

SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND STUDENT INFORMATION NEEDS: THE SCHOOL LIBRARY AS A SOCIAL SPACE IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

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Abstract	<i>School libraries are increasingly recognized not only as academic resource centers but also as vital social spaces that contribute to students' holistic development. This study explores the role of school library information services in supporting students social intergration as part of their broader information needs. Drawing on Katz's information needs theory which highlights cognitive, emotional and social dimensions, the research examines how collaborative library environments can facilitate interpersonal interaction among junior high school students. The study employed a descriptive quantitative design, involving 60 students from SMP Negeri 35 Padang, Indonesia. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their active involvement in library-based group activities. Data collection included structured questionnaires (4-point Likert scale), systematic observations, and semi-structured interviews with both students and librarians. The study employed a mixed-methods design, combining descriptive quantitative analysis (questionnaires, Spearman's rho) with qualitative data from observations and interviews. Findings reveal that 92% of students used the library to support group discussions, 68% reported enhanced peer relationships through library interaction, and 72% participated in collaborative topic- based discussions. Despite limitations in collection resources, the library continues to serve as a social learning hub, affirming that spatial and service design can significantly impact student engagement. This study emphasizes the importance of developing inclusive, socially responsive information services in school libraries, especially in resource-constrained settings. The findings contribute to the discourse on information behavior by highlighting the relational function of libraries in adolescent learning environments.</i> Keywords: School, Library, Integration, Student, Collaboration.
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INTRODUCTION

School libraries have traditionally served as academic resource centers, supporting the curriculum by providing access to textbooks and learning materials. However, their role has evolved in contemporary education, especially for junior high school students who are

navigating the transitional phase of adolescence (Bladek, 2021; Hanif et al., 2025). Adolescents not only seek cognitive fulfillment but also require emotionally safe and socially engaging environments. School libraries are now expected to function as inclusive spaces that support identity development, peer interaction, and collaborative learning (American Library Association, 2019; Mudrikah, 2017).

For students, this translates into seeking academic content as well as interpersonal support, group engagement, and opportunities for emotional expression through collaboration and communication (Alhusna & Masruroh, 2021). The social function of school libraries has been highlighted in recent studies, which point to their capacity to foster social competencies, build relationships, and cultivate a sense of belonging among students (Mohzana, 2024; Onunka et al., 2023). These spaces contribute to social integration, which encompasses the development of interpersonal relationships and shared identity (Almulla & Al-Rahmi, 2023; Cockerham et al., 2021).

Despite these findings, many school libraries in developing regions, including Indonesia, remain underutilized as social spaces due to outdated collections, limited infrastructure, and a narrow focus on academic services (Jaedun et al., 2024; Nafisah, 2022). This reflects a significant research gap, the lack of empirical studies examining how students in resource-limited schools engage with libraries not only for academic needs but also for social integration.

Preliminary observations at SMP Negeri 35 Padang indicate that although the library's collection is outdated, students continue to use the space for peer collaboration and social interaction. This highlights an important dynamic, the library retains social value even when its academic resources are perceived as inadequate. Preliminary interviews with students (Azmar, November 2024) revealed that most of library's collection consists of outdated textbooks and teaching materials, making them less appealing as primary information sources. Several students reported preferring to search for information online or to study in groups outside the library because they found it difficult to locate materials that met their needs.

Interestingly, however, the library remains a place for students to gather and interact, particularly when working on group assignments or discussing lessons. Observational data show that students still consider the library a comfortable and pressure-free informal meeting space where they can discuss, collaborate and exchange ideas. This highlights that students information needs are not solely cognitive but also deeply social, driven by the desire to communicate, interact, and build solidarity within the learning process (J. O. Adetayo et al., 2023).

Existing research tends to emphasize the cognitive dimension of information needs, while the social and emotional aspects remain underexplored in school library settings. Moreover, few studies quantitatively examine how specific library services (e.g., group study areas, information literacy programs, peer discussions) support social integration among junior high school students (Pratiwi et al., 2022; Ernst, 2023).

