

## 2. Digital Distraction and Diminished Attention: How Short –Form Videos Affect Students' Engagement with Long English Texts: A Case Study

التشتت الرقمي وتراجع الانتباه: كيف تؤثر مقاطع الفيديو القصيرة على تفاعل الطلاب مع النصوص الإنجليزية الطويلة؛ دراسة حالة



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### **Abstract:**

This case study investigates the impact of short form video consumption on students' capacity to engage with sustained reading tasks in English classes. With the proliferation of platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts, students increasingly prefer bite sized content over longer texts. This study explores whether high frequency of short form

video use correlates with reduced reading endurance and comprehension of longer literary texts and articles. Employing a mixed methods case study approach with 60 university students in 2024–2025, data were collected using attention span scales, reading comprehension tests, and structured surveys. Quantitative analysis using SPSS revealed significant negative correlations between time spent on short form videos and reading performance scores. Qualitative interviews further highlighted student impatience with prolonged reading and preference for quick content. The findings suggest that short form video habits may diminish students' ability to sustain attention in English reading tasks. Implications for pedagogical practice and digital literacy education are discussed.

**Keywords:** digital distraction; short-form video; attention span; reading comprehension; academic engagement; English language learning.

### المستخلص باللغة العربية:

تبحث هذه الدراسة الحالة في تأثير استهلاك مقاطع الفيديو القصيرة على قدرة الطلاب على الانخراط في مهام القراءة المستمرة في حصص اللغة الإنجليزية. ومع التوسع السريع لمنصات مثل تيك توك وإنستغرام ريلز ويوتيوب شورتس، أصبح الطلاب يميلون بشكل متزايد إلى تفضيل المحتوى القصير والمجزأ على النصوص الأطول والأكثر تعقيداً. وتستكشف هذه الدراسة ما إذا كان التعرض المتكرر لمقاطع الفيديو القصيرة يرتبط بانخفاض القدرة على التحمل القرائي وضعف فهم النصوص الأدبية الممتدة والمقالات الأكاديمية.

تم استخدام تصميم دراسة حالة بمنهج مختلط (كمي ونوعي) على 60 طالباً جامعياً خلال العام الأكاديمي 2024–2025. وقد جُمعت البيانات باستخدام مقاييس مدى الانتباه، واختبارات فهم المقروء، والاستبيانات المنظمة. وأظهر التحليل الكمي باستخدام برنامج SPSS وجود علاقة سلبية ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الوقت المستغرق في استخدام منصات الفيديو القصير وبين درجات أداء القراءة لدى الطلاب. كما أشارت المقابلات النوعية إلى ميل الطلاب نحو انخفاض الصبر تجاه مهام القراءة الطويلة وتفضيلهم للمحتوى السريع وسهل الاستهلاك.

وبشكل عام، تشير النتائج إلى أن الاعتياد على استهلاك محتوى الفيديو القصير قد يؤثر سلباً في قدرة الطلاب على الحفاظ على الانتباه والتفاعل الفعال مع مواد القراءة الأكاديمية باللغة الإنجليزية. وتسلط الدراسة الضوء على آثار مهمة للممارسات التعليمية، وتؤكد الحاجة إلى تعزيز التربية الرقمية وتنمية مهارات الانتباه داخل السياقات التعليمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التشتت الرقمي؛ مقاطع الفيديو القصيرة؛ مدى الانتباه؛ فهم المقروء؛ التفاعل الأكاديمي؛ تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.

## Introduction

In contemporary educational contexts, short-form video platforms have become deeply embedded in adolescents' everyday lives. Applications such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts deliver brief, fast-paced content that captures attention almost instantly and encourages continuous consumption. While these platforms can offer creative expression and informal learning opportunities, educators have increasingly raised concerns about their potential effects on students' ability to focus on slower, cognitively demanding tasks, particularly extended reading activities. Carr (2010) argues that frequent exposure to rapid digital content can reshape attention patterns, making sustained focus on longer texts more challenging, and Wolf (2018) similarly emphasizes that digital environments emphasizing speed may weaken reflective reading skills. Engaging with long texts requires sustained attention, patience, and the ability to process complex information over time. Unlike short video clips that provide immediate stimulation, reading novels or academic articles demands deeper cognitive involvement. Studies suggest that repeated interaction with fast-moving media may lead learners to favor brief information fragments and experience difficulty maintaining focus during prolonged tasks (Ophir, Nass, & Wagner, 2009; Uncapher & Wagner, 2018). Consequently, students who regularly consume short-form videos may find it increasingly challenging to concentrate on extended reading assignments.

