

# Library and Education Collaboration: Strategies for Reawakening Students' Critical Reasoning in the Brain Rot Era

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**Abstract:** The brain rot phenomenon in today's digital era shows a decline in critical thinking skills due to the consumption of instant, shallow, and repetitive content. This condition is a big challenge for the world of education, which should play an important role in fostering analytical, reflective, and creative reasoning in students. However, the reality is that the current educational process often fails to thoroughly develop students' critical reasoning skills, and the brain rot phenomenon exacerbates this issue. For this reason, this research aims to examine collaboration between libraries and education as a strategy in regenerating students' critical reasoning power amid the current massive digitalization. The method used in this study involves library research, examining various sources such as scientific literature, books, journals, and papers on literacy, critical pedagogy, and the transformation of library functions in the modern education system. The main result of this study shows that the synergy between libraries and education can be a practical approach to restoring students' critical thinking skills. Libraries now serve not only as storage spaces for collections, but also as learning spaces that can foster intellectual exploration, collaboration, and reflection for students. Through the integration between librarians and educators, students are encouraged to access, critique, and utilize information in a deep and meaningful way. The findings also confirm that collaboration between libraries and education is a strategic step to address the brain rot phenomenon and restore education's primary function as a place to develop students' critical reasoning. Thus, the synergy of libraries and pedagogy is key in rebuilding the awareness of deep thinking in the midst of a fast-paced and instant digital society.

**Keywords:** Brain Rot, Critical Pedagogy, Information Literacy, Islamic Education, Library Research.

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## Introduction

The rapid development of technology has become a hallmark of modern civilization, with the digital era having a major impact on various aspects of human life. This progress has not only changed the way individuals communicate, but also influenced how humans work, learn, and access information. Along with these changes, technology has transformed into a necessity that is almost inseparable from human daily life. Various activities, ranging from personal to professional, currently depend on digital technology. In addition to serving to facilitate human work, technology is also often seen as a symbol of lifestyle and a supporter of social status

in modern society (Arsyad & Hasanah, 2025:88). As human dependence on technology increases, one of the most prominent forms of digital development can be seen in the use of social media, especially among teenagers.

Social media has become an integral part of modern youth life. Platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube allow young people to connect with friend, share experiences, and access various information (Aribowo & Bagaskara, 2025:351). However, the increase in social media use has raised many concerns about its impact on young people's mental health. According to Boyd and Ellison, social media is a web-based platform that provides individuals

with the opportunity to create public or semi-public profiles, communicate with other users, and explore available social networks. A number of studies have also revealed that high intensity of social media use is associated with increased levels of anxiety and depression in adolescents (Twenge et al., 2018).

Seeing this phenomenon, it can certainly have an impact on users. One of the impacts that is currently a concern is the phenomenon of "*brain rot*," which specifically refers to a decline in cognitive capacity due to excessive exposure to digital technology, especially devices such as cell phones. This phenomenon is characterized by a decline in concentration, increased attention disorders, and reduced efficiency in processing information (Daliani, 2020). In the field of education, the issue of *brain rot* is becoming increasingly important to pay attention to, considering that students are still in a crucial phase in the development of analytical, logical, and critical thinking skills, and are active users of digital devices. Of course, this condition is a serious concern, especially when linked to the main objective of education, which is to train students to be able to think critically and deeply.

Education essentially functions as a forum for active intellectual development, where students are trained to think critically, reflectively, and creatively. It is also clear that the role of education is not merely to transfer knowledge, but also to facilitate students' ability to critically analyze, evaluate, and process information in depth (Khasanah et al., 2025:87)

. As stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System in Article 1 paragraph (1), education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed by themselves, the community, the nation, and the state.

Apart from education, libraries also play an important role in overcoming the phenomenon of *brain rot*. Libraries function as literacy centers that provide access to quality reading materials, conducive learning spaces, and information literacy programs that train students to sort, understand, and process information intelligently (Rohmaniyah & Sari, 2024:128). Through digital literacy activities,

training in the use of valid information sources, and the provision of reading materials that stimulate critical thinking, libraries can be at the forefront of balancing exposure to digital technology with healthy intellectual activities.