Ultimately, this study aims to provide new insights into how junior high school students utilize library services not only for academic purposes but also to meet social and emotional needs. Findings will inform the development of library programs that enhance student collaboration, empathy, and community building core competencies in 21st century learning (Tordoff & Atkin, 2023; Tripon et al., 2023; Webb, 2023).

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role of school library information services in supporting social intergration as part of fulfilling student's information needs. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, this research will collect data from junior high school students to examine how library services contribute to social interaction and collaboration among them. The findings are expected to provide a clearer understanding of how students utilize library services to meet both their informational and social needs. Accordingly, the study seeks to explore in depth the role of junior high school library information services in

supporting students social intergration by examining their engagement in collaborative, socially driven information activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand the role of school libraries in supporting students' social integration, it is essential to first examine the fundamental concept of information needs and how these needs evolve within the educational context. This study highlights relevant theories and previous research, particularly those related to students information needs, the social dimintions of these needs, and the role of the library as both an information service provider and a social space within the school environment.

Multidimensional Information Needs

Information needs are defined as the gap between the knowledge an individual currently possesses and the knowledge required to understand or solve a particular problem. In the educational context, these needs are the foundation os student's information-seeking behavior. According to Kinanti & Erza (2020) as well as Alhusna & Masruroh (2021), students' information needs can be categorized into five main types, which are consistent with the information needs model proposed by Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (Shobirin et al., 2020; Sulistyo-Basuki, 2019).

The first is cognitive needs, which arise from students' desire to understand, learn, and master specific subjects or topics. These are rational needs tied closely to students academic goals. The second type is emotional needs, which involve psychological comfort, entertainment, and stress relief. In educational environments, students often require safe spaces to manage emotional stress, making this type of need essential to their affective well-being. The third is personal integrity needs, which refer to the development of self-confidence, motivation, and identity (Crocetti et al., 2023). These needs reflect student's efforts to recognize their own self-worth and establish how they wish to be perceived within educational and social contexts. The fourth category is social integration needs, which stem from the innate human desire to interact and build relationships with others through the exchange of information.

In schools, this manifests through group discussions, collaborative assignments, and other forms of peer engagement, reinforcing the idea that learning is both an individual and a social process. Lastly, they are escapist or contemplative needs, which describe student's psychological desire to momentarily withdraw from academic pressures through passive or imaginative activities such as reading fiction, daydreaming, or personal reflection.

These activities, while often private, are crucial for maintaining emotional balance and mental health. This model suggests that school libraries must be designed to meet these information needs holistically, not only by serving as academic learning centers but also by functioning as emotional and social spaces. As such, library information services should be carefully developed to accommodate the diversity of student's needs and be supported by appropriate facilities, programs, and collections that reflect these multidimensional aspects (Alhusna & Masruroh, 2021; Kinanti & Erza, 2020; Shobirin et al., 2020; Sulistyo-Basuki, 2019).

The need for social integration in the information needs theory by Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas Kinanti & Erza (2020) highlights the individuals drive to interact and build social connections through information-seeking and use. Among junior high school students, this need is especially relevant due to adolescence being a crucial phase of identity formation and social development. According to Alhusna & Masruroh (2021), this need is influenced by student's emotional states, sense of belonging, and acceptance within peer groups. An open and interactive learning environment, such as the school library, can serve as a social space where interaction and information go hand in hand.

Mudrikah (2017) emphasizes that collaborative programs in school libraries, such as literacy competitions, book discussions, and group study, support student's social development (M. S. & Nirmala, 2025). Thus, information services based on collaboration rather than individual use can strengthen the library's role as a center for social integration and collective learning.