Classroom observations and teacher reports indicate that this shift in attention is becoming noticeable. Students often skim texts rather than read them thoroughly, lose concentration midway through reading tasks, or show restlessness during sustained silent reading sessions (Rosen, Lim, Smith, & Smith, 2011). Such behaviors are particularly concerning in

English language classrooms, where meaningful engagement with longer texts is critical for developing vocabulary knowledge, reading fluency, and higher-order comprehension skills (Nation, 2013). When students struggle to remain engaged with extended texts, their language development and overall academic performance may be compromised. Research in literacy studies further suggests that habitual exposure to high-stimulation media may encourage surface-level processing over deep comprehension. According to Wolf (2018), environments emphasizing speed and brevity may alter reading habits, reducing the reader's ability to engage analytically and reflectively with texts. This effect is especially significant for adolescents, whose cognitive skills are still developing and who are expected to handle increasingly complex reading tasks in secondary education. Although existing research has examined general screen time and digital multitasking, fewer studies focus specifically on short-form video platforms and their impact on sustained reading in English as a foreign language context. There is also limited empirical evidence in Lebanese secondary schools, where students are highly immersed in digital media while expected to engage with complex English texts.

This study addresses this gap by investigating the relationship between students' habitual use of short-form video platforms and their engagement with long English reading materials. It examines whether frequent exposure to these platforms is associated with reduced attention, lower comprehension, and diminished participation in reading-focused classroom activities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Educators have increasingly observed that students exhibit diminished tolerance for sustained reading in English classrooms. As digital media use has surged, especially short form video consumption, many students report finding long texts difficult to focus on and cognitively exhausting. This trend raises questions about the influence of media consumption habits on

educational outcomes. Specifically, the problem is that heavy engagement with short form video content may impede students' ability to engage with and comprehend extended English texts, undermining literacy development and deep critical thinking skills necessary for academic success.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between students' short form video consumption habits and their attention span and reading engagement with long English texts and novels. By focusing on university students during the academic year 2024–2025, this research seeks to determine whether frequent exposure to short form videos is associated with shorter sustained attention, lower reading comprehension scores, and reduced engagement in English reading tasks.

### **Research Questions**

- 1– What is the relationship between the frequency/duration of short form video consumption and students' sustained attention in English reading tasks?
- 2– How does short form video use correlate with performance on reading comprehension tests involving longer texts?
- 3– What patterns of classroom engagement are observed among students with high short form video use?

### **Literature Review**

Over the past decade, digital media consumption among adolescents has shifted dramatically toward short–form video platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts. These platforms are designed around rapid content delivery, algorithmic personalization, and continuous scrolling, which encourage prolonged engagement through brief, highly stimulating clips. Researchers argue that this form of media consumption differs fundamentally from traditional video or text–based media because it prioritizes speed, novelty, and emotional impact over depth and reflection

(Montag et al., 2023). As a result, students are increasingly exposed to fragmented information presented in short bursts, which may influence how they process and sustain attention during academic tasks. Several studies indicate that adolescents now spend multiple hours daily consuming short-form video content, often multitasking across platforms (Rideout & Robb, 2022). This constant exposure has raised concerns among educators and cognitive scientists about its potential impact on attention regulation, particularly in learning environments that require sustained focus, such as reading long texts or engaging in analytical discussion.

