



Learning Style Adaptation of Generation Z to Short Educational Videos on Social Media



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Abstract: The rapid growth of digital technology and social media has significantly influenced how Generation Z engages with educational content. This study explores how Gen Z high school students adapt their learning styles to short educational videos available on platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels. Using a qualitative descriptive research design, data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and questionnaires involving 30 students from urban senior high schools. The findings reveal that Gen Z learners prefer visual, fast-paced, and interactive content, with short videos serving as effective tools for reinforcing understanding and engaging attention. Students reported that these microlearning formats support their multitasking habits and align with their digital media consumption patterns. However, concerns emerged regarding content credibility and distraction when educational material is mixed with entertainment. The study highlights the potential of short-form video as a supplementary learning tool in hybrid and post-pandemic educational environments. It also identifies a gap in existing research concerning long-term impacts and learning outcomes, suggesting a need for further studies. The insights provided can inform educators, content developers, and policymakers in designing more effective digital learning strategies tailored to Gen Z preferences.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has redefined how information is produced, accessed, and shared across all segments of society. This transformation is particularly evident among Generation Z those born between 1995 and 2010 who are the first truly digital-native cohort. With their lives intertwined with smartphones, tablets, and constant internet connectivity, their interaction with digital media has evolved from passive consumption to active participation (Krisdiyansah & Hakim, 2023). In Indonesia, the pervasive use of social media has become a cultural norm among Gen Z, as platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts dominate their daily screen time. These platforms, originally designed for entertainment, are now repurposed as sources of knowledge, inspiration, and informal education (Ayu Aprilia et al., 2023).

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The consumption of short-form video content has risen sharply, transforming social media into a hybrid space where education and entertainment converge. Generation Z learners are particularly drawn to content that is fast-paced, visually stimulating, and interactive. Their multitasking behavior, preference for autonomy, and demand for immediate feedback align well with the characteristics of short educational videos available on platforms such as TikTok and YouTube (Akbari et al., 2025). These microlearning formats accommodate their limited attention span and provide flexible access to knowledge anytime and anywhere. However, the adoption of such content also raises questions about depth of understanding, critical engagement, and its alignment with formal learning objectives.

Generation Z possesses distinctive learning traits that diverge from those of previous generations. This cohort favors learning experiences that are highly visual, socially connected, and technology-rich. Their cognitive preferences are shaped by the constant stimulation provided by digital environments, leading to a preference for multimedia learning over traditional text-based formats (Rahmawati et al., 2025). They are also inclined to learn independently using online platforms, a trait that was further reinforced during the pandemic. According to Suhartoyo and Wulandari (2024), Gen Z students often utilize TikTok tutorials, Instagram infographics, and YouTube explainers to supplement their academic work, indicating a paradigm shift in how this generation perceives and engages with educational content.

Short educational videos, commonly defined as concise instructional content typically under three minutes, are now utilized not only for personal learning but also as supplemental tools in formal education settings. These videos emphasize clarity, brevity, and creativity often relying on visual storytelling and audio cues to convey complex information quickly. They allow learners to access bite-sized knowledge in a time-efficient manner and are particularly effective for revision, conceptual overviews, and skill demonstrations (Suhartoyo & Wulandari, 2024). Nonetheless, despite these advantages, the integration of short videos into structured curricula presents challenges in ensuring content validity, critical reflection, and assessment alignment.

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically accelerated the global adoption of digital education, exposing the limitations of traditional learning models and highlighting the necessity of flexible, technology-integrated instruction. In Indonesia, schools and teachers were compelled to transition to online platforms and digital pedagogies, many of which have continued post-pandemic in hybrid or blended formats (Ayu Aprilia et al., 2023). This shift has not only normalized the use of social media for educational purposes but also empowered students to seek alternative learning resources on their own. Platforms like TikTok, once perceived as purely recreational, are now populated with educational influencers, subject-matter experts, and student-created academic content, reshaping perceptions about how and where learning can occur (Justiyan Waris, Luthpi Saepuloh, 2025).

Despite the growing trend of using social media and short videos for educational purposes, there remains a significant gap in empirical research concerning how Indonesian high school students particularly Generation Z adjust their learning styles in response to this format. Most existing studies focus on higher education contexts or examine social media use from a general behavioral perspective. Few have investigated

the specific cognitive and motivational impacts of short educational videos on Gen Z students in senior high school settings. There is a pressing need for research that captures students' perspectives, evaluates their engagement strategies, and explores how such media shapes their academic behaviors (Rahmawati et al., 2025).

Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by examining the adaptation of Generation Z's learning styles to short educational videos disseminated through social media platforms. The primary objective is to explore how these students integrate such content into their academic routines and how it influences their engagement, comprehension, and overall academic motivation. It also aims to identify which factors such as video design, platform preference, and peer interaction enhance or hinder the educational value of short-form content (Akbari et al., 2025; Muhammad Ari Rifqi et al., 2025).

Two research questions guide this inquiry: (1) How do Generation Z students utilize short educational videos in their learning process? (2) What factors influence the effectiveness of short video formats in shaping their learning styles and academic engagement? These questions are rooted in the need to understand how learning modalities must evolve to remain relevant and effective for digital-native students.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform educators, instructional designers, and policymakers about how to optimize learning environments for Generation Z. By recognizing the value and limitations of short-form content, schools can design hybrid strategies that combine traditional instruction with innovative media approaches. Additionally, this study provides insights for content creators and ed-tech developers to produce pedagogically sound videos that resonate with students' cognitive needs and digital behaviors (Krisdiyansah & Hakim, 2023; Muhammad Ari Rifqi et al., 2025). Ultimately, this research advocates for an educational ecosystem that embraces the realities of modern media consumption while upholding academic rigor and inclusivity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Characteristics of Generation Z Learners in the Digital Age

Generation Z, often referred to as "digital natives," represents a cohort born and raised in the era of rapid technological advancement. This generation is distinguished by its inherent familiarity with digital tools, instant communication, and online interaction. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z learners are more inclined to engage with visual and interactive forms of content rather than traditional textual or verbal learning methods (Nugroho, 2018). Their upbringing in an environment saturated with smartphones, the internet, and social media has shaped their cognitive and behavioral patterns in learning contexts, promoting preferences for autonomy, speed, and multitasking (Setyosari, 2020).

In educational settings, these characteristics translate into a strong preference for dynamic, multimedia-based instruction. Studies show that Gen Z students gravitate toward learning formats that are not only visually rich but also offer rapid access to information, such as video tutorials, infographics, and gamified learning tools. The dominance of platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok among this group further reinforces their orientation toward short, engaging, and interactive digital content (Manjillatul Urba et al., 2024). These tools align with their preference for fast processing, frequent stimulation, and the flexibility to learn at their own pace.

Moreover, the pervasive use of digital media has significantly influenced the way Generation Z absorbs and processes information. Their exposure to multiple streams of content simultaneously has fostered a learning style that values multitasking, immediate feedback, and visual stimulation. As Hayati (2024) explains, educators must consider these traits when designing instructional strategies, especially in the context of social studies and other content-heavy disciplines (Hayati, 2024). To foster meaningful engagement, instructional design for Gen Z must align with their digital behaviors, leveraging media formats that resonate with their cognitive strengths and learning preferences.

Educational Use of Short Videos on Social Media Platforms

Short educational videos have emerged as a powerful learning medium, particularly in the digital era where attention spans are shrinking and learning preferences are evolving. These videos, typically lasting under five minutes, are designed to convey concise, focused lessons on specific topics. Known for their brevity, accessibility, and engagement potential, short videos are increasingly utilized on platforms like TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels. These social media platforms provide an intuitive interface and vast audience reach, making them ideal for delivering educational content in formats that appeal to today's learners (Susilana et al., 2024).

The concept of microlearning underpins this trend, emphasizing the delivery of knowledge in small, digestible units that learners can access anytime and anywhere. This format aligns particularly well with the needs of Generation Z, who favor learning methods that are fast, flexible, and mobile-friendly. Microlearning also supports just-in-time learning, enabling students to access information when it is most relevant, which can enhance retention and motivation (Arifin, 2024). With visual, auditory, and interactive elements, short videos create immersive microlearning experiences that cater to multiple learning styles.

Despite the promising advantages, integrating short videos into formal education also poses challenges. Concerns include the superficiality of content, difficulty in assessing deep understanding, and the risk of distraction inherent in social media platforms. However, studies indicate that when used strategically, these videos can significantly boost learner engagement, especially in hybrid learning settings where digital content complements classroom interaction. As highlighted by Yuangga et al. (2022), the post-pandemic shift in education necessitates adaptive strategies, and short-form digital content has the potential to bridge instructional gaps while meeting the evolving demands of 21st-century education (Yuangga et al., 2022).