The School Library as a Social Space

School libraries are no longer narrowly viewed as quiet spaces for storing collections or solitary study. They have involved into social and cultural hubs that support student's intellectual, emotional, and interpersonal development, aligning with 21st-century education, which emphasizes collaboration, communication, and teamwork. According to Yuni (2023), an ideal school library not only offers reading materials but also provides a comfortable, inclusive, and flexible environment for discussions, interest exploration, and non-academic activities.

In such spaces, students are more open to expressing opinions, engaging in dialogue, and building healthy social relationships, thus fulfilling their needs for social integration and self-actualization. This transformation is driven by a growing understanding that information is not merely an individual asset, but a social commodity shared, discussed, and collectively interpreted. In this social space, the exchange of information fosters interaction, strengthens identity, and promotes solidarity among students. Therefore, school libraries must integrate both informational and social functions to effectively respond to the diverse and dynamic information needs of junior high school students (Yuni, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to examine the role of school library information services in supporting students' social integration needs. The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 35 Padang, a junior high school located in Padang Selatan District, West Sumatra, Indonesia. The school was purposively selected due to its relatively active library usage, despite limited physical resources. The study sample consisted of 60 students from grades 8 and 9, selected based on their recent use of the library for group-based learning activities. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising 15 items measured on a four-point Likert scale.

The questionnaire was validated through expert judgment involving two scholars in library science and educational psychology. Its internal consistency was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.82, indicating high reliability. In addition to the survey, structured observations were conducted over a two-week period during break times and after school hours to document student's behaviour and interactions within the library space. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to identify general patterns.

Furthermore, Spearman's rho correlation was employed to explore the relationship between the availability of information services and levels of social interaction, appropriate for the ordinal data and modest sample size. All analyses were performed using SPSS version 25.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings based on data collected from 60 students at SMP Negeri 35 Padang through a structured questionnaire. This section presents the research findings based on data collected from 60 students at SMP Negeri 35 Padang through a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using tendencies in utilizing library information services, particularly in fulfilling information needs related to social integration.

The results are interpreted within the framework of information needs theory and the social function of school libraries in facilitating peer interaction and collaboration. The discussion is organized around key indicators of social integration needs identified in the literature, including participation in group discussions, the development of positive social relationships, and active engagement in information-based activities within the library environment. Thus, the analysis not only presents statistical data but also connects empirical findings to theoretical concepts to provide a comprehensive understanding of the library's role in addressing the social dimension of students' information needs.

Information Needs For Group Discussion And Social Interaction

Based on questionnaire data collected from 60 student respondents at SMP Negeri 35 Padang, it was found that 55 students (92%) felt that the library provided the information they needed for group discussion assignment. This finding indicates that the library's information services have played a significant role in supporting student's collaborative activities. Activities such as discussions and group work are tangible forms of social integration needs that the library has successfully facilitated.

This aligns with previous findings by Kinanti and Erza (2020) who noted that student's information needs are not solely cognitive but also social, particularly in the context of peer collaboration and communication. Although students acknowledged the limitations of the library's book collection, they still utilized the space and opportunities provided to interact and engage in informal discussions. This suggests that the library's social function is being fulfilled even though its informational resources are not yet fully optimized (Putri et al., 2024).

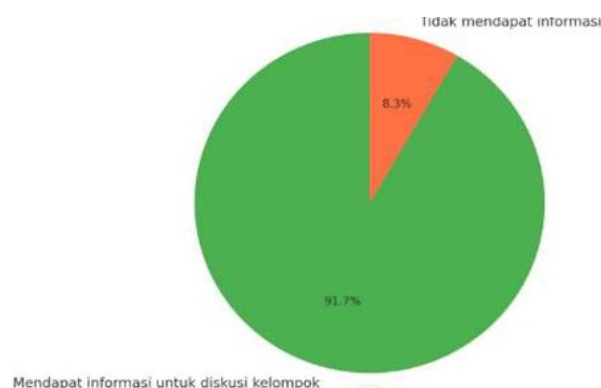


Figure 1: Diagram Information Needs for Group Discussion and Social Interaction

The finding that 92% of students at SMP Negeri 35 Padang perceive the library as beneficial in supporting group discussion activities indicates that the library functions not only as a center for individual learning resources but also as a social space that enables interaction and collaboration among students. This role is crucial in fulfilling students' needs for social integration, which include the need to share ideas, collaborate on assignments, and build healthy interpersonal relationships.

