

## TikTok Use and Reading Interest Among Elementary School Students: The Role of *Attention Span*

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### Abstract

The rise of the social media platform TikTok among elementary school students has transformed patterns of information consumption and literacy activities. This study aims to analyze the effect of TikTok video consumption on students' interest in reading and to examine the role of attention span as a mediating variable. This study employs a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The sample consisted of 43 fifth-grade students at SDN Temugiring, selected using total sampling. Data were collected via a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire that met the criteria for validity and reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.701). Data analysis was conducted using Spearman's correlation and path analysis with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics. The results showed that TikTok video consumption was not significantly associated with reading interest ( $\rho = 0.015$ ;  $p = 0.923$ ), while attention span was positively and significantly associated with reading interest ( $\rho = 0.370$ ;  $p = 0.014$ ). The results of the path analysis indicate that attention span does not mediate the relationship between TikTok video consumption and reading interest because the path from TikTok video consumption to attention span is not significant ( $\beta = -0.183$ ;  $p = 0.241$ ). These findings suggest that the ability to sustain attention plays a more important role in reading interest than the intensity of TikTok use.

**Keywords:** Attention Span, Literacy, Reading Interest, Elementary School Students, TikTok.

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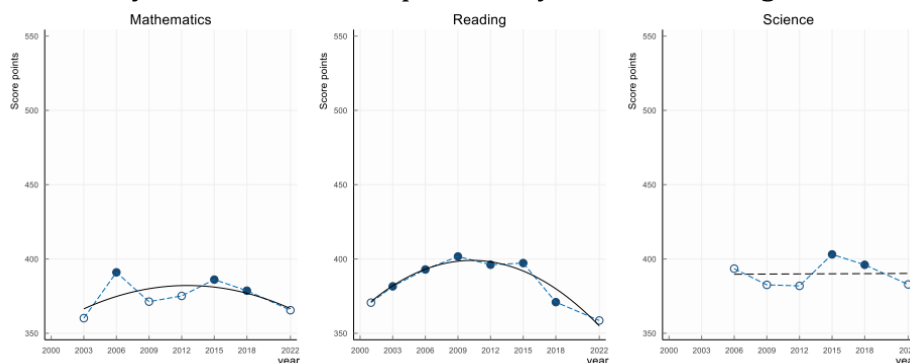
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## INTRODUCTION

The development of *digital* technology has brought fundamental changes to the way children access, understand, and interact with the information and entertainment they consume. Social media *platforms* such as TikTok present very short-form content with intense visual and audio stimuli. This is supported by the high usage of social media in Indonesia, where the average daily usage time reaches 3 hours and 7 minutes—higher than the global average of 2 hours and 39 minutes per day. This pattern fosters a habit of consuming information that is fast, instant, and tends to be superficial. This phenomenon not only influences media preferences but also impacts how attention works, particularly in the form of a “*short attention span*”—that is, the tendency for individuals to struggle to maintain focus for extended periods.

In the context of elementary education, the ability to sustain attention plays a crucial role, particularly in reading. Reading is not merely the process of recognizing words, but rather a complex cognitive activity that demands sustained concentration, comprehension of meaning, and full mental engagement. Elementary school students are expected to develop into readers who can understand the content of a text while also enjoying the reading process as a meaningful learning experience. However, data from the OECD’s *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) show that Indonesian students’ literacy levels remain below the OECD average. In fact, according to the PISA 2022 findings, Indonesia’s reading scores actually declined compared to 2018 and rank among the lowest since the country first participated (OECD, 2023). This situation indicates that many students still lack proficiency in basic reading.



**Figure 1. PISA 2022 Results (Volumes I and II) – Country Notes: Indonesia, 2023**

In addition to low reading literacy, challenges are also evident in the reading habits of the Indonesian public. The low interest in learning and reading literacy among elementary school students is consistent with previous research findings indicating that the use of digital media can contribute to a decline in students’ interest in reading (Mega & Safrizal, 2023). This is reinforced by the 2024 National Reading Enthusiasm Survey (TGM) results, which indicate that the national TGM score reached 72.44 and falls into the “moderate” category. Although this represents an increase compared to the previous year, these results indicate that the public’s reading culture still requires continuous strengthening, particularly among school-age groups who are in the phase of developing reading habits (National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024).