Therefore, it is important to review how the strategic roles of libraries and education can be positioned in previous studies to see the extent to which these two things are involved in discussions about the phenomenon of *brain rot*. Many studies have examined the phenomenon of *brain rot*, such as those by Arsyad & Hasanah (2025), Aribowo & Bagaskara (2025), and Oktavia (2025), but all of these studies still focus on conceptual and descriptive understanding of the causes and effects of the phenomenon of *brain rot*. These studies have not yet found any discussion that places educational institutions and libraries in a strategic role in addressing the crisis of declining deep thinking skills.

Thus, there is a significant research gap regarding the absence of comprehensive studies explaining how collaboration between libraries and education functions as an effective solution to restore students' critical thinking skills. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by offering a new perspective on the synergy between libraries and education as an institutional approach to addressing the phenomenon of *brain rot* in today's digital era.

## Materials and Methods

A descriptive qualitative method was applied in this study to describe and understand the meaning, process, and connections of the phenomenon as a whole. Using a literature study approach, this study emphasizes a deep understanding of the phenomenon through critical and systematic analysis of written sources, without using statistical data (Adlini, 2022). The data obtained was collected from various literature sources such as books, scientific journals, articles, and other relevant documents. Source- The sources used were evaluated and selected by assessing the quality and relevance of the sources found to ensure that the data used was valid and accountable. The results of the analysis were presented in the form of a

systematic, clear, and easy-to-understand descriptive narrative.

## Results and Discussion

### A. The Phenomenon of *Brain Rot*

The term "*brain rot*" was designated as the Oxford Word of the Year in 2024, meaning "brain decay." This term refers to a condition in which brain function weakens and mental fatigue arises due to excessive consumption of light and shallow digital content (Fahmy, 2025:2). The phenomenon of *brain rot* has now become a popular term that reflects cultural and cognitive changes due to the consumption of fast digital content (Nastiar et al., 2025:64). *Brain rot* is a phenomenon that describes the impact of excessive consumption of content, which can cause cognitive impairment, weakened attention, and anxiety when away from digital devices (Fahmy, 2025:3).

This phenomenon of *brain rot* can be triggered by several factors, including watching instant videos without time limits, excessive scrolling and *screen time*, the emergence of short-duration content, and others. As a result, many students become engrossed in *screen time* activities and can continue doing so continuously until it leads to addiction in the brain (2025:267). There are many factors why someone can become addicted to social media, one of which is because the human brain has *dopamine loops* that function to increase curiosity, pleasure, and improve mood. Therefore, when scrolling through videos, the brain is stimulated to keep watching funny and interesting videos, and that is when our brain releases *dopamine* (the pleasure hormone) (Nurdyansah, 2025).

### B. Library Strategies for Addressing *Brain Rot* in Students

The term *brain rot* refers to a decline in learning motivation, boredom, or a decrease in cognitive function due to excessive exposure to passive digital content or a lack of intellectual stimulation. Libraries can play an important role in preventing and addressing this phenomenon through integrated and evidence-based strategies (Breen, 2022). Libraries are not only repositories of books

but also spaces for social, centers of literacy (information, digital, and emotional), and places for non-clinical interventions that can improve learning habits, provide calmness, and build cognitive capacity. Studies and reviews indicate that libraries can contribute to mental well-being, digital literacy, and learning support that reduce the effects of digital distraction (Merga, 2020). The strategies that libraries can implement to prevent and address *brain rot* in students include:

1. Developing a physical environment that supports concentration

The first strategy begins with improving the physical environment of the library to create a learning space that stimulates focus and reduces digital distractions. The phenomenon of *brain rot* is closely related to the loss of the ability to maintain attention due to exposure to fast-paced content such as short videos, continuous notifications, and digital multitasking. Therefore, libraries can design spaces that psychologically and sensorially support deep learning. Dividing the space into several types of zones, such as a quiet zone for intensive reading, a controlled collaborative zone for discussion, and a reflective relaxation zone, can help students choose a space according to their cognitive needs. A quiet space free of gadgets, equipped with individual study booths, warm lighting, soundproofing, and minimalist layout will help restore students' attention span. Additionally, libraries can install non-instructional visual cues in the form of small posters about the benefits of deep focus and distraction management. These physical changes are not merely decorative, but highly effective *behavioral architecture* interventions to reduce the potential for *impulse checking* on cell phones.