Although the limited book collection is acknowledged as a challenge, it does not significantly diminish the library's social function, as students continue to use it as a conducive place for informal discussion and information exchange. This reinforces the notion that effective library services are not solely dependent on the completeness of the collection but also on the library's ability to provide a safe and comfortable space for social interaction and collaborative learning. This support aligns with the study by Kinanti & Erza (2020) which emphasizes that students' information needs include social dimensions that

are vital for developing communication, cooperation, and empathy skills capabilities that are essential in the context of 21st-century education.

The issue of regulating the use of library space also emerges as a significant topic in this discourse. Shilling & Cousins (1990) highlight a tension between students who seek to claim the library as their social space and teachers or librarians who aim to preserve its order and educational function. This situation reflects a complex social negotiation that, according to Crispin (2021), requires close collaboration between librarians and teaching staff to transform the library into a harmonious multifunctional space.

In the increasingly complex and holistic landscape of modern education, the school library is no longer seen merely as a center for information resources but has evolved into a meaningful space for student social interaction (Merga, 2021). This evolution aligns with the growing attention to student well-being, as noted by Willis et. al. (2019), who argue that the design and function of libraries should support both academic and emotional dimensions.

Even in higher education, Adetayo et. al. (2023) assert that libraries serve as spaces where social relationships, such as friendships, are formed a finding that is equally relevant for primary and secondary education. From a design perspective, physical comfort and spatial flexibility are key elements in attracting student participation, particularly among Generation Z, who prefer collaborative and interactive environments (Yoo-Lee et.al., 2013).

However, the library's potential in building social capital has yet to be fully realized. Leung et. al. (2021) observe that while users generally have positive perceptions of libraries, their social function still faces limitations, especially due to restrictions on interaction during the pandemic. This underscores the importance of community-based strategies to reactivate the social function of libraries in the post-pandemic era. The presence of digital technology in today's library's also expands the forms of social interaction both in-person and virtually, making the library a hybrid social space that adapts to the times (Afrina et al., 2024).

To fulfill this strategic role, school libraries need to be managed with an integrative approach that includes inclusive and student-friendly space design, regulations that are responsive to social dynamics, and a deep understanding of students psychosocial characteristics as primary users. In doing so, the library can contribute not only to academic achievement but also to the development of a socially and emotionally healthy generation.

Therefore, to maintain the balance between the academic and social functions of the library, inclusive and adaptive space governance strategies are required. This involves participatory space use policies, librarian training as social facilitators, and pedagogical approaches that value not only the silence of study but also the productive noise of student discussion and collaboration. Such measures will ensure that the library becomes a truly vibrant learning space a place where information, interaction, and inclusivity thrive together.

The Role Of Libraries In Building Positive Social Relationships

A total of 41 students (68%) stated that they found it easier to build social relationships with their peers through interactions that took place in the library. The information obtained and shared during group activities in the library encouraged the formation of social bonds and a sense of solidarity among students. This indicates that the library serves as a conducive social space for strengthening a sense of togetherness among students. The approach of viewing the library as a social space has been discussed by Bladek (2021) and Mudrikah (2017), who emphasize the importance of creating a literacy environment that also supports students social development. In the context of SMP Negeri 35 Padang, although the library's collection has not yet kept pace with modern developments, its social function remains active and is naturally maintained by the students.

