**INDONESIAN JOURNAL of SUSTAINABILITY**

# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE READATHON PROGRAM AND LIBRARY SOCIALIZATION TO ENHANCE CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS, READING COMPREHENSION, AND LITERACY OF STUDENTS AT SMP NEGERI 34 BEKASI CITY

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Readathon Program and library socialization in enhancing critical thinking skills and reading comprehension among students at SMP Negeri 34 Kota Bekasi. The research method employed a quantitative descriptive approach, involving 1,041 students from grades VII to IX, with a random sample of 270 students. Data collection was conducted through questionnaires, interviews, and tests to measure reading comprehension and critical thinking skills before and after the program was implemented. Statistical analysis used paired t-tests to examine the significance of score changes. The results showed that the average reading comprehension score increased from 65.4 to 78.9, while critical thinking skills improved from 61.3 to 75.7 after the program was implemented. The paired t-test indicated a significant increase at $p < 0.05$. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Readathon Program and library. Socialization proved to be effective in improving students' literacy. This study emphasizes the importance of developing engaging literacy programs that involve libraries as learning centers. Schools are encouraged to continue developing literacy activities to foster a strong literacy culture within the school environment, one of which is through library socialization. This includes raising awareness that the library serves as a learning facility.

**Keywords :** *Readathon Program; library socialization; critical thinking skills; reading comprehension; student literacy*

## INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the fundamental skills that is crucial in the learning process and the development of students' critical thinking abilities. Critical thinking skills not only help students comprehend the information they read but also train them to analyze, evaluate, and draw conclusions from various sources of information. In this context, Literacy can hinder students' critical thinking skills, which impacts their learning process (Anisa et al., 2021).' This indicates that a low level

of literacy negatively affects students' critical thinking abilities, which in turn can influence their learning outcomes. In Indonesia, including at SMP Negeri 34 Kota Bekasi, students' literacy levels still face significant challenges, as many students have yet to develop good reading habits (Hijjayati et al., 2022).

The library, as a learning center, has great potential to enhance students' literacy. According to, 'the library plays a crucial role as a learning resource that supports the educational process and the development of public knowledge (Eskha, 2018).' In this context, library socialization becomes essential, as emphasizes that 'the role of libraries in increasing public reading interest is very important (Anawati, 2017). Through the provision of adequate collections, comfortable facilities, excellent services, and promotional efforts involving parents and educators, libraries can contribute to fostering students' reading interest (Yudisman, 2023). The implementation of the Readathon program, which aims to encourage students to read more frequently, is one of the proposed strategies to improve students' critical thinking skills and reading comprehension at SMP Negeri 34 Kota Bekasi (Widodo, 2020).

The Readathon program does not only focus on the quantity of reading but also on the quality of students' comprehension and critical thinking skills. Literacy activities such as the Readathon can be an effective effort to increase students' reading interest (Majid & Nurhayati, 2020).' By engaging students in enjoyable reading activities, it is expected that they will become more motivated to read and develop their critical thinking skills(Kusumawati et al., 2022). Therefore, effective library socialization is also an integral part of this program, aiming to increase the frequency of students' visits to the library (Prayogi et al., 2024).

The problem formulation in this study includes several key questions, namely:

1) How do students' critical thinking skills and reading comprehension differ before and after participating in the Readathon program?

2) Is there a relationship between the frequency of library visits and the improvement of students' critical thinking skills?

3) What are the most effective socialization strategies to attract students who are less interested in reading to participate in the Readathon program (Laksmi, 2023).

The objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the Readathon program and library socialization in enhancing students' critical thinking skills and reading comprehension at SMP Negeri 34 Kota Bekasi. This research is expected to provide theoretical benefits for the

development of educational sciences as well as practical benefits for teachers, students, and library managers in designing more effective literacy programs (Syafitri et al., 2021).

In this study, several key terms that need to be defined operationally are Readathon, library socialization, critical thinking, and reading comprehension. Critical thinking is the ability to analyze and evaluate information objectively (Linda & Lestari, 2019).' With a clear understanding of these terms, this research is expected to provide a more comprehensive overview of the implementation of the Readathon program and library socialization, as well as their impact on students (Rusydi, 2019). Through this study, it is hoped that effective strategies can be identified to improve students' literacy and critical thinking skills, enabling them to be better prepared to face the challenges of an increasingly complex information era (Prasetyo, 2023).