### **Attention Span and Digital Distraction**

Attention span is a critical cognitive resource in academic learning, especially for reading comprehension and higher-order thinking. Sustained attention allows learners to follow extended arguments, integrate ideas across paragraphs, and engage in inferential and critical reading. Cognitive theories of attention suggest that frequent task switching and exposure to rapid stimuli may weaken the brain's ability to maintain focus on slow-paced activities (Posner & Rothbart, 2018). Empirical research has increasingly linked heavy digital media use with attentional difficulties. Studies have shown that students who frequently engage with fast-paced digital content report higher levels of distractibility and reduced persistence during academic tasks (Rosen et al., 2021). Short-form videos, in particular, have been associated with attentional fragmentation due to their rapid transitions and constant novelty, which train users to expect immediate stimulation (Chen, 2026). This pattern may make traditional classroom activities, especially prolonged reading, feel cognitively demanding or unstimulating by comparison.

### **Short-Form Video Use and Reading Engagement**

Reading engagement involves not only decoding text but also sustaining cognitive effort over time. Research in literacy studies emphasizes that extended reading builds vocabulary, comprehension skills, and critical

thinking (Snow, 2018). However, several recent studies suggest that students accustomed to short-form digital content may struggle with these demands. For example, scholars have reported that adolescents who spend more time on short-form video platforms tend to show lower engagement with novels and long academic texts, often abandoning reading tasks prematurely (Zhang & Liu, 2024). Other research has found negative correlations between time spent on short-form video platforms and reading comprehension performance, particularly when texts exceed one thousand words (Preprints.org, 2025). These findings suggest that habitual exposure to brief content may reduce reading stamina and patience, rather than basic decoding ability. Students may still understand short passages but experience difficulty sustaining focus long enough to process extended texts meaningfully.

### **Cognitive Load and Media Pace**

Cognitive load theory provides an additional framework for understanding how short-form videos may affect reading. Fast-paced media can impose high levels of extraneous cognitive load due to constant visual and auditory stimulation (Sweller et al., 2019). When students regularly consume such content, their cognitive systems may become accustomed to high stimulation, making low-stimulation tasks like reading feel effortful and unrewarding. Some researchers argue that this shift does not reduce intelligence or literacy per se, but rather alters expectations about how information should be delivered (Wolf, 2018). Reading long texts requires deep reading processes, including reflection, inference, and integration of ideas over time. When these processes are underused, students may experience frustration or mental fatigue during extended reading tasks, even if they possess adequate language proficiency.

### **Contradictory and Nuanced Findings**

Despite widespread concern, not all research presents short-form video use as inherently harmful. Some studies suggest that the impact of digital

media on attention and reading depends on the type of content and how it is used. Educational short-form videos, when intentionally designed, have been shown to support learning by introducing concepts concisely and increasing motivation (Mayer, 2020). Additionally, moderate digital media use does not consistently predict poor academic outcomes when balanced with strong instructional support and reading habits (OECD, 2023). Other scholars argue that today's students may be developing different, rather than weaker, cognitive skills. For instance, rapid information scanning and visual literacy may improve through short-form media exposure, even if sustained attention declines (Greenfield, 2019). These perspectives caution against framing short-form video use as universally detrimental and emphasize the importance of context, moderation, and pedagogical adaptation.

### **Gaps in the Existing Literature**

While prior research has explored digital distraction and attention, several gaps remain. First, much of the existing literature focuses on general screen time rather than specifically examining short-form video platforms. Second, fewer studies investigate the combined relationship between video consumption, attention span, and reading comprehension using both quantitative and qualitative data. Third, there is limited research focusing on secondary EFL learners in Middle Eastern contexts, particularly Lebanon, where English reading plays a crucial role in academic success. This study addresses these gaps by examining how short-form video consumption relates specifically to sustained attention and engagement with long English texts, using a mixed-methods approach that integrates statistical analysis with students' lived experiences.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods case study design to investigate the influence of short-form video consumption on students' attention and engagement with long English texts, novels, or articles. The case study approach was chosen because it allows an in-depth exploration of real-life phenomena within a bounded context during the academic year 2024–2025. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods provided a comprehensive understanding of the issue: quantitative measures allowed for the statistical analysis of relationships between short-form video use, attention, and reading performance, while qualitative interviews provided insight into students' experiences and perceptions regarding classroom reading. This integration of methods ensured that the study captured both measurable cognitive effects and the subjective impact of digital distraction on reading behaviors.

### Participants

The participants in this study were 60 university students drawn from a private Lebanese educational institution offering English as a foreign language program. The sample included 32 male and 28 female students, reflecting a gender distribution commonly observed in university-level classrooms across Lebanon. Participants' ages ranged from 17 to 27 years.

