Ananda: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak dan Remaja
e-ISSN: 3109-4384
Volume 1, Issue. 2, 2025, pp. 83-92

The Impact of Short-Form Content Consumption on the Development of Interest and Reading Resilience in Alpha Generation Children

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Submitted: December 14, 2025 Revised : February 12, 2026 Accepted: February 17, 2026

ABSTRACT. This study aims to analyze the impact of short-form content consumption on reading interest and endurance among Generation Alpha children using a psychopedagogical approach. The research employed a qualitative method with a single case study design, focusing on an 8-year-old female elementary school student as the subject. Data were collected through naturalistic observation over six weeks and semi-structured interviews conducted in the third and sixth weeks with both the subject and parents. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns related to reading behavior and the influence of short-form content consumption. The findings reveal that short-form content consumption significantly reduces reading interest through observational learning mechanisms that alter children's expectations toward information format, preferring content that is "fun and easy to understand." Additionally, reading endurance declined due to weakened delay of gratification abilities and attention system adaptation to rapid stimuli. The study concludes that this phenomenon represents cognitive adaptation to the digital environment rather than mere motivational issues, requiring strategic psychopedagogical interventions including gradual reading endurance training, self-regulation strengthening through mindfulness techniques, and educational approaches to limit short-form content consumption. These findings contribute to understanding the psychological mechanisms underlying digital media's impact on literacy development and provide practical implications for developing adaptive literacy approaches in the digital era.

Keywords: short-form content; reading interest; reading endurance; Generation Alpha; psychopedagogical approach

INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has brought about fundamental changes in the way people access and consume information. This transformation has not only affected reading and learning habits, but has also comprehensively overhauled the structure of literacy culture, especially among the Alpha generation a demographic group consisting of children born from 2010 to 2025 (Fell, 2020). This generation has unique characteristics because they are true *digital natives* who grow and develop in a digital ecosystem that has been fully integrated with their daily activities since birth. In contrast to previous generations who transitioned from the analog to digital world, the Alpha generation was directly exposed to digital technology from the early days of their lives, making them very active consumers of various forms of digital content with an intuitive level of technological fluency (Sahara et al., 2024).

Rapid advances in information technology and the proliferation of social media platforms have created a media environment dominated by *short-form content*. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts have become prima donna by presenting content that ranges from 15 seconds to a maximum of 3 minutes. The main characteristics of this content are a very limited duration and a minimal level of complexity, yet they are packaged in a way that is attention-grabbing and easy to consume. This phenomenon of shifting media consumption

preferences has become the focus of serious attention in contemporary psychopedagogical discourse. Empirical data released by the Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture reveals an alarming trend related to the use of digital devices among Indonesian children. Statistics show that the percentage of gadget use by children has experienced a significant spike, from 43.5% in 2019 to 67.8% in 2023. What is even more worrying is that the average duration of use of digital devices by children has reached 5.7 hours per day (Coordinating Ministry for PMK, 2024). The research findings cited from the Kumparan article provide a more comprehensive picture of the negative impact of excessive exposure on short-form video content. These studies show that intensive exposure to this type of content can have detrimental effects on various aspects of cognitive ability, including long-term memory capacity and an individual's ability to process and analyze information in depth and comprehensively (Mulyono, 2025).

The academic perspective put forward by Carr in his monumental work entitled *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding this phenomenon. Carr argues that excessive reliance on digital devices and constant internet access can significantly reduce a person's capacity to perform critical and deep-thinking processes. According to his analysis, constant exposure to fragmented and superficial information can alter the neural structure of the brain, thereby reducing the ability to concentrate for long periods of time and perform in-depth analysis (Matei, 2013). This condition is further exacerbated by the low level of interest in literacy activities among social media users. Observations show that the majority of users, particularly the younger generation, tend to be more interested and comfortable with visual content that can be consumed quickly, compared to text or reading materials that require an investment of time, concentration, and deep thinking. This phenomenon creates a potentially detrimental cycle, where traditional literacy skills are eroded as preferences shift towards instantaneous and superficial content consumption.