2. Digital literacy and information literacy programs

The second strategy focuses on empowering students through digital literacy and information literacy as a foundation for overcoming *brain rot* caused by unguided media consumption. Digital literacy is not only about the ability to operate technology, but also includes *digital hygiene* such as notification management, social media usage limits, awareness of *dopamine hijacking*, and techniques for managing study time amid the

flood of digital distractions (Putra, 2024). Libraries can organize scheduled workshops on attention management, how to create a *media diet*, *deep reading* techniques, and skills for evaluating information quality. Additionally, information literacy helps students understand the difference between in-depth sources and superficial content, thereby encouraging a transformation in knowledge consumption patterns. When students understand how algorithms work, how information bias arises, and how to make healthy information decisions, they not only reduce *brain rot* but also enhance their critical and evaluative thinking capacities.

### 3. Digital literacy and information literacy programs

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### 4. Planned reading programs, book clubs, and bibliotherapy

The next strategy emphasizes strengthening a culture of deep reading as the most effective remedy for declining concentration. Reading long texts, both fiction and non-fiction, trains the brain to build sustained attention, analyze context, construct narratives, and engage in reflective thinking. Libraries can create structured reading programs such as 30-day

reading challenges, *shared reading* sessions, thematic book clubs, and weekly reading agendas. Meanwhile, bibliotherapy acts as a more psychological intervention through the selection of books that can help students understand their emotions, reduce academic anxiety, and motivate positive behavioral change. With the assistance of librarians or teachers, bibliotherapy activities can improve mental well-being while improving reading habits. This strategy strengthens depth of thought while providing space for self-awareness for students.

### 5. Creative activities and practical learning experiences

This strategy emphasizes the need for creative and *hands-on learning* activities as a way to restore the brain's capacity, which is accustomed to instant stimuli. *Brain rot* often occurs when students are more often passive consumers of digital content than producers of knowledge. Therefore, libraries can build *makerspace* rooms, creative writing clubs, mini-project workshops, or creative activities such as zines, academic scrapbooks, and educational podcasts. Activities like these force the brain to work in a process flow, rather than instant results, thereby helping to rebuild tolerance for tasks that take a long time. In addition, *journaling*, mindfulness exercises, and *deep work sessions* facilitated by the library can improve students' cognitive health. Libraries can design weekly schedules such as "Guided Focus Hours," "Distraction-Free Sessions," or "Creative Hours" as routines that help restore learning discipline.

### 6. Collaboration with teachers, counselors, and parents

Addressing *brain rot* cannot be done by libraries alone. A mutually supportive learning ecosystem is needed through collaboration between librarians, teachers, school counselors, and parents (Sektiningtyas, 2025). Librarians can coordinate with teachers to align school assignments with students' cognitive abilities, so that students do not become overwhelmed and turn to fast content as an escape. Collaboration with counselors is important for designing *self-help* modules, stress management guides, and professional referrals for students who need

additional mental support. Meanwhile, workshops for parents can help them understand their children's digital patterns at home, so that the library does not work in a vacuum. A consistent learning environment between school and home is key to minimizing exposure to distractions and forming long-term learning habits.

#### 7. Curating high-quality collections and reading recommendations

This strategy emphasizes the role of curation as the core of the librarian profession. To overcome *brain rot*, libraries need to provide materials that are not only interesting but also challenge students' ways of thinking. Collection curation can include in-depth essays, popular science books, classic literature, popular scientific magazine articles, and educational multimedia materials with high curatorial standards. Librarians can create special shelves with themes such as "Anti Brain Rot," "In-Depth Reading," or "Recommendations of the Week," so that students can more easily find materials that train their cognitive stamina. Additionally, libraries can design personalized recommendations based on students' interests through reading interest surveys or brief consultations. A high-quality collection serves as a *counterbalance* to shallow digital content and helps students develop analytical skills.