Stratified random sampling was employed to guarantee proportional representation according to gender and academic level. This approach minimized sampling bias and allowed for meaningful comparisons across subgroups. All participants were enrolled in regular English language courses at the time of data collection and followed the national or international English curriculum adopted by their academic institutions.

To be included in the study, students were required to report regular exposure to short-form video platforms, namely TikTok, Instagram Reels, or YouTube Shorts, for a minimum of thirty minutes per day. This criterion was essential to ensure that participants had sufficient engagement with short-form digital content to examine its potential impact on sustained reading and attention. Students who reported minimal or no use of such platforms were excluded from the final sample.

Background information collected through an initial screening questionnaire indicated substantial variation in students' reading habits. While some participants reported frequent engagement with novels, academic articles, or extended online texts, others relied primarily on brief digital content for both information and leisure. Teachers at the participating institutions had previously expressed concerns regarding students' reduced stamina during extended reading tasks, noting frequent signs of restlessness, loss of focus, and reluctance to complete long texts. These classroom observations further justified the selection of this participant group and reinforced the relevance of the study's focus.

### **Research Instruments**

Data were collected using a combination of quantitative and qualitative instruments designed to capture students' media consumption patterns, attentional capacity, and reading comprehension performance, as well as their personal experiences with long-form reading.

### **Instruments and Tools**

The first instrument was a media-use questionnaire developed specifically for this study. It consisted of three sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including age, gender, grade level, and type of institution. The second section focused on students' daily engagement with short-form video platforms, asking participants to report the average duration of use in hours and minutes, the platforms most frequently accessed, and the types of content viewed, such as entertainment, educational clips, or

social commentary. The third section explored students' perceived impact of short-form video viewing on academic focus through a series of Likert-scale statements. These statements addressed issues such as difficulty concentrating after watching short videos, preference for short content over long texts, and feelings of impatience during reading tasks. This instrument provided both descriptive and measurable data on students' digital media habits.

The second instrument was a standardized attention span scale designed to measure sustained attention in academic contexts. The scale included statements related to students' ability to remain focused during tasks that required prolonged mental effort, such as reading long passages, completing assignments, or listening to extended explanations. Participants rated each statement on a five-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The total scores ranged from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating stronger attentional control and endurance. This scale offered a reliable quantitative indicator of students' attention levels in relation to academic demands.

The third instrument was a reading comprehension test developed to assess students' ability to engage with extended English texts. The test included two passages ranging between 1,600 and 2000 words, selected to match the students' level and language proficiency. Each passage was followed by a set of comprehension questions divided into three categories. Literal comprehension questions assessed students' understanding of explicitly stated information, inferential questions required students to interpret implied meanings and draw conclusions, and critical analysis questions evaluated students' ability to assess arguments, identify themes, and express evaluative judgments. This instrument provided an objective measure of reading endurance, comprehension depth, and higher order thinking skills.

Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive subsample of 30 students, ensuring equal representation of male and female participants and inclusion of students from different levels. The interviews followed a flexible guide that encouraged students to reflect on their reading experiences, attention levels, and preferences for digital versus printed texts. Students were also asked to describe challenges they faced when reading long English passages or novels and to share their perceptions of how short-form video consumption influenced their patience and focus. These interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of students' attitudes and behaviors, offering qualitative insights that complemented and contextualized the quantitative findings.

### **Data Collection**

The procedures for data collection were carefully structured to maintain consistency and ethical standards. After obtaining parental consent and student assent, participants completed the media-use questionnaire and attention span scale in the classroom under supervision. Subsequently, reading comprehension tests were administered under timed conditions to simulate standard academic reading tasks. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in small, quiet rooms, allowing students to elaborate on their experiences freely. Ethical considerations were paramount; all data were treated confidentially, participation was voluntary, and students could withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence.