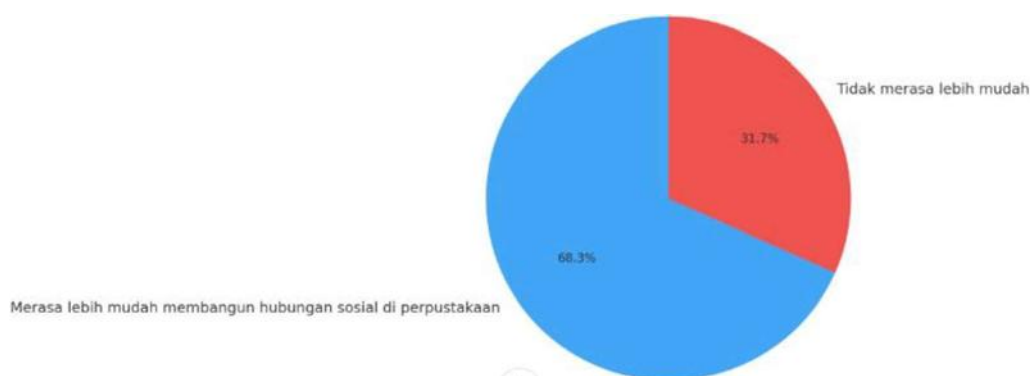


Figure 2: Diagram The Role of Libraries in Building Positive Social Relationships

The finding that 68% of students feel it is easier to build social relationships through student-friendly social space. The library is not merely a place to access information; it also serves as a venue where social values such as cooperation, solidarity, and mutual respect can naturally grow through discussions, group work, or casual conversations. The social bonds formed through these interactions not only enrich the learning experience but also strengthen student's sense of belonging to the school community.

This aligns with the ideas of Bladek (2021) and Mudrikah (2017), who emphasize the significance of the library as a space that fosters the development of social relationships especially in promoting student's character and social skills. At SMP Negeri 35, although the library's facilities and collections are not yet fully modernized, the social values cultivated within it continue to be preserved and flourish. This demonstrates that the library's function as a social hub can be effectively realized even amid limitations, as long as the environment encourages positive and inclusive interaction. From a psychological perspective, the library as a social space contributes significantly to students' mental and emotional well-being.

Afrina et. al. (2024) note that the social interactions facilitated in the library help reduce feelings of loneliness, enhance a sense of social connectedness, and provide both emotional and academic support. The presence of digital technology and social media within the library also expands the forms of interaction both in-person and virtual creating a social ecosystem that adapts to contemporary developments.

Thus, the school library holds strategic potential as a nurturing ground for healthy social interaction that not only supports academic success but also enhances students' psychological resilience, emotional strength, and collaborative spirit. Even in the context of limited facilities, these values can be cultivated as long as library services, spatial design, and user culture are geared toward inclusivity, supportive relationships, and active student participation.

Student Participation In Topic Discussions In The Library Environment

A total of 43 students (72%) reported actively participating in discussions about academic topics within the library environment. This indicates that the library serves as an informal meeting point that supports both information exchange and the development of students' communication skills. These discussions are not only task-oriented but also function as a means for students to express ideas and engage in collaborative learning.

According to Mawaddah (2021), libraries that provide interactive spaces such as discussion corners or active librarian services tend to attract more student interest. Although limited facilities pose a major challenge in optimizing collaborative services, the librarians role remains crucial as a facilitator of social interaction. In resource-constrained contexts, librarians can take an active role as a bridge between students and information

services, for example, by encouraging group discussions, offering informal literacy support, or creating flexible interaction spaces. This aligns with Ernst (2023) perspective, which emphasizes the importance of librarians as social actors who help students build emotional and relational connections through adaptive library services. In this regard, SMP Negeri 35 Padang has a significant opportunity to optimize this social function by enhancing interactive facilities such as discussion rooms, collaborative services, or group-based literacy programs.

