_2 = 77 - 2 = 75$, respectively. Therefore, when checking the F table value with $df_1 = 1$ and $df_2 = 75$, the F table value is 3.96. The following table displays the analysis's findings:

Table 3. Linear Regression Test Results of X and Y Variables

ANOVA^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24696,675	1	24696,675	566,256	.000 ^b
	Residual	1221,191	75	43,614		
	Total	25917,867	76			

F-table and F-count It is clear from the above table that the 566.256 is the F count. Thus, it may be concluded that $F\text{-count} > F\text{-table}$ ($566,256 > 3.96$), indicating that reading culture variables (X) have an impact on critical thinking ability variables (Y). Following the completion of statistical tests for validity, reliability, normalcy, linearity, and regression, a correlation test using the Pearson Product Moment Model is conducted. The following table displays the analysis's findings:

Table 4. Correlation Test Results

Correlations			
		X	Y
Reading Culture	Pearson Correlation	1	.976**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0,000
	N	77	77
Critical Thinking Skills	Pearson Correlation	.976**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	
	N	77	77

The reading culture and critical thinking skills variables in Table 4 above have a significant value of 0.000, meaning that 0.000 is less than 0.05, suggesting a connection or association between the two. Additionally, the table displays the 0.976 Pearson Correlation value between critical thinking abilities and learning motivation. This suggests a positive association and a very high correlation between the two variables, indicating that kids' critical thinking abilities increase with their reading culture. Critical thinking abilities are crucial to contemporary education, crucial for pupils to succeed academically, and the most crucial life skills. It is a key skill that kids need to have to solve problems and make wise decisions so that we can act appropriately based on our best judgments of the facts. Students who utilize critical thinking can better identify the reasons for

changes in one variable and how one variable affects other variables (Suhirman et al., 2021). Students' problem-solving habits also contribute to the development of critical thinking skills. Students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills by creating questions based on their understanding of data collection methods (Muhfahroyin et al., 2023).

The growth of the brain's prefrontal cortex, on the other hand, causes critical thinking skills and inclinations to emerge at younger ages. The definition of critical thinking and its elements has required a great deal of work (Çelik İskifoğlu et al., 2022). Ratminingsih et al. (2020) It demonstrates that children who study using the reading culture-based learning model have superior critical thinking abilities compared to those who use the discovery learning model. Advanced reading and critical thinking abilities are useful in both academic and professional settings because they allow readers (both students and teachers) to locate reliable information sources, organize them in a hierarchy, spot plagiarism, and support the authority of writers, among other things. Starting with the obvious link between critical thinking and proficient reading (Javorčíková & Badinská, 2021). Students with strong critical thinking abilities are more likely to address difficulties successfully. Critical thinking includes logical and introspective thought processes that allow one to observe, analyze, synthesize, and draw conclusions based on evidence (Hasyim et al., 2024).

Strengthening the development of students' speculative, innovative, and practical skills and improving their overall quality have become the main goals of higher education. Critical thinking is primarily a skill, not a knowledge system, and is defined as the capacity to make theoretical and objective assessments based on sound arguments and facts (Xu, 2020). People who can analyze critically and assess the value or validity of an idea or concept before accepting it are known as critical thinkers. When tackling an issue, students with critical thinking skills can ask insightful questions, deliver accurate and efficient information, make logical decisions based on credible or implausible (objective) facts, and reach consistent conclusions (Sarwanto et al., 2021). It is acknowledged that critical thinking is not only a crucial component of a person's future competencies but also a crucial ability that will facilitate further educational advancement (Skrzek-Lubasińska & Malik, 2023). Critical thinking is among the talents people need to enhance their knowledge capacity, choose the proper information, structure information, and develop new information (Baki, 2025).

Examining subjects from various angles also pushes students to broaden their horizons and develop critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills will benefit students in the future, both in the classroom and the workplace. Since reading can enhance one's capacity for critical thought, extend one's perspective, and provide fresh perspectives on one's life and the wider world, it is one of the best methods to increase one's knowledge (Younis et al., 2023). Reading helps people grow intellectually, personally, and socially by encouraging empathy, creativity, and critical thinking. It acts as a doorway to information, expanding people's horizons and allowing them to consider various viewpoints (Sarah et al., 2023). Strong reading abilities are crucial to academic success, which is why reading greatly impacts educational development. Reading improves life and provides access to culture and legacy, while those with strong reading habits generally do better on different examinees (Tatfeng et al., 2024). Reading is a habit that needs to be developed, just as culture is a way of life for a particular group. Culture is defined as the act of reading regularly, whereas habit is an acquired behavioral pattern regularly followed until it has become nearly involuntary and happens automatically (Otake, 2020). Through reading, people can learn how to live and work with dignity, promote their full potential, survive, become knowledgeable citizens, make better decisions, develop critical thinking skills, and never stop learning. Since no society can prosper without information, the lack of a reading culture contributes to social inequality and poses a threat to national progress (Dai Luong, 2021).

Patronage of libraries and reading culture aid in acquiring desirable and significant knowledge. Students who have good reading habits have a powerful tool at their disposal to succeed in life. A habit of reading is crucial to building a literate society in the modern world. It molds people's personalities, fosters the development of sound thought processes, and generates fresh concepts (Esther et al., 2021). A person is said to have a reading culture when they routinely and habitually read books and other informational materials that are unnecessary to progress in their profession or career. Students only display reading culture during exams, and very few try to read for pleasure and knowledge (Mohammed, 2024). Reading culture is the cornerstone of literacy; it aids in the improvement of people's understanding and critical thinking abilities. Undergraduate students' horizons are expanded, and general knowledge is acquired when a reading culture is established. However, the reading culture is fast disappearing (Asibi et al., 2021). This study contributes to understanding the connection between students' critical thinking skills and reading culture by demonstrating a strong positive correlation between the two variables. These results suggest that encouraging kids to read can help enhance their critical thinking skills, which is crucial for future academic and professional success. By strengthening reading habits and learning new material, students develop critical thinking, analytical, and evaluative abilities that will aid them in problem-solving and decision-making. As a result, creating a strong reading culture needs to be a top goal in education, both through curriculum development that promotes reading as a daily learning process and through school-level regulations.

CONCLUSION

With a Pearson correlation value of 0.976, the study's conceptual findings show a significant positive association between students' critical thinking abilities and reading culture. This suggests that students' critical thinking abilities improve with increasing reading culture. The study's conclusions highlight how crucial it is to foster a reading culture in the classroom to enhance students' critical thinking abilities. Students who improve their reading habits gain new information and critical, analytical, and reflective thinking abilities essential for problem-solving and decision-making. Because it can significantly aid in developing critical thinking abilities necessary for future academic achievement and professional life, enhancing the reading culture among students should be given top priority in the curriculum.

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