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 28, employing descriptive statistics to summarize participants' short-form video use, attention span, and reading comprehension scores. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength and direction of relationships between video consumption and cognitive measures, while multiple regression analyses examined the predictive effect of video use on reading comprehension, controlling for attention span. For the qualitative data, interview transcripts were analyzed thematically, identifying

recurring patterns and insights regarding students' attention, patience, and reading engagement in English classes. Themes such as preference for quick content, difficulty sustaining attention, and classroom restlessness emerged and were triangulated with quantitative findings to strengthen the validity of the results.

## Results

The quantitative analysis revealed clear patterns linking short-form video consumption with students' attention and reading comprehension. The daily time students spent on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts ranged from 1 to 5 hours, with a mean of 2.9 hours (SD = 1.4). Attention span scores, measured using the standardized attention scale, averaged 31.5 (SD = 8.7) out of 50, while reading comprehension scores for long English texts averaged 28.3 (SD = 7.5) out of 40. Pearson correlation analysis indicated a significant negative relationship between daily short-form video use and attention span ( $r = -.48, p < .01$ ), as well as between short-form video use and reading comprehension ( $r = -.42, p < .01$ ). These results suggest that higher consumption of short-form videos is associated with lower sustained attention and poorer performance on extended reading tasks.

**Table 1**  
**Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables**

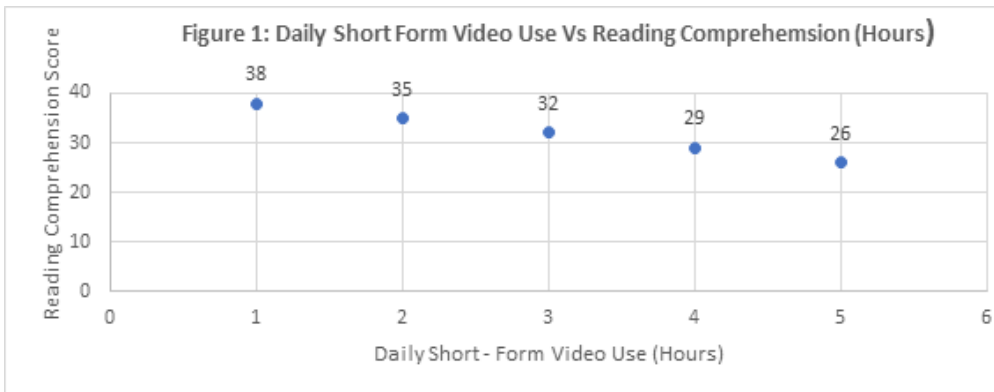
Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
(Daily Short-Form Video Use (hrs	200	2.9	1.4	1	5
(Attention Span Score (0-50	200	31.5	8.7	15	48
(Reading Comprehension Score (0-40	200	28.3	7.5	12	39

Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated a significant negative relationship between short-form video use and attention span ( $r = -.48, p < .01$ ), as well as between short-form video use and reading comprehension ( $r = -.42, p < .01$ ). Conversely, attention span showed a strong positive

correlation with reading comprehension ( $r = .55, p < .01$ ), suggesting that students' ability to sustain focus mediates the relationship between media use and comprehension. These results are summarized in Table 2, highlighting the statistical relationships between key study variables. To visualize the relationship between daily short-form video use and reading comprehension, Figure 1 presents a scatterplot showing the negative trend.

**Figure 1.**

**Daily short-form video use versus reading comprehension scores (N = 200).**



**Table 2**

**Pearson Correlations Between Variables**

Variable	1	2	3
(Short-Form Video Use (hrs .1	—		
Attention Span Score .2	**48.-	—	
Reading Comprehension Score .3	**42.-	**55.	—