Based on the initial observations, the researcher emphasizes that the implementation of the Readathon Program and library socialization plays a crucial role in enhancing students' critical thinking skills and reading comprehension at SMP Negeri 34 Kota Bekasi. The Readathon Program not only encourages students to read more but also focuses on improving the quality of their comprehension and analytical skills. Additionally, effective library socialization can increase students' reading interest through the provision of adequate collections, comfortable facilities, and promotional efforts involving parents and educators.

This study aims to evaluate the impact of both initiatives and identify the most effective strategies for engaging students who are less interested in reading. Therefore, it is expected that the findings of this research will provide valuable insights for the development of more effective literacy programs and contribute to the improvement of education quality in the school environment.

**METHOD**

This study employs a quantitative descriptive approach to describe and analyze data on the implementation of the Readathon Program and library socialization in enhancing students' critical thinking skills and reading comprehension at SMP Negeri 34 Kota Bekasi.

The study is conducted at SMP Negeri 34 Kota Bekasi, selected as the research site because it is where the program is implemented and where there is a need to improve students' literacy and critical thinking skills (Widodo, 2020). This study involved all students from grades 7, 8, and 9 at SMP Negeri 34 Kota Bekasi, with a total population of 1,041 students. A random sample of 270 students was selected. In addition, this study also

involved teachers who teach at the school and play a role in supporting literacy activities, as well as librarians responsible for managing the library and implementing library socialization (Yudisman, 2023).

Data collection in this study is carried out using several techniques, including questionnaires, interviews, documentation, and tests. Questionnaires will be distributed to students, teachers, and librarians to gather data on their perceptions and experiences related to the Readathon Program and library socialization (Hijjayati et al., 2022). Additionally, in-depth interviews will be conducted with selected teachers and librarians to gain deeper insights into program implementation and the challenges faced (Prayogi et al., 2024). Data will also be collected from relevant documents, such as activity reports, library visit records, and socialization materials used (Laksmi, 2023). Tests will be administered to measure students' reading comprehension and critical thinking skills before and after participating in the Readathon Program (Majid & Nurhayati, 2020).

The instruments used in this study include questionnaires specifically designed for students, teachers, and librarians, covering questions related to reading interest, reading experiences, and the effectiveness of the Readathon Program (Kusumawati et al., 2022).

The Readathon program is implemented for 6 months, with main activities such as reading selected books, group discussions, and presentations of reading results. Library socialization is carried out through colloquium and regular visits to the library. In addition, interview guidelines will be used for interviews with teachers and librarians, containing questions related to the implementation of the program and library socialization (Anawati, 2017). Observation sheets will also be used to record students' activities during the Readathon Program and their interactions with librarians (Eskha, 2018).

The collected data will be analyzed using statistical analysis, including descriptive analysis to describe the characteristics of respondents and the results of the questionnaire (Prasetyo, 2023). Additionally, statistical tests will be conducted to test the hypotheses and examine differences in students' critical thinking skills and reading comprehension before and after participating in the Readathon Program. A t-test or analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be used depending on the data distribution (Syafitri et al., 2021). With this systematic and structured research method, it is expected that the study will provide a clear overview of the effectiveness of the Readathon Program and library socialization in improving students' critical thinking

skills and reading comprehension (Linda & Lestari, 2019).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involves 1,041 students from SMP Negeri 34 Kota Bekasi, ranging from grades 7 to 9, with a randomly selected sample of 10 students per class, resulting in a total of 270 students as the main sample.

**Table 1**. Research Subjects

| Subject Categories | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Student | 522 | 519 | 1041 |
| Teacher | 8 | 27 | 35 |
| Librarian | 1 | 1 | 2 |

*Source: private documentation*

Students' reading comprehension data were measured through tests conducted before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the implementation of the Readathon program. The average pre-test and post-test scores are presented as follows:

**Table 2.** Comparison of Average Pre-test and Post-test Scores

| Categories | Average Pre-Test Score | Average Post-Test Score | Improvement (Difference) | Percentage of Improvement (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reading Comprehension | 65,4 | 78,9 | 13,5 | 20,64% |
| Critical Thinking Skills | 61,3 | 75,3 | 14,4 | 23,49% |

*Source: private documentation*

The following is a comparison chart of the average pre-test and post-test scores in the categories of reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. The chart demonstrates a significant improvement in both categories after the implementation of the Readathon Program and library socialization, supporting the effectiveness of the program in enhancing students' literacy and critical thinking skills at SMP Negeri 34 Kota Bekasi.