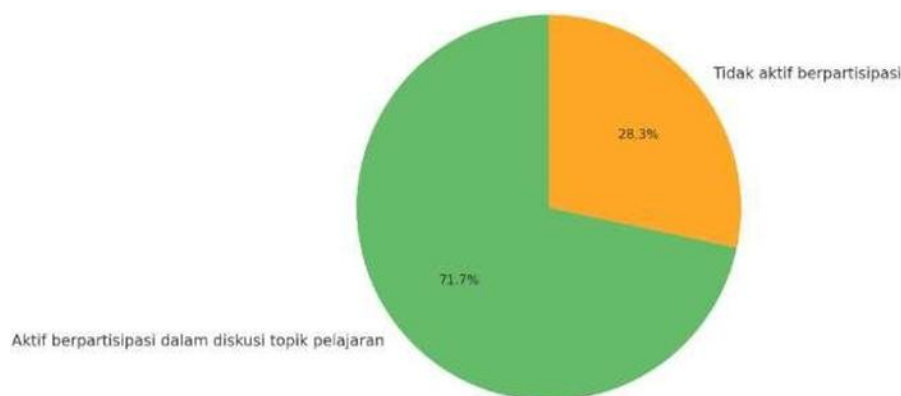


Figure 3: Diagram Student Participation in Topic Discussions in the Library Environment

The fact that 72% of students actively participate in discussions on subject topics in the library environment indicates that the library has gone beyond its traditional role as a place to store collections and become a center for students' intellectual and social interactions. This active participation reflects the high need for informal spaces that allow students to exchange ideas, deepen their understanding of the material, and hone their critical thinking and communication skills. Discussions that occur in the library also give students the opportunity to express their opinions more freely, without formal pressure like in the classroom, thus creating a more democratic and enjoyable learning atmosphere.

This is in line with the view of Mawaddah (2021), who emphasizes the importance of interactive spaces and the active role of librarians in creating a lively and interesting library environment. For SMP Negeri 35 Padang, this finding opens up great opportunities to develop the library to be more dynamic by providing special facilities such as group discussion rooms, collaborative zones, and project-based literacy programs that facilitate interaction between students. By optimizing these elements, the library can become a participatory learning center that supports both academic aspects and the development of students' social skills in a sustainable manner.

Therefore, for SMP Negeri 35 Padang, strategic opportunities are wide open to develop informal discussion infrastructure in the library, such as: Providing "discussion pods" or carpeted discussion corners with small whiteboards, Designing a "weekly literacy discussion" program based on current topics or issues, Compiling "thematic circulation books" that encourage group conversations, Training librarians and students as "small facilitators" in study groups.

These steps will strengthen the function of the library as a center for participatory learning, making the library not only a source of information, but also a space for the production of social meaning, where students grow independently and collectively in a spirit of collaboration. With this approach, the school library will not only survive amidst facility challenges, but will also appear as a model of inclusion, creativity, and participation in modern education.

Collection Limitations And Their Implications

Observation results show that most students feel that the library collection is still dominated by old textbooks and supporting materials. However, students still use the library as a place to gather and discuss. This shows a paradigm shift in the use of libraries from just a place to look for books to a social space that supports interaction. This condition is in line with the concept that information is no longer viewed as an individual entity alone, but also as a social tool that strengthens relationships between individuals (Tripon et. al., 2023).

Libraries as a social medium need to be directed not only to rely on collections, but also to strengthen aspects of services, space, and collaborative programs. The limited collection conditions that are still dominated by old textbooks and supporting materials in the library of SMP Negeri 35 Padang are a real reflection of the challenges faced by many school libraries in keeping up with the increasingly dynamic development of students' information needs. However, interestingly, the finding that students still use the library as a space to gather and discuss actually shows a paradigm shift in interpreting the function of the library. The library is no longer seen as just a place to store and access books, but has developed into a social space that allows students to interact, learn together, and build communication networks.