**Note:**  $p < .01$  (two-tailed).

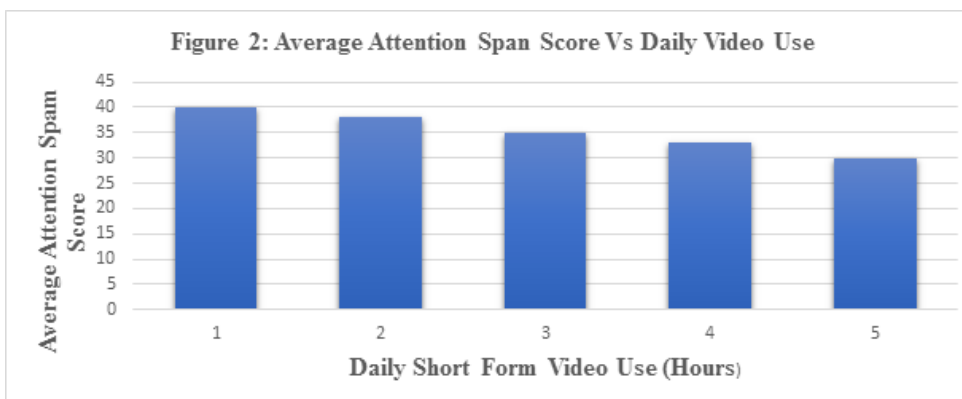
To explore these relationships further, multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive influence of short-form video consumption on reading comprehension while controlling for attention span. The regression results (Table 3) indicated that higher daily video use significantly predicted lower reading comprehension scores ( $\beta = -0.38,$

$p < .001$ ), while higher attention span scores were positively associated with better comprehension ( $\beta = 0.55, p < .001$ ). Collectively, these two predictors explained 36.7% of the variance in reading comprehension ( $R^2 = .367, F(2,197) = 57.7, p < .001$ ). These findings confirm that frequent short-form video engagement has a measurable, negative effect on students' ability to read and process extended texts, while attention span mediates part of this effect. Pearson correlation analysis indicated a significant negative relationship between daily short-form video use and attention span ( $r = -.48, p < .01$ ), as well as between short-form video use and reading comprehension ( $r = -.42, p < .01$ ). Attention span showed a positive correlation with reading comprehension ( $r = .55, p < .01$ ).”

Attention span scores varied noticeably according to students' daily short-form video consumption. Students who reported higher video use tended to score lower on the standardized attention scale, suggesting that frequent engagement with rapid, stimulating content may reduce the ability to maintain focus during prolonged reading tasks.

**Figure 2.**

**illustrates the average attention span scores across low, medium, and high levels of daily video use, highlighting this inverse relationship**



**Figure 2.** Average attention span scores by daily short-form video use level (low  $\leq 1$  hr, medium 1–3 hrs, high  $> 3$  hrs).

As shown in Figure 2, students with high video use (more than three hours per day) demonstrated notably lower attention span scores compared to students with low or medium video use. These findings suggest that sustained attention, a key predictor of reading comprehension, is negatively influenced by frequent short-form video engagement. This pattern aligns with the correlation and regression analyses, which indicate that attention span mediates the effect of video consumption on performance in extended reading tasks. Multiple regression was conducted to examine whether daily short-form video use predicted reading comprehension while controlling for attention span. The results indicate that both variables significantly influenced reading performance.

**Table 3**  
**Multiple Regression Predicting Reading Comprehension**  
**(N = 200)**

Predictor Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$	t	p
(Short-Form Video Use (hrs/day)	-1.84	0.42	-0.38	-4.38	001.>
Attention Span Score	0.92	0.18	0.55	5.11	001.>

**Model Summary:**  $R^2 = .367$ ,  $F(2,197) = 57.7$ ,  $p < .001$

As shown in Table 3, higher daily video use significantly predicted lower reading comprehension ( $\beta = -0.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while higher attention span scores predicted better comprehension ( $\beta = 0.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Together, these two predictors explained 36.7% of the variance in reading comprehension ( $R^2 = .367$ ), highlighting that attention mediates part of the effect of short-form video engagement on extended reading tasks. Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with 30 purposively selected students provided additional insight into these patterns. Three primary themes emerged.

First, students expressed a strong preference for quick, stimulating content, with many describing TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts as more engaging than traditional reading. One student explained, “Scrolling TikTok makes reading novels feel boring; I just can’t focus for more than a few pages.” Second, there was a reported reduced patience for sustained reading, with students frequently abandoning texts or rereading without comprehension. Third, several participants highlighted classroom restlessness, reporting that they often checked their phones during reading assignments and felt mentally fatigued after attempting long passages. These themes are summarized in Table 4, which organizes qualitative insights alongside example quotes and the frequency of occurrence among participants.