Post-Pandemic Shifts in Digital Learning and Research Gaps

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly reshaped the global education landscape, triggering a rapid shift toward digital learning. In Indonesia, this transformation accelerated the integration of digital tools and platforms into formal education systems, challenging traditional classroom models and requiring both educators and students to adapt swiftly (Suyanto & Ginting, 2022). The emergency transition revealed the importance of technological infrastructure, teacher digital competence, and innovative content delivery. This period also marked the emergence of hybrid learning models,

blending online and face-to-face instruction, as a new educational norm rather than a temporary solution (Hariyanto & Wulandari, 2021).

As digital learning became more prominent, social media began to play a growing role in supporting academic engagement. Platforms that were once considered distractions are now increasingly used as channels for educational content. The use of WhatsApp, YouTube, and TikTok to distribute learning materials has shown potential to reach students across diverse backgrounds, especially in asynchronous and flexible learning environments (Muhajir et al., 2024). However, this shift also exposed critical gaps particularly in how learners adapt their learning styles to short-form, visually driven content. While tools and platforms are evolving, pedagogical approaches have not always kept pace, leaving a disconnect between instructional strategies and learner preferences (Nur, 2021).

Despite growing literature on digital and hybrid learning, there remains limited research focused on how high school students, particularly those from Generation Z, adjust their learning strategies to fit short educational videos delivered via social media. This gap is crucial given the prominence of visual micro-content in Gen Z's everyday media consumption. Exploring how this generation engages with such content in formal educational contexts is essential to designing responsive teaching methods that align with their learning behaviors and digital fluency.

METHODOLOGY

Understanding how Generation Z learners adapt their learning styles to short-form educational videos necessitates an approach that is both flexible and deeply explorative. Therefore, this study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze the lived experiences and perspectives of high school students regarding their use of short educational videos on social media platforms. This design enables researchers to describe phenomena as they occur in real-life contexts without manipulating variables, making it particularly suitable for social science inquiries involving subjective experiences (Sugiyono, 2007). The qualitative approach also facilitates a naturalistic inquiry, focusing on how students perceive and respond to the educational potential of platforms like TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels. These platforms are not only prevalent among young people but also serve as informal educational spaces where students consume and engage with microlearning content. Given the complexity of student behaviors and the nuances of digital media interaction, a qualitative descriptive method was best suited to capture the richness of these phenomena (Ramdhan, 2021).

The selection of research participants was conducted using purposive sampling. This technique was chosen to ensure that only individuals who fit specific criteria relevant to the study namely, high school students from grades 10 to 12 who regularly engage with short-form educational content on social media were included. Participants were drawn from several urban high schools where access to digital infrastructure and mobile devices is relatively high, increasing the likelihood of social media usage for learning purposes. Data collection methods comprised semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and short questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility in probing deeper into students' preferences, experiences, and motivations while ensuring that the discussion remained focused on the key research objectives. Focus group discussions

enabled the exploration of shared patterns and peer influences, while questionnaires were used to obtain demographic information and a general overview of participants' media usage behaviors (Tersiana, 2018).

The thematic analysis approach was employed to analyze the qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions. This method is commonly used in qualitative research to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within data. Initially, all interviews were transcribed verbatim and subjected to a process of coding to identify recurring concepts and expressions. These codes were then categorized into broader themes, such as learning engagement, content relevance, cognitive adaptation, and emotional response to video learning formats. Special attention was given to how students described their shifts in attention span, preference for visuals, and multitasking behaviors when engaging with educational content on platforms typically associated with entertainment. The analysis process was iterative, involving multiple rounds of reading, coding, and interpretation to ensure the accuracy and depth of the insights drawn. This approach is grounded in the notion that meaning emerges through detailed contextual interpretation rather than numerical data or hypothesis testing, aligning with the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research (Sugiyono, 2007; Ramdhan, 2021).

Additionally, the study incorporated triangulation to enhance data validity. By combining data from interviews, focus group discussions, and questionnaires, the researcher could corroborate findings across sources, ensuring that interpretations were well-grounded and reflective of actual student experiences. The use of direct quotations from participants provided voice to the data, allowing the study to capture not only what students do but how they make sense of their learning behaviors. In line with qualitative best practices, the researcher maintained a reflective journal throughout the data collection and analysis process to account for potential biases and assumptions. Ethical considerations were also upheld; informed consent was obtained from all participants and school authorities, and anonymity was preserved in all published findings (Tersiana, 2018).