One factor believed to influence students’ interest in reading is the high consumption of digital media, particularly short videos on the TikTok platform. According to the *Uses and Gratifications* theory ( ), individuals selectively choose the media that best suits their specific needs and desires for satisfaction (Karunia H, Ashri, & Irwansyah, 2021). TikTok offers engaging, interactive, and easily accessible content,

enabling it to quickly meet users' needs for both entertainment and information. These characteristics make TikTok one of the most effective media platforms for facilitating the fulfillment of users' informational and entertainment needs through interactive engagement.

However, continuous exposure to short videos is suspected of affecting students' attention spans. From a developmental psychology perspective, elementary school age (6–12 years) is a critical phase in the development of concentration, self-regulation, and executive functions. TikTok videos, which are presented briefly and rapidly, can foster the formation of an *"instant reward"* pattern, causing children to become accustomed to instant gratification and struggle to maintain focus on activities requiring sustained attention.

This explanation aligns with the *Cognitive Load* theory proposed by John Sweller (1998), which states that human cognitive processing capacity is limited. Rapid and repetitive exposure to information has the potential to increase cognitive load, thereby reducing an individual's ability to engage in deep information processing. As a result, students may struggle to sustain their attention on activities that require prolonged concentration, such as reading.

*Attention span* is one of the factors that supports the development of an interest in reading. Students who are able to sustain their attention for longer periods tend to find it easier to understand the content of what they read, engage deeply in the reading process, and have a positive reading experience. Soniah, Safrizal, & Herlina (2023) explain that reading involves the comprehension and interpretation of information, which requires sustained cognitive engagement. Consequently, a decline in attention span has the potential to affect students' interest in reading.

Conceptually, *Attention Span* is positioned as a mediating variable because the ability to sustain attention is one of the cognitive mechanisms that can bridge the influence of digital media consumption on students' learning behavior. Exposure to fast-paced and repetitive TikTok videos is thought to affect students' ability to maintain focus, while reading requires sustained attention for students to understand and enjoy the content. Thus, changes in *Attention Span* have the potential to serve as a pathway explaining how TikTok consumption can influence students' interest in reading.

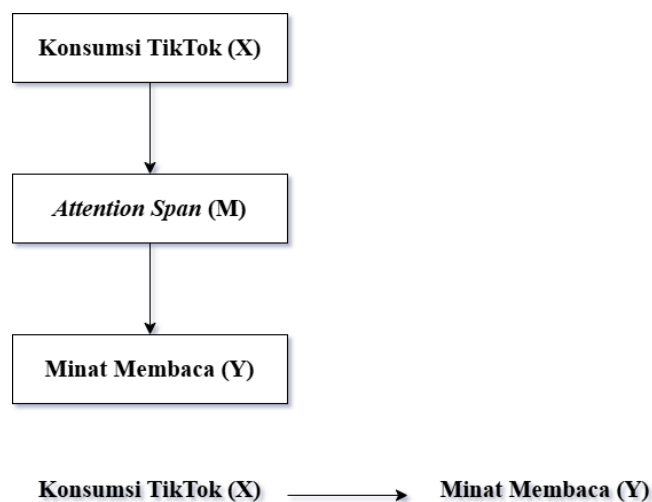
**Table 1. Analysis of Previous Research and the Position of This Study**

| Researcher                               | Research Focus                                                   | Key Findings                                                | Limitations                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rauf, Hamsiah, & Muhammadijah (2023)     | Gadget Use and Reading Interest Among Elementary School Students | Gadget use is associated with students' reading interest    | Did not specifically examine TikTok use and did not include <i>attention span</i> as a mediating mechanism |
| Nurhaliza, Suriansyah, & Rafianti (2024) | Digital media and reading literacy                               | Digital media influences students' literacy behaviors       | Does not explain the psychological processes linking digital media to reading interest                     |
| Haliti-Sylaj Sadiku (2024)               | <i>Short-form</i> videos and <i>attention span</i>               | Exposure to short-form videos affects <i>attention span</i> | Does not link <i>attention span</i> to elementary school                                                   |

|            |                                                                                           |                                                                       |  |  | students' interest in reading                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| This study | TikTok Usage, <i>Attention Span</i> , and Elementary School Students' Interest in Reading | Examining direct and indirect relationships through a mediation model |  |  | No previous study has simultaneously examined TikTok consumption, <i>attention span</i> , and reading interest among elementary school students within a single analytical model. |