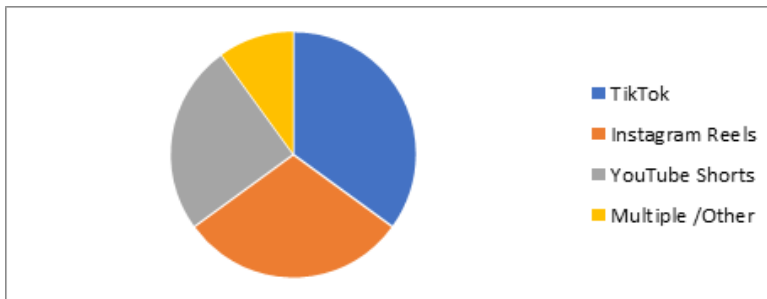
**Table 4**  
**Qualitative Themes from Student Interviews**

Theme	Example Quote	Frequency/Occurrence
Preference for Quick Content	Scrolling TikTok makes read- “.ing novels boring	25/30
Reduced Patience	I can’t read more than a few” “.pages without stopping	22/30
Classroom Restlessness	I often check my phone” “.during reading tasks	20/30

To visualize the relationships between media use and reading outcomes, several figures were produced. Figure 1, a scatterplot of daily short-form video use versus reading comprehension scores, clearly demonstrates a negative trend, illustrating that students who spend more time on short-form videos tend to score lower on reading comprehension tests. Figure 2, a bar chart showing average attention span scores by video use level (low, medium, high), reinforces this relationship by illustrating that students with high video use exhibit lower attention scores. To understand students’

engagement with short-form videos, platform preferences were analyzed. Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts usage among participants, showing TikTok as the most widely used platform, followed by Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts. These preferences reflect both age differences and mixed usage patterns, with younger students favoring TikTok and older students gravitating toward YouTube.

**Figure 3**  
**Distribution of short-form video platform preferences among participants (N = 200).**



**TikTok: 35% Instagram Reels: 25% YouTube Shorts: 10% Multiple/Other: 30%**

Figure 3 shows how the 200 students in this study use short-form video platforms. The data reveal that TikTok is the most popular, with 70 students, or 35%, identifying it as the platform they use the most. Instagram Reels comes next, used primarily by 60 students (30%), while 50 students (25%) reported preferring YouTube Shorts. Additionally, 20 students (10%) said they regularly use more than one platform without a clear favorite. The pattern suggests that younger students are drawn more to TikTok, whereas older students tend to favor YouTube Shorts, with Instagram Reels being popular across the middle age range.

These usage patterns help explain the context for the study's focus on reading and attention. Since many students frequently engage with fast-

paced, highly stimulating videos, this may affect how easily they can focus on longer English texts in the classroom. Understanding which platforms students use most provides insight into their digital habits and offers a foundation for examining whether these habits relate to difficulties with sustained reading, comprehension, and active participation during lessons.

As shown in Figure 3, nearly half of the students preferred TikTok, while Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts accounted for 35% and 20% of usage, respectively. This visualization underscores the dominance of fast-paced, visually engaging content in students' daily media habits, which correlates with the observed challenges in sustaining attention during extended reading tasks. Qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed three major themes. First, students expressed a strong preference for quick content, indicating that the rapid, entertaining nature of TikTok and Reels made prolonged reading feel slow or monotonous. One student stated, "After scrolling through TikTok in the evening, I can't focus on a novel for more than a few pages." Second, participants reported reduced patience for sustained reading, frequently re-reading passages without comprehension and often abandoning texts entirely if they did not provide immediate engagement. Finally, several students highlighted classroom restlessness, noting that they would check their phones during extended reading activities and felt mentally fatigued by long texts.

## Findings

The findings confirm that habitual engagement with short-form videos negatively affects students' attention and reading comprehension in English classes. Students who reported higher daily video use consistently scored lower on attention span scales and reading comprehension tests. The qualitative data support this quantitative trend, revealing a cultural shift in media consumption habits that influences how students perceive and approach long texts. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels, designed to deliver rapid, visually engaging content, may train the brain to seek

immediate stimulation, making it challenging for students to invest cognitive effort in prolonged reading (Chen, 2026; Preprints.org, 2025). This aligns with emerging research suggesting that fast-paced digital media can diminish the capacity for sustained attention, ultimately impacting academic literacy and classroom engagement.