This supports the concept of Tripon, Gonta and Bulgac (2023) which states that information is now understood not only as an entity consumed individually, but also as a social tool that connects individuals in a collaborative context. Therefore, libraries must be directed to strengthen non-collection aspects such as user-based services, the provision of comfortable interactive spaces, and community-based or collaborative literacy programs. In this context, the development of librarians as interaction facilitators, flexible space design for various forms of activities, and the integration of simple technology can also be strategic steps to address the challenges of limited collections, while optimizing the social function of libraries in the 21st century learning era.

Amid the increasing preference of students to search for information via the internet, the challenges for school libraries are increasingly complex. As stated by Cox (2021) and Onunka et. al. (2023), traditional libraries must transform to remain relevant in the digital era, especially in providing services that are responsive to the digital habits of the younger generation. In this context, the integration between physical space and technological support becomes important. Libraries can develop hybrid services such as providing physical discussion spaces equipped with Wi-Fi access, presentation devices, and online information resources. Thus, libraries remain the center of social interaction while supporting students' digital information needs in a balanced manner.

Based on the analyzed data, it can be concluded that despite the shortcomings in terms of collections, the library of SMP Negeri 35 Padang has succeeded in carrying out its social role significantly. The function as a social integration space is reflected in student activities involving interaction, discussion, and collaboration. Information services that are inclusive and support collective participation have proven to be an important key in meeting students' information needs from a social aspect.

In the digital context, junior high school students' information needs do not only take place in physical spaces such as libraries or classrooms, but also in virtual social spaces such as social media. This media is not only used for socializing purposes, but also in order to find learning resources, complete assignments collaboratively, and solve problems related to the curriculum (Dimacangun et. al., 2023).

Thus, social media has the potential to be a dynamic alternative learning space, as long as it is supported by adequate digital literacy skills. Unfortunately, many students still have difficulty verifying information, maintaining the security of personal data, and using technology wisely (Ariska & Putri, 2023). The risk of misinformation and misuse of information is a serious challenge in meeting information needs in the digital era. In

addition, classroom interactions as part of fulfilling information needs are also largely determined by the teaching strategies implemented by teachers. Inclusive and quality instruction can reduce stigma against previously marginalized students and encourage the involvement of students from various social backgrounds (Di Stasio et. al., 2022).

This shows that teachers have an important role in creating a fair classroom climate and encouraging a healthy exchange of information. No less important, direct and personal information services such as individual guidance have been shown to increase students' self-confidence in social interactions (Erdawati et al., 2021). This confirms that students' information needs also include affective and social dimensions that play a role in shaping their character and identity.

However, the use of digital space in the learning process and information exchange also brings its own challenges. Excessive dependence on social media risks reducing students' sense of social responsibility and increasing the tendency towards individualism (Zhou, 2020). In this case, innovation is needed in learning models that are able to shape students not only as consumers, but also as active actors in a culture of cooperation and social concern (Nawalinsi et. al., 2024).

One approach that is starting to develop is project-based learning that places students in a more contextual and collaborative learning experience. This model has been shown to improve students' critical thinking skills, creativity, communication, and collaboration (Prayogo et. al., 2024). However, student participation in digital social spaces is not always optimal, given the low motivation and interest in these activities (Galvin, 2020). Therefore, a more personal, relevant, and appropriate approach to the character of Generation Z is important so that information needs can be met more effectively and meaningfully.

The library has transformed into a social integration space that allows students to interact, discuss, and collaborate in a conducive and inclusive atmosphere. These activities reflect that the library is not only a place to find information, but also a place for the growth of social skills, communication, and collaboration. This success shows that information services that support collective participation and an environment that is friendly to students' social needs can be the key to making the library a center for dynamic learning life.

Therefore, although the collection aspect still needs to be improved, the strategic role of the library as a social space must continue to be strengthened through the development of services, collaborative programs, and the provision of facilities that support active and productive interaction between students. The difference in student perceptions reflects a paradigm shift in the function of the library, from merely a center for academic collections to a social space that supports the needs of interaction and collaboration.