Overall, the chosen methodology provided a comprehensive and contextually rich understanding of how Generation Z students adapt to microlearning through short educational videos on social media. The findings are intended to inform educators, content creators, and policymakers about the evolving learning styles of digital-native students, emphasizing the importance of aligning instructional methods with contemporary digital habits.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study explored how Generation Z high school students adapt their learning styles to short educational videos found on platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels. Through qualitative methods including interviews, focus group discussions, and questionnaires, the research uncovered several key patterns in student learning preferences, engagement behaviors, and cognitive responses to short-form video content.

Most respondents expressed a strong preference for visually rich and interactive content that delivers educational material quickly. Students frequently noted that short videos are easier to consume, especially when trying to understand complex topics in a

limited time. Many participants mentioned they often rewatched videos to enhance comprehension, reinforcing the idea that the concise nature of short-form content supports repeated viewing for better retention. This finding aligns with the growing evidence that digital-native learners benefit from microlearning strategies tailored to their cognitive style and digital behavior (Maria & Sujarwati, 2025).

Students also emphasized that platforms like TikTok and YouTube Shorts offer a blend of entertainment and education, making the learning process feel less burdensome and more natural. However, several students raised concerns regarding the reliability of information, noting that not all content creators provide accurate educational content. This observation echoes findings from earlier research that warn about the need for educator involvement and media literacy education to help students critically evaluate digital content (Rahmawati et al., 2025).

The integration of microlearning techniques, as observed in short educational videos, appears to support multitasking and cognitive efficiency. Students reported that videos containing animations, bullet points, clear voiceovers, and narrative storytelling helped them grasp concepts faster and retain information longer. This is consistent with studies that show interactive media increases attention and engagement among Gen Z learners (Datu et al., 2023).

Interestingly, a significant number of participants indicated that they often stumbled upon educational content by accident while scrolling through entertainment feeds. This suggests that algorithm-driven exposure on social media platforms facilitates incidental learning, an emerging trend where students learn unintentionally through passive engagement. According to Rakhmasari and Pratiwi (2024), such incidental learning is particularly powerful because it aligns with the students' habitual use of digital media and encourages spontaneous interest in academic content.

In terms of motivation, respondents noted that educational videos on TikTok or Instagram Reels made learning more appealing and less intimidating. Students particularly valued videos that featured real-life applications, humor, or peer-generated content, which made them feel more connected to the material. This sentiment supports research showing that relatable content on social media platforms can enhance learning outcomes by boosting motivation and emotional engagement (Mayasari et al., 2025).

The following table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants. In addition to survey and interview data, a weekly usage frequency pattern was observed among the participants. The figure below illustrates how often short educational videos are used on different platforms.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

No	Demographic Characteristics	Total (n=30)	Percentage (%)
Gender			
1	Male	12	40.0
2	Female	18	60.0
Grade Level			
3	Grade 10	8	26.7
4	Grade 11	12	40.0
5	Grade 12	10	33.3
Social Media Used for Learning			
6	TikTok	24	80.0
7	YouTube Shorts	21	70.0
8	Instagram Reels	15	50.0