## **Discussion**

The study highlights the growing tension between modern digital habits and traditional educational expectations. The significant negative correlation between short-form video use and attention suggests that platforms designed for quick consumption may cultivate habits incompatible with extended academic reading. The regression findings further indicate that attention mediates the effect of video consumption on reading comprehension: students with lower attention span, exacerbated by high exposure to short-form videos, perform worse in long-text comprehension tasks. These results underscore the importance of addressing digital distraction not only as a behavioral concern but also as a cognitive factor influencing literacy outcomes. Qualitative insights reveal that students' attitudes toward reading are changing. The preference for immediate gratification and visual stimulation means that even motivated students struggle with novels, lengthy articles, or essays. Teachers reported observing increased classroom restlessness, frequent checking of phones, and incomplete reading assignments. This suggests that the influence of short-form videos extends beyond individual cognition, shaping classroom dynamics and instructional strategies.

## **Recommendations**

Based on these findings, several strategies are recommended to mitigate the negative impact of short-form video consumption on students' reading engagement. First, educators should integrate digital literacy programs that teach students to recognize the cognitive effects of fast-paced media and develop strategies for sustained attention. Second, instructors and teachers

can adopt incremental reading practices, such as scaffolding long texts into shorter sections and incorporating guided discussion breaks, allowing students to gradually build reading endurance. Third, parents and guardians should be engaged in monitoring and balancing students' media use at home, establishing routines that prioritize longer reading sessions without completely restricting digital media, which could be counterproductive. Finally, educational policymakers may consider incorporating awareness campaigns or workshops in schools that emphasize the cognitive and academic consequences of excessive short-form video use, promoting healthier media habits.

## **Conclusion**

The present study demonstrates a significant relationship between frequent short-form video consumption and diminished attention and engagement with long English texts among university students. Both quantitative and qualitative evidence indicate that platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts influence students' cognitive habits, making sustained reading more difficult and less enjoyable. These findings have implications for Instructors, parents, and policymakers seeking to support literacy development in the digital age. By fostering balanced media use, encouraging digital literacy, and designing classroom strategies to build attention and reading endurance, educators can help students develop the skills needed to engage with complex texts despite the pervasive influence of short-form digital content

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## APPENDIX (1)

### Media–Use and Reading Engagement Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to collect information about students' use of short-form video platforms and their reading habits. There are no right or wrong answers. All responses will remain confidential.

#### Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender:  Male  Female
2. Age:  17  18  19  20
3. University year:

#### Section B: Frequency and Duration of Short–Form Video Use

4. On average, how much time do you spend daily watching short-form videos (e.g., TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts)?  
 Less than 30 minutes  30–60 minutes  1–2 hours  
 More than 2 hours
5. Which platform do you use most frequently for short-form videos?  
 TikTok  Instagram Reels  YouTube Shorts  I use all platforms equally
6. What type of content do you watch most often? (You may choose more than one)  
 Entertainment  Educational  News/Informational  Sports  
 Lifestyle/Trends

#### Section C: Attention and Focus after Viewing Short–Form Videos

Responses are based on a 5–point scale: **1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree**

7. I find it difficult to concentrate on schoolwork after watching short-form videos.
8. Short-form videos make it harder for me to focus on one task for a long time.
9. I feel mentally tired after watching several short videos in a row.

10. I become easily distracted when studying after using social media platforms.

#### Section D: Reading Habits and Engagement

11. I enjoy reading long English texts such as stories, articles, or novels. \_\_\_\_\_

12. I find it difficult to finish long reading assignments without losing focus. \_\_\_\_\_

13. I prefer watching short videos rather than reading long texts for information. \_\_\_\_\_

14. I feel impatient when reading texts longer than one page. \_\_\_\_

15. I can stay focused when reading English texts for more than 20 minutes. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Section E: Self-Perceived Impact of Digital Media on Reading

16. Watching short-form videos has reduced my interest in reading long texts. \_\_\_\_\_

17. I feel more comfortable consuming information in short digital formats. \_\_\_\_\_

18. My reading comprehension has been affected by my media consumption habits. \_\_\_\_\_