#### 8. Awareness and media literacy campaigns

In addition to providing facilities and programs, libraries need to conduct literacy campaigns that focus on awareness of the risks of *brain rot*. These campaigns should not be patronizing or prohibitive, but rather take an educational approach that motivates students to reflect on themselves. Libraries can create informative posters, short educational videos, or infographic series that explain the negative effects of excessive consumption of fast content, the benefits of deep focus, and ways to strengthen the brain through healthy routines. These campaigns can also be disseminated through library social media to reach students who are active on digital platforms. The success of the campaign lies in the ability to communicate in a way that is relevant to the language of the

younger generation and in the consistency of the message delivered.

#### 9. Regular evaluation and *action research*

The final strategy ensures that all library interventions do not stop at the idea stage but actually have an impact. Periodic evaluations can be conducted through surveys on focus levels, productive learning duration, frequency of library use, and student feedback after participating in the program. Libraries can apply the *action research* model to test the effectiveness of certain strategies—for example, comparing changes in focus habits before and after a *digital detox week* or intensive reading club program. The evaluation data will help libraries improve their programs, strengthen policy arguments, and provide scientific evidence that libraries play a real role in building students' cognitive health. Evaluation is also important to show schools or campuses that libraries deserve more support because they have a direct impact on student academic performance.

Overall, the library's strategy in overcoming *brain rot* in students shows that libraries are no longer just information storage spaces, but important actors in building a healthy, reflective, and long-term learning ecosystem. Through a combination of physical environment improvements, strengthening digital and information literacy, developing deep reading habits, providing creative activities, cross-professional collaboration, curating quality collections, and data-based evaluation, libraries are able to provide comprehensive interventions that counteract the degradation of focus and critical thinking skills due to exposure to instant digital content. The implementation of these various strategies not only improves the quality of learning but also contributes to the formation of a more disciplined, conscious, and independent learning character. Thus, libraries have a strategic position as a space for cognitive recovery as well as a laboratory for intellectual habits that can strengthen students' mental and academic resilience in facing the challenges of the digital age.

### C. Educational Strategies for Addressing Brain Rot in Students

In the field of education, which is linked to Islamic concepts, a solution can be proposed. The concept of education to overcome *brainrot* caused by gadget addiction, according to the perspective of the Quran, must at least involve the main aspect of preventive education. Overall, solutions in the field of education to overcome *brainrot* caused by gadget addiction can be achieved through preventive, curative, and developmental approaches based on Islamic principles. Of course, these solutions are based on the principles taught in the Quran and Hadith, namely as follows:

#### 1. Preventive Solutions (Prevention)

The first step in addressing gadget addiction is prevention. In Islam, prevention is an important part of maintaining the quality of life and worship. Some preventive solutions that can be taken in the context of education are as follows (Muhamad, 2025:11) :

##### a. Digital Wellness Education

Introducing *digital wellness* is very important to provide students with an understanding of how to use technology wisely. In this case, education must provide teaching on the importance of using gadgets wisely, maintaining a balance between the real world and the virtual world, and understanding the negative impacts that may arise from excessive gadget use.

The Qur'an in Surah Al-A'raf 7:31 states, "(And do not be excessive, for Allah does not like those who are excessive)." This verse teaches the importance of moderation in all things, including the use of technology. This verse also reminds Muslims not to get caught up in excessive gadget use, which can interfere with other aspects of life. Thus, *digital wellness* education will provide lessons on wise use of digital devices, choosing beneficial content, and how to maintain mental and physical health in the digital world.

##### b. Islamic Character Building

Islamic character building plays an important role in shaping individuals who are strong in faith and piety and able to face various temptations from the digital world. A character based on Islamic values and

awareness of the purpose of life makes a person better prepared to control themselves from various technological distractions. Islam itself emphasizes the importance of building good relationships with Allah and fellow human beings. Therefore, ethics-based education can be a means to guide students not to get lost in the virtual world, while teaching them how to manage their time so that they remain focused on activities that are beneficial and valuable according to Islamic teachings.