Based on Table 1, previous studies generally examined the relationship between digital media, *attention span*, and reading interest separately; thus, no study has been found that simultaneously examines TikTok consumption, *attention span*, and reading interest among elementary school students within a single mediation model. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in the integration of these three variables to explain the mechanism of the relationship between TikTok usage and reading interest through *attention span* as a mediating variable.

Based on theoretical reviews and the results of previous studies, this study proposes a conceptual model that illustrates the relationship between TikTok consumption, *attention span*, and reading interest. The model suggests that TikTok consumption is hypothesized to influence reading interest both directly and through *attention span* as a mediating variable.



**Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of the Study**

A key finding of this study lies in testing the role of *Attention Span* as a mediating variable in the relationship between TikTok consumption and reading interest among elementary school students, thereby not only examining the direct effects between variables but also explaining the underlying psychological mechanisms of this relationship. Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the relationship between TikTok video consumption and reading interest among elementary school students and to test the role of *Attention Span* as a mediating variable.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a correlational design and quantitative methodology. The quantitative method was chosen because the study aims to objectively measure the relationship between variables, which will then be analyzed using numerical data through statistical procedures. The relationships among these factors will be examined in this study. The variables used in this study are *Attention Span* (M), TikTok video consumption (X), and interest in reading (Y). The purpose of this correlational study is to identify and explain the relationships among the variables under investigation. A correlational design was chosen because this study aims to determine how students' reading interest and TikTok video consumption are related, as well as to test the role of *Attention Span* as a mediating variable.

The research instruments were developed by the researcher based on a literature review regarding social media use, *Attention Span*, and students' reading interest. Indicators of reading interest include interest in reading activities and consistency in reading activities (Putri & Ahmadi, 2023; Rauf et al., 2023). Indicators of TikTok video consumption focused on the intensity and habits of students' TikTok use, reflecting the frequency, duration, and level of engagement in using social media (Karunia H et al., 2021).

The research instrument does not specifically distinguish the types of content consumed by students; therefore, TikTok usage in this study may include both entertainment and educational content. Meanwhile, the *Attention Span* indicator encompasses the ability to maintain focus while learning, the duration of concentration while reading, susceptibility to distraction, focus when receiving information, and sustained attention during learning activities (Haliti-Sylaj & Sadiku, 2024; Rusydiana & Kediri, 2025).

The study was conducted at SDN Temugiring, Cilegon City, with a population of all 43 fifth-grade students. Because the population size was relatively small and all members of the population were accessible to the researchers, total sampling was used, making all fifth-grade students the study's respondents.

Research data were collected using a questionnaire designed based on the indicators of each research variable. Initially, the instrument consisted of 18 statement items, including 6 items for the TikTok video consumption variable, 6 items for the *attention span* variable, and 6 items for the reading interest variable. All items were measured using a 4-point Likert scale consisting of Strongly Agree (SS), Agree (S), Disagree (TS), and Strongly Disagree (STS). Some items were formulated as negative statements, so *reverse coding* was performed during the data processing stage.

Before being used in the study, the instrument was tested for validity and reliability using IBM SPSS *Statistics*. The validity test was conducted using *Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation* ( ) with the criteria of calculated  $r > \text{table } r$  (0.301) and a significance level  $< 0.05$ . The test results showed that all items in the *Attention Span* and reading interest variables met the validity criteria. Meanwhile, for the TikTok video consumption variable, two items did not meet the validity criteria and were therefore eliminated, while the other four items were deemed valid and used in the research analysis.