In line with Yuni (2023), today's libraries need to be designed as inclusive spaces that provide space for students' social involvement, without neglecting their academic function. This finding shows the need for school policies that balance strengthening informational services such as collections and academic literacy with developing the social function of the library. Support for collaborative literacy programs, flexible space design, and student involvement in library community activities are important strategies to maintain the relevance of libraries in the 21st century education era.

Although this study did not directly measure the correlation between social interaction and academic grades, the findings regarding students' active participation in group discussions in the library indicate the potential for support for academic collaboration. This is in line with Almulla & Al-Rahmi (2023) who emphasized that social integration contributes positively to the learning process, especially through increasing motivation, sense of belonging, and exchange of knowledge between students.

In the context of SMP Negeri 35 Padang, interactions that occur in the library not only build interpersonal relationships but also open up informal academic collaboration

spaces, such as sharing understanding of subject matter, helping each other complete assignments, and discussing learning strategies. Therefore, library services that support social interaction have strategic value in indirectly increasing students' academic engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the vital role that school library information services play in supporting student's social integration, particularly in environments with limited collections and infrastructure. The findings demonstrate that when libraries provide inclusive, student-centered spaces and collaborative services, they can foster meaningful peer interaction and emotional support.

These social dynamics are essential components of adolescent development and should be recognized as core objectives of school library programs. By extending Katz's information needs model, this study contributes to the theoretical discourse by affirming that information seeking among students is not purely cognitive, but also deeply relational. In practice, the results emphasize that even under-resourced school libraries can serve as powerful hubs of student engagement, provided they are intentionally designed to facilitate interaction and inclusivity.

For school administrators and librarians, this study suggests the need to prioritize flexible space planning, social literacy programming, and librarian roles as facilitators of communication. Furthermore, national library and education policies should acknowledge the social function of libraries and allocate resources not only for collections but also for community-driven library services. Future research may expand on this study by employing longitudinal or mixed-methods designs to examine the long-term impact of library-based social integration on academic performance and emotional well-being.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have significant practical implications for enhancing the role of school libraries as inclusive and socially responsive learning environments, particularly in resource-constrained contexts. Despite limitations in collections, libraries can be transformed into vital hubs for student interaction and emotional development by reimagining spatial design, offering flexible and comfortable areas for group discussions, and emphasizing collaborative learning. Librarians should be equipped not only with technical skills but also trained as facilitators of social engagement, capable of guiding peer collaboration and informal literacy programs that meet student's cognitive, emotional and social needs.

Moreover, schools should adopt inclusive policies that balance academic use with students' natural inclination for interpersonal communication, recognizing that productive social interaction is integral to 21st century learning. Integrating low-cost digital tools and hybrid services can also enhance the relevance of libraries in the digital age, enabling them to support both physical and virtual modes of student collaboration. Therefore, school administrators and policymakers must prioritize the development of school libraries not only through improved collections but through strategic investment in services, infrastructure, and programs that foster student engagement, social integration, and emotional well-being as essential components of holistic education.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several policy recommendations can be proposed to strengthen the role of school libraries as social integration spaces in the educational system. Education policymakers at both local and national levels should recognize the dual function of school libraries as centers for academic resources and as inclusive social environments that support student well-being and interpersonal development. Policies should allocate

funding not only for updating book collections but also for developing library infrastructure, such as flexible discussion spaces, digital access points, and collaborative program support. School governance bodies are encouraged to issue guidelines that empower librarians as facilitators of student interaction and provide them with professional development opportunities in social pedagogy and youth engagement.

Additionally, curricular integration of library-based collaborative activities should be formalized to promote cross-functional learning between academic content and social skill-building. Lastly, monitoring and evaluation frameworks should be established to assess the impact of library services on student social integration, ensuring that library development remains aligned with broader educational goals focused on inclusivity, emotional well-being, and holistic student development.

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