- Reading Comprehension: The average score increased from 65.4 to 78.9.

- Critical Thinking Skills: The average score increased from 61.3 to 75.7.
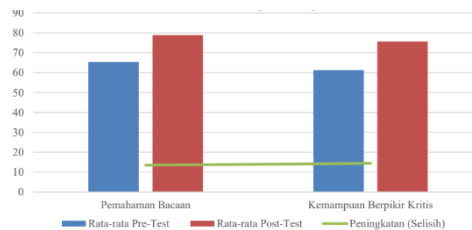


**Figure 1**. Comparison of Average Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores in Reading Comprehension and Critical Thinking Skills
*Source: researcher processed data*

This chart clearly illustrates the significant positive impact of the program on both measured categories.

## STATISTICAL TEST

Statistical analysis was conducted to test the significance of the changes in average scores using a paired t-test.

$$t = \frac{\overline{x}_{post} - \overline{x}_{pre}}{\sqrt{\dfrac{s^2_{post}}{n} + \dfrac{s^2_{pre}}{n}}}$$

1.  t-Test for Improvement in Reading Comprehension
    The t-test analysis for the significant difference in reading comprehension scores between the pre-test and post-test produced the following results:
    - Average Pre-Test Score: 65.4.
    - Average Post-Test Score: 78.9.
    - Pre-Test Variance: 144.5.
    - Post-Test Variance: 135.8.
    - Sample Size ($n$): 270.
    - t-Value: 13.24, significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (p < 0.05).

    These results indicate a significant improvement in reading comprehension after the implementation of the Readathon Program.

2.  t-Test for Improvement in Critical Thinking Skills
    The t-test analysis for the significant difference in critical thinking scores between the pre-test and post-test produced the following results:
    - Average Pre-Test Score: 61.3.
    - Average Post-Test Score: 75.7.
    - Pre-Test Variance: 152.7.
    - Post-Test Variance: 138.4.
    - t-Value: 13.87, significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (p < 0.05).

The test results indicate a significant improvement in critical thinking skills, supporting the effectiveness of the Readathon Program in stimulating students' critical thinking abilities.

Library outreach also had an impact on increasing the frequency of student and teacher visits to the library. The details of visit frequency before and after the program are presented in the following table:

**Table 3**. Increase in Student and Teacher Library Visit Frequency

| Categories | Before the Program | After the Program | Percentage Increase (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Student Visits | 48% | 73% | + 25% |
| Teacher Visits | 28% | 45% | + 17% |

*Source: private documentation*

The increase in library visit frequency indicates that the outreach program successfully fostered students' and teachers' interest in utilizing the library as a source of reading materials and literature.

The research results indicate a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension and critical thinking skills following the implementation of the Readathon program at SMP Negeri 34 Kota Bekasi. The average reading comprehension score increased from 65.4 in the pre-test to 78.9 in the post-test, reflecting a 20.64% improvement. Similarly, critical thinking skills improved from 61.3 to 75.7, representing a 23.49% growth. The paired t-test analysis showed that both improvements were statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the Readathon program and library outreach were effective in enhancing students' literacy and critical thinking skills.

Additionally, the increase in the frequency of student and teacher visits to the library, by 25% and 17% respectively, indicates that the library outreach program successfully stimulated interest in utilizing the library as a source of information and literature. This is crucial in supporting teaching and learning activities.

The findings of this study align with previous research that highlights the importance of libraries and literacy activities in enhancing students' reading interest and critical thinking skills. the role of libraries in increasing public reading interest is crucial,' indicating that libraries are not merely book repositories but also centers for fostering reading interest through adequate collections and quality services (Anawati, 2017). In this context, our study found that the library outreach conducted within the Readathon program successfully increased the frequency of student and teacher visits to the library, reflecting a growth in reading interest.