Thus, the instrument used in the final analysis consisted of 16 items, including 4 items on TikTok video consumption, 6 items on *Attention Span*, and 6 items on reading interest. Next, a reliability test was conducted using *Cronbach's Alpha* coefficient on all items that had been deemed valid. The test results showed a *Cronbach's Alpha* of 0.701,

indicating that the instrument has an adequate level of internal consistency and is suitable for use in collecting research data (Forester et al. 2024).

**Table 2. Distribution of Research Instrument Items**

| Variable                 | Indicator                                                                                      | Number of Items |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| TikTok Video Consumption | Intensity of use, usage habits                                                                 | 4               |
| <i>Attention Span</i>    | Focus while studying, duration of concentration, susceptibility to distraction, attention span | 6               |
| Interest in Reading      | Interest in reading, consistency in reading                                                    | 6               |
| <b>Total</b>             |                                                                                                | <b>16</b>       |

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS *Statistics*. Descriptive analysis and inferential analysis were the two stages of data analysis used. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the characteristics of the data for each research variable through the mean, standard deviation, minimum value, and maximum value. This analysis aimed to provide an overview of students' levels of TikTok video consumption, *attention span*, and interest in reading (Siregar, 2021).

Inferential analysis was used to test the correlations and relationships among the research variables. Before hypothesis testing, the data were first tested for normality. The relationships among the research variables were analyzed using Spearman's correlation because some variables did not meet the assumption of normality (Pamungkasih, 2023). Since the sample size was less than 50 respondents, the normality test was conducted using the *Shapiro-Wilk test* (Fahmeyzan, Soraya, & Etmy, 2018). Subsequently, hypothesis testing was performed using regression analysis and path *analysis* to identify both direct and indirect effects among the research variables (Keneq, 2020).

Path analysis was used to test the role of *Attention Span* as a mediating variable in the relationship between TikTok video consumption and reading interest among fifth-grade students at SDN Temugiring. The mediation test was conducted in three stages: (1) testing the effect of TikTok video consumption on *Attention Span*, (2) testing the effect of *Attention Span* on reading interest, and (3) testing the direct effect of TikTok video consumption on reading interest. Indirect effects were obtained by multiplying the path coefficients between the independent variable, the mediating variable, and the dependent variable. The analysis results were used to determine the role of *Attention Span* as a mediating variable in the relationship between TikTok video consumption and students' reading interest.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to examine the relationship between students' reading interest and their use of TikTok, as well as to evaluate the role of *Attention Span* as a mediating factor in that relationship. The study was conducted to understand the relationship between the use of *digital* social media and the literacy activities of elementary school students, particularly regarding reading habits and the ability to maintain attention while learning. Based on the results of data analysis using statistical tests, several findings were obtained that indicate a relationship among the variables studied and can be discussed further as follows.

## Instrument Item Statistics

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation)**

|                          | Item Statistics |                |           |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------|
|                          | Mean            | Std. Deviation | N         |
| TikTok Video Consumption | <b>11.44</b>    | <b>2.56</b>    | <b>43</b> |
| <i>Attention Span</i>    | <b>17.60</b>    | <b>2.42</b>    | <b>43</b> |
| Interest in Reading      | <b>16.51</b>    | <b>3.48</b>    | <b>43</b> |

The results of the descriptive analysis show that the average score for students' TikTok video consumption was 11.44 (SD = 2.56), for *attention span* was 17.60 (SD = 2.42), and for reading interest was 16.51 (SD = 3.84). The standard deviation values for the three variables indicate variation in respondents' answers, although the data distribution is relatively narrow. These results provide a general overview of the characteristics of TikTok video consumption, *attention span*, and reading interest among the student respondents in this study.

## Reliability Test

**Table 4. Reliability Test Results (*Cronbach's Alpha*) for the Instrument**

| Reliability Statistics |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha       | Number of Items |
| .701                   | <b>16</b>       |

A reliability test was conducted using *Cronbach's Alpha* coefficient on the 16 items that had been validated. The results of the test showed a *Cronbach's Alpha* value of 0.701. This value met the minimum reliability criterion of 0.70, so the research instrument was deemed to have adequate internal consistency and is suitable for use in research data collection (Forester et al., 2024).