Source: Data Processed

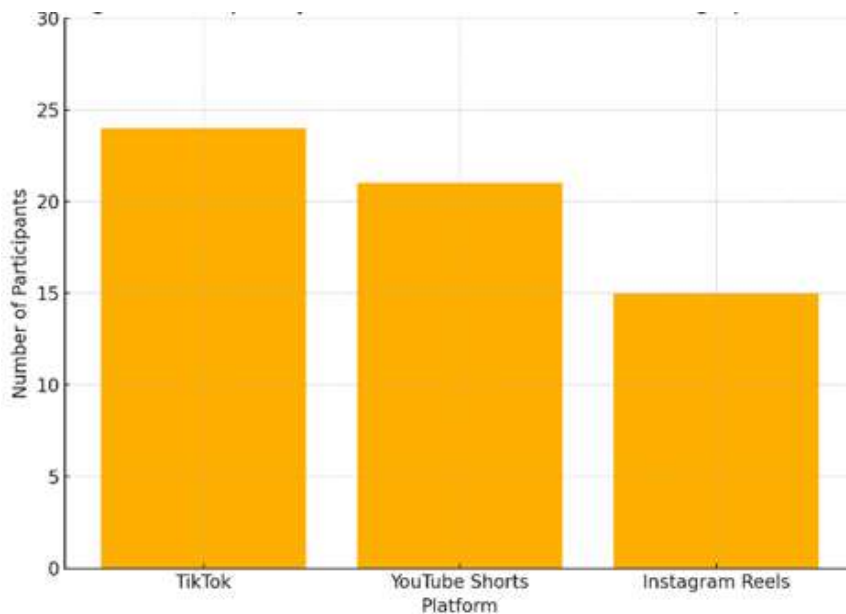


Figure 1. Frequency of Short Educational Video Usage per Week

Overall, the findings demonstrate that short-form educational videos resonate deeply with Generation Z’s learning behaviors and media consumption patterns. While they are not without limitations especially regarding content reliability they serve as a valuable complement to traditional instruction when used strategically. The results underscore the importance of leveraging students’ natural engagement with digital platforms for meaningful and adaptive learning experiences (Datu et al., 2023; Maria & Sujarwati, 2025; Mayasari et al., 2025; Rahmawati et al., 2025; Rakhmasari & Pratiwi, 2024).

This study's findings reveal that Generation Z high school students demonstrate distinct learning behaviors and preferences when engaging with short educational videos on platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels. The majority of participants expressed a clear preference for visually engaging and interactive content that delivers concise explanations of concepts, which they perceived as more accessible and less cognitively demanding than traditional text based materials. Students frequently reported rewatching videos to reinforce understanding and appreciated the flexibility of microlearning formats that allow them to control their pace of learning (Maria & Sujarwati, 2025). These preferences align with previous research indicating that visually rich content supports better engagement and comprehension among digital natives who are accustomed to rapid information processing (Manjillatul Urba et al., 2024; Susilana et al., 2024).

Despite the positive perceptions of short educational videos, some respondents raised concerns regarding the accuracy and academic credibility of user generated content on social media. A number of students observed that educational videos are often intermingled with entertainment content, leading to potential distractions that can undermine focus and learning continuity. This finding underscores a broader challenge identified in digital learning research: while social media has expanded access to educational content, it also requires learners to exercise critical judgment when selecting reliable sources (Rahmawati et al., 2025; Krisdiyansah & Hakim, 2023). In addition, students noted that without guidance from educators, they sometimes struggle to distinguish between high quality instructional videos and content created primarily for entertainment.

Another significant pattern that emerged is the role of microlearning and algorithmic content exposure in supporting incidental learning. Several students reported that while scrolling for entertainment, they encountered educational videos that piqued their curiosity or provided useful explanations, which they later incorporated into their study routines. This incidental engagement highlights the potential for social media algorithms to unintentionally support learning, particularly when recommendations align with users' interests and search history. Such patterns reflect broader trends in digital learning where formal and informal educational experiences increasingly converge (Mayasari et al., 2025; Rakhmasari & Pratiwi, 2024). These insights are important for educators designing hybrid learning strategies that leverage students' natural interactions with digital content.

The findings also point to the complementary role of short videos within blended learning environments. Students noted that when short educational videos are used alongside traditional classroom instruction or structured online learning, they serve as effective revision tools and help clarify topics that were challenging during face to face lessons. This reinforces the idea that hybrid education models combining teacher led instruction with digital resources can enhance overall learning outcomes if implemented thoughtfully. Previous research on hybrid learning post pandemic supports this view, suggesting that the integration of social media based content should be strategic and pedagogically grounded rather than random or solely entertainment oriented (Arifin, 2024; Ayu Aprilia et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that short educational videos on social media platforms play a meaningful role in how Generation Z high school students engage with academic content. The visual and interactive nature of these videos aligns with Gen Z's learning preferences and supports cognitive engagement through concise, repeatable content delivery. However, the educational value of such content depends critically on its accuracy and context within structured learning, as students can easily become distracted or misled by non academic material. The interplay between algorithmic content exposure and incidental learning further suggests that informal digital experiences influence formal learning behaviors. Therefore, educators and curriculum developers should consider integrating short video content into blended learning frameworks, ensuring that digital resources complement rather than replace pedagogically sound instruction. Future research could investigate how teacher guided use of social media videos impacts academic performance and how digital literacy training might help students discern quality educational content online.

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