Paradoxically, although the Alpha generation has unlimited access to information as *digital natives*, they actually experience a decline in deep literacy skills that require critical reflection and analysis (Mulyono, 2025). This shift in information consumption patterns raises serious concerns about the future of literacy culture and its impact on the intellectual development of future generations. To respond to these challenges, the educational psychology approach offers a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding and responding to these dynamics strategically. Through a psychopedagogical framework, educators can design interventions that not only focus on technical reading skills, but also consider the affective and motivational aspects of the child in building sustainable reading habits. Studies show that the implementation of strategies such as *scaffolding*, fun activity-based literacy, and healthy digital literacy integration can increase reading engagement and resilience in elementary school-age children (Royanto, 2012). Furthermore, literacy in the digital era not only requires the ability to understand texts, but also evaluate and reflect on information critically (Adelia Dhea Oktria et al., 2024).

Based on this thought, this study seeks to answer the following questions. First, how does the consumption of short-form content affect the reading interest of Generation Alpha children? Second, what strategies can be applied to increase children's interest and reading resilience in the digital era? This study aims to analyze in depth the impact of short-form content consumption on the reading interest and resilience of Alpha generation children, as well as formulate solutions based on relevant psychopedagogical approaches to overcome these problems. By raising this theme, it is hoped that this research can make a significant contribution to the development of education policies and literacy strategies that are adaptive to the challenges of the digital era. This research is also expected to be a reference for educators, parents, and policy makers in creating a learning environment that is able to strengthen a culture of deep literacy, as well as equip the Alpha generation with the ability to think reflexively and critically in the midst of the rapid flow of instant information.

METHOD

Participants

This study uses a qualitative approach with a single case study design, which aims to explore the impact of *short-form content* consumption on reading interest and resilience of Generation Alpha children. The subject in this study was an 8-year-old girl who was in the 2nd grade of elementary school.

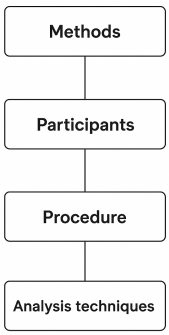

Figure 1. Research methods

In this study, the sample selection strategy was carried out by applying the purposive sampling technique. According to Sugiyono, purposive sampling is a technique for determining a sample of data sources with certain considerations. This technique is used when the researcher selects individuals who are considered to know the most information needed in the study (Lenaini, 2021), with the following selection criteria: (1) actively consuming short-form content such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, or Instagram Reels for at least two hours per day; (2) have basic reading skills that are in accordance with their grade level; and (3) showed indications of decreased attention when reading based on the results of observations in the learning environment. The selection of a single subject is carried out to allow an in-depth excavation of the phenomenon observed in a specific context using pseudonyms, as well as the subject's right to stop participation at any time.

Procedure

The research was conducted for six weeks in the subjects' home environment, where the researcher interacted regularly as a companion in private learning sessions. Observation is carried out in a naturalistic manner to observe reading behavior, response to text, and subjects' attention patterns during learning activities. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted in the third and sixth weeks with subjects and parents to obtain data on *short-form content consumption* habits, perceptions of reading activities, and potential behavioral changes that emerged during the study period. This data collection method is designed to capture the dynamics of the subject's experience in an authentic and contextual context.

Analysis techniques

Data collected through observation and interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis was chosen because it provides flexibility in identifying, organizing, and interpreting thematic patterns that emerge from qualitative data systematically (Heriyanto, 2018). The analysis process begins with the transcription of interview data and recording of observation results, followed by the process of repeated reading to understand the overall context. Next, the initial coding process is carried out to mark important parts of the data that are relevant to the focus of the research. These initial codes are then grouped into themes that reflect patterns of meaning related to children's reading interest and resilience, as well as the

influence of short-form content consumption on these two aspects. The process of preparing the theme is carried out inductively, based on the trends that emerge from the data, without imposing on a rigid theoretical framework. The validity of the data is maintained through the source triangulation technique, namely by comparing the results of observations and interviews from subjects and parents.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The Impact of Short-Form Content Consumption on Children's Reading Interest