## Normality Test

The normality test was conducted using the *Shapiro-Wilk* method because the sample size was less than 50 respondents (n = 43). The results of the normality test are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Results of the Normality Test**

| Variable                 | Test of Normality |    |      | Description |
|--------------------------|-------------------|----|------|-------------|
|                          | Statistic         | dg | Sig. |             |
| TikTok Video Consumption | .949              | 43 | .057 | Normal      |
| <i>Attention Span</i>    | .952              | 43 | .072 | Normal      |
| Interest in Reading      | .914              | 43 | .004 | Non-Normal  |

The test results show that the variables TikTok video consumption ( $p = 0.057$ ) and *Attention Span* ( $p = 0.072$ ) are normally distributed, while the variable reading interest ( $p = 0.004$ ) is not normally distributed. Since one of the variables did not meet the normality requirement, the relationship between variables was tested using Spearman's correlation, which does not require a normal data distribution.

### Spearman's Correlation Test

The Spearman correlation test was used to determine the relationships among the study variables, namely TikTok video consumption, *attention span*, and students' interest in reading. The use of the Spearman test in this study was based on the results of the normality test, as one of the variables in this study did not follow a normal distribution. The results of the Spearman correlation test are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. Results of the Spearman Correlation Test (Spearman's rho)**

| Variable              | TikTok | <i>Attention Span</i> | Reading Interest |
|-----------------------|--------|-----------------------|------------------|
| TikTok                | 1      | -.074                 | .025             |
| <i>Attention Span</i> | -.074  | 1                     | .370*            |
| Interest in Reading   | .015   | .370                  | 1                |

Note:  $p < 0.05$

The results of the Spearman correlation test showed that there was no significant relationship between TikTok video consumption and *attention span* ( $\rho = -0.074$ ;  $p = 0.636$ ) or between TikTok video consumption and interest in reading ( $\rho = 0.015$ ;  $p = 0.923$ ). Conversely, there was a significant positive relationship between *attention span* and interest in reading ( $\rho = 0.370$ ;  $p = 0.014$ ). The correlation coefficient values indicate that the relationship between *attention span* and interest in reading falls into the low-to-moderate category.

### Mediation Test Results (Regression)

A mediation analysis was conducted to test the role of *Attention Span* as a mediating variable in the relationship between TikTok video consumption and students' interest in reading. The analysis was performed using path analysis through three stages: (1) testing the effect of TikTok video consumption on *Attention Span*, (2) testing the effect of TikTok video consumption on interest in reading while controlling for TikTok video consumption, The test results are presented in Table 7, Table 8, and Table 9.

**Table 7. Test Results for Variables X and M**

| Variable | $\beta$ | t      | Sig. |
|----------|---------|--------|------|
| X and M  | -.183   | -1.189 | .241 |

The results of the regression analysis indicate that TikTok video consumption does not have a significant effect on students' *attention span* ( $\beta = -0.183$ ;  $p = 0.241$ ). A negative regression coefficient indicates a tendency for an inverse relationship; however, since the significance level is greater than 0.05, this relationship cannot be considered statistically significant. Thus, the level of students' TikTok video consumption has not been proven to affect their ability to maintain attention.

This finding suggests that students' use of TikTok is not necessarily associated with a decline in their ability to focus or concentrate. These results differ from several studies that suggest exposure to short-form videos has the potential to reduce users' attention spans because they become accustomed to receiving information rapidly and in a constantly shifting manner (Haliti-Sylaj & Sadiku, 2024; Rusydiana & Kediri, 2025).

These differing results may be attributed to the characteristics of the study's respondents, who were still in elementary school, as well as the lack of differentiation regarding the types of content consumed by the students. In this study, TikTok use could encompass both entertainment and educational content, resulting in a more varied impact on attention span.