Additionally, explained that 'A lack of literacy can hinder students' critical thinking skills, which impacts their learning process (Anisa et al., 2021).' The findings of this study indicate that the improvement in students' critical thinking skills after the Readathon program can be linked to the increase in literacy, aligning with these previous findings.

Emphasized that 'Libraries play a crucial role as a learning resource that supports the educational process and the development of public knowledge (Eskha, 2018).' Our findings support this statement by demonstrating that students' participation in the Readathon program enhances reading comprehension and critical thinking, which in turn supports their learning process. The Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model can enhance students' critical thinking skills through a constructivist approach (Kusumawati et al., 2022). Our findings indicate that the Readathon program, which involves active reading and discussions, also serves as an effective learning model in this context.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study support constructivist theory, which posits that active and interactive learning can enhance comprehension and critical thinking skills. That 'Critical thinking is the ability to analyze and evaluate information objectively (Linda & Lestari, 2019).' In this context, the Readathon program, which involves interaction and discussion among students, creates a deeper and more meaningful learning experience.

Practically, the implications of this study highlight the need for schools to continuously develop engaging and interactive literacy programs. The increased frequency of library visits indicates that library outreach can be an effective tool for enhancing students' reading interest. Therefore, schools should consider organizing more activities that involve the library, such as reading workshops, book clubs, and other literacy initiatives that engage both students and teachers. The factors contributing to low literacy skills among students can be addressed through efforts made by teachers, including motivation and literacy activities (Hijjayati et al., 2022). This aligns with our recommendation that teachers should continuously innovate in their teaching methods and utilize the library as a valuable resource.

This study makes an important contribution to the development of literacy programs in schools and provides recommendations for educators and school administrators to continue investing in activities that support the enhancement of students' literacy and critical thinking skills.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the research on "Implementation of the Readathon Program and Library Socialization to Improve Critical Thinking and Reading Comprehension Skills of Students at SMP Negeri 34 Kota Bekasi," it can be concluded that both initiatives have been proven effective in enhancing students' critical thinking and reading comprehension skills.

Statistical tests indicate that these improvements are significant, confirming that the Readathon Program and library socialization have a substantial positive impact on students' literacy. Additionally, there was an increase in the frequency of library visits by both students and teachers, suggesting that the library socialization successfully piqued their interest in utilizing library resources as learning tools.

Therefore, it is essential for schools to continue developing engaging and interactive literacy programs, as well as maximize the role of libraries as learning centers. To support the sustainability and effectiveness of this program, it is recommended that schools continue to update literacy activities, involve parents in library socialization, and provide training for teachers and librarians on innovative teaching methods. Additionally, enhancing library facilities with diverse book collections and comfortable reading spaces is crucial.

This study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, the research was conducted in only one school, SMP Negeri 34 Kota Bekasi, which means the results may not be generalizable to other schools with different characteristics. Second, the method used was limited to a quantitative approach, which did not explore in-depth the subjective experiences of students, teachers, and librarians regarding the implemented program. Third, this study focused only on a specific period after the program's implementation, without conducting a long-term evaluation to assess its sustainability and impact on the school's literacy culture.

For future research, it is recommended that similar studies be conducted in multiple schools with different characteristics. Further research could also evaluate the long-term impact of the program to determine whether the literacy improvements persist or decline over time. Additionally, future studies could explore the extent of parental involvement in supporting school literacy programs and its effect on students' reading habits. The findings of this study provide several important implications for education and school library management. This research confirms that structured and interactive literacy programs can enhance students' critical thinking skills and reading comprehension. Therefore, schools must continue to

innovate in developing literacy programs and ensure that libraries function as active learning centers. The study also shows that library socialization effectively increases student and teacher visits to the library. This highlights the crucial role of librarians in creating an engaging learning environment that supports students' literacy needs.

Furthermore, this study can serve as a foundation for policymakers in designing more comprehensive literacy policies, including improving library facilities, providing training for teachers and librarians, and ensuring access to a diverse collection of reading materials. It also opens opportunities for further exploration of various factors that can enhance the effectiveness of school literacy programs, such as technology integration, community involvement, and innovative literacy-based learning strategies. By understanding the limitations, recommendations, and implications of this research, it is expected that literacy program development in schools can become more optimal and sustainable, ultimately supporting the improvement of education quality in the rapidly evolving digital era.

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