The results of interviews with the subject AJ (8 years old) showed a significant shift in media consumption preferences from written text to short video-based visual content. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, children aged 7-11 years are at a concrete operational stage, where they learn better through direct experience, visualization, and concrete activities rather than abstractions such as reading long texts (Handayani et al., 2025). The subject statement "*If you look at books that have a lot of writing, are a bit tired, ma'am, continue to be lazy"* can be understood as a natural manifestation of the characteristics of the concrete operational stage, where children need visual and concrete representations to understand information optimally. *Short-form content* with a combination of visual, audio, and movement provides multisensory stimulation that suits the child's cognitive needs at this stage. However, an over-interest in visual content quickly raises concerns about long-term cognitive development (Clemente-Suárez et al., 2024). Piaget emphasized that each stage of development has a cognitive task that must be mastered in order to reach the next stage. If the child relies too much on concrete visual stimulation and avoids cognitive processes that require abstraction such as reading texts, this can hinder the transition to the formal operational stage (11-15 years) that requires abstract and logical thinking skills. AJ's statement as the subject is also.

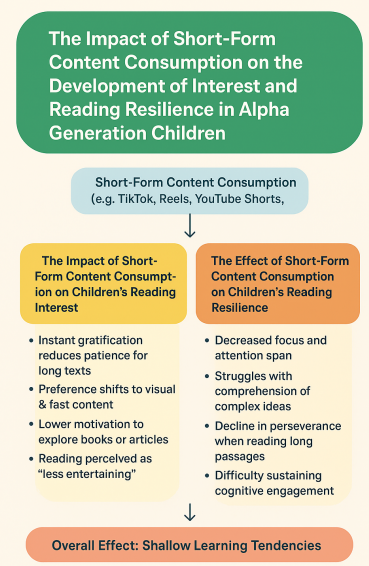

Figure 2. Research Results

The evolution of subjects' reading preferences that stated *"I used to like books with pictures. But now I prefer to watch. The problem is more exciting, easier to understand, too"* indicating the occurrence of regression in the development trajectory. This phenomenon can be further explained through Albert Bandura's theory of social learning, which states that children learn through observation and imitation, especially from models that they find interesting or influential (Firmansyah &

Saepuloh, 2022). In the context of consuming short-form content, children not only consume information, but also observe and internalize the behavior patterns displayed in the content (Khotimah & Ula, 2023). Platforms like *YouTube Shorts* and TikTok present behavioral models that emphasize fast consumption, *switching* between content, and instant gratification. *Content creators* on this platform generally display information in a highly condensed format, with fast transitions, and an emphasis on *entertainment value*. Through the modeling process, children adopt *the expectation* that information should be presented in the same way. Subject statements that show a preference for *"more exciting, easier to understand"* reflect the internalization of observational learning towards an instant and entertaining information consumption model. Bandura emphasized that attention is the first component in the *social learning process* (Wahyuni & Fitriani, 2022). *Short-form content* is designed to hypnotize attention with rapidly changing stimuli, *creating addictive viewing patterns* (Chen et al., 2023). The inability to maintain interest in traditional reading activities can be explained as a consequence of the vicarious reinforcement obtained from observation of behavioral models in *short-form content*. Children observe that fast content consumption provides immediate satisfaction, while reading requires *sustained effort* without *comparable* immediate rewards.

The massive consumption *of short-form content* among Generation Alpha has created a fundamental change in the way they process and consume information. This generation born between 2010-2025 grew up in an era of dominance of platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts, where information is presented in a short, visual, and easy-to-digest format. This habit of consuming 15-60 seconds of content gradually shapes their mindset and expectations towards all forms of media, including traditional reading. The most significant impact of this phenomenon is a decrease in *attention span* ability, the most significant impact of a decrease in attention span is difficulty concentrating and focusing for a longer period of time, which can interfere with various aspects of life, including work, study, and daily activities (Ilmiyah, 2024). Generation Alpha children who are accustomed to rapid and alternating visual stimulation have difficulty focusing on texts that require sustained concentration (Fadlurrohim et al., 2020). Their brains have been trained to process information in short *bursts* with instant dopamine rewards, so when