**Table 8. Results of the M and Y Variable Tests**

| Variable | $\beta$ | t     | Sig. |
|----------|---------|-------|------|
| M and Y  | .385    | 2.586 | .013 |

The results of the regression analysis indicate that *Attention Span* has a positive and significant effect on students' interest in reading ( $\beta = 0.385$ ;  $p = 0.013$ ). These results suggest that the better students' ability to maintain attention and concentration, the higher their interest in reading. Therefore, *Attention Span* is a factor that contributes to increasing students' interest in reading.

This finding indicates that the ability to focus is a key factor in reading activities. Reading requires sustained attention so that students can understand the content and remain engaged with the text. When students have strong concentration skills, they are more likely to enjoy the reading process, which in turn increases their interest in reading.

The results of this study support the theory that attention is a key component of the learning process. Students who can maintain focus on the information they receive will find it easier to engage in academic activities, including reading. Therefore, improving attention skills can be a strategy to foster students' interest in reading.

**Table 9. Results of the Test for Variables X and Y**

| Variable | $\beta$ | t     | Sig. |
|----------|---------|-------|------|
| X and Y  | -.036   | -.229 | .820 |

The results of the regression analysis show that TikTok video consumption does not have a significant effect on students' interest in reading ( $\beta = -0.036$ ;  $p = 0.820$ ). A significance level greater than 0.05 indicates that there is no meaningful relationship between TikTok video consumption and interest in reading. Thus, the hypothesis stating that TikTok video consumption influences interest in reading is not supported by the research data.

This finding is interesting because it contradicts the study's initial assumption that the higher the TikTok consumption, the lower students' interest in reading. These results suggest that TikTok use does not necessarily hinder literacy activities. Currently, TikTok has evolved into a platform that not only provides entertainment but also offers a variety of educational content capable of introducing information, knowledge, and reading recommendations to users. This situation allows students to maintain their interest in reading even while actively using TikTok (Suttriso, 2022). These findings align with the

view that digital media can be utilized as a tool to support literacy when used appropriately (Arifah et al., 2024; Putri & Ahmadi, 2023).

Furthermore, students' interest in reading is likely influenced more by other factors such as family environment, school support, reading habits at home, and awareness of reading materials than by the intensity of social media use alone (Rauf et al., 2023; Zalukhu & Zalukhu, 2024).

### **The Role of Attention Span as a Mediating Variable**

A path analysis was conducted to test the role of *Attention Span* as a mediating variable in the relationship between TikTok video consumption and students' interest in reading. The results showed that the path from TikTok video consumption to *Attention Span* was not significant ( $\beta = -0.183$ ;  $p = 0.241$ ), whereas the path from *Attention Span* to interest in reading was significant ( $\beta = 0.385$ ;  $p = 0.013$ ). Furthermore, the direct effect of TikTok video consumption on reading interest was also not significant ( $\beta = -0.036$ ;  $p = 0.820$ ).

Based on these results, *attention span* cannot indicate that the relationship between TikTok video consumption and reading interest is likely influenced by factors outside the scope of this study. Factors such as learning motivation, parental support, the school's literacy environment, digital literacy skills, or the type of content consumed via TikTok may be more relevant variables for explaining this relationship. Therefore, future research is recommended to examine these variables as mediators or moderators to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between digital media use and students' interest in reading.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to analyze the relationship between TikTok consumption, *attention span*, and reading interest among fifth-grade students at SDN Temugiring. The results indicate that TikTok video consumption does not have a significant effect on students' *attention span* or reading interest. Conversely, *attention span* was not found to mediate the relationship between TikTok video consumption and reading interest because the pathway of influence from TikTok video consumption to *attention span* was not significant.

These findings suggest that the ability to sustain attention plays a more significant role in enhancing reading interest than the intensity of TikTok use. Therefore, teachers and schools need to develop learning strategies that can improve students' focus and concentration during the learning process. Parents also need to provide guidance on digital media use and foster reading habits within the family environment to support children's literacy development.

This study has several limitations, namely a relatively small sample size and the fact that it involved only one school; thus, the results cannot yet be widely generalized. Additionally, the research instrument did not distinguish between the types of TikTok content consumed, nor did it examine other variables—such as learning motivation, digital literacy, parental support, or the school's literacy environment—as factors that could influence students' interest in reading.

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