#### c. Time Management

Time management when using gadgets or *screen time* is a very important preventive solution. In Islam, time management is strongly emphasized, as mentioned

in Surah al-'Asr 103:1-3:

وَالْعَصْرِ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ  
وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ ؕ

"(By time, indeed, mankind is in loss, except for those who believe and do righteous deeds, and advise one another to truth and patience)." Thus, limiting the duration of gadget use and setting aside specific times to take a break from *screen time* can reduce the risk of gadget addiction. This is in line with Islamic principles, which teach us to manage our time well and not allow ourselves to become preoccupied with things that are not beneficial.

#### 2. Curative Solutions (Recovery)

If gadget addiction has already occurred, curative measures are needed to restore the situation and bring back balance to the student's life. Islamic education provides several curative solutions that can help individuals recover from gadget addiction, as follows (Muhamad, 2025:14)

##### a. Gradual Addiction Recovery

Recovery from digital device addiction or *digital detox* is a valuable tool to prevent the adverse effects of SNS use on well-being by reducing the risk of compulsive smartphone use among young people. *Digital detox* is carried out gradually to slowly and systematically reduce gadget use. In Islam, *detox* can be interpreted as an effort to cleanse oneself of bad habits that interfere with the quality of worship and daily life.

Surah Al-A'raf 7:31, which teaches against excess, can also be applied in this case by detoxifying gadget use. *Digital detox* can begin by limiting gadget use at certain times, such as during class, after prayer, or while engaged in school activities, and so on. Gradually, students will begin to feel more free from dependence on technology and have more time for more productive activities.

b. Islamic Counseling Approach

Islamic counseling can help individuals who are addicted to gadgets to rediscover their purpose in life within the framework of Islam. With an approach based on the Qur'an and Hadith, Islamic counseling helps students realize the importance of balance in life and redirect themselves towards Islamic values. Islamic counseling not only helps students overcome gadget addiction, but also provides an understanding of how to improve themselves and reconnect with Allah. This counseling can be conducted through regular meetings with a counselor who has a good understanding of religion.

### 3. Development (Pengembangan)

Self-development is an approach that focuses more on improving overall quality of life. This involves developing positive hobbies, improving digital literacy, and empowering one's potential so that students are not only focused on gadgets. Some solutions in self-development are (Muhamad, 2025:15) :

a. Developing Hobbies or Personal Potential Through Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities at school are a very effective means of helping students reduce their dependence on gadgets. Through various activity options such as sports, arts, literacy, scouting, and student organizations, schools provide a healthy platform for students to channel their interests and talents. These activities not only fill free time with useful things, but also shift students' focus away from the digital world.

In Surah al-Mulk 67:15, Allah ta'ala says: "It is He who made the earth easy for you to explore, so explore its corners and eat some of His provision.

And to Him you will be returned." Through the development of positive hobbies, students can engage in productive activities to find a deeper happiness than that which can be provided by the virtual world.

b. Improving Digital Literacy

Improving digital literacy is very important in today's world of education, especially so that students can use technology wisely and responsibly. Digital literacy is not only the ability to operate gadgets, but also the ability to select useful information, understand how digital media works, and utilize technology for productive learning activities.

From an Islamic perspective, the concept of literacy is actually reflected in the command *to iqra'* (read) and the use of the word *qalam* (pen) in the Qur'an. Both concepts emphasize the importance of reading, writing, and seeking knowledge broadly. This value is highly relevant to modern education, which requires students to be able to filter information, understand sources of knowledge, and process them into a deep understanding.

### Conclusions

The phenomenon of *brain rot* in the digital age has weakened students' critical thinking skills due to the consumption of fast and superficial content. Studies show that the solution is not only to understand the causes and effects, but also requires the active role of educational institutions and libraries. This study confirms that collaboration between education and libraries is an effective strategy to restore and regrow students' critical thinking skills. Education through preventive, curative, and developmental approaches, coupled with Islamic values, can shape healthy digital habits, strong character, and wise literacy. Libraries serve as centers of literacy, spaces for reflective learning, and reinforcers of a culture of deep reading. The synergy between the two is key to addressing *brain rot* and restoring the primary function of education as a developer of deep thinking skills amid the rapid flow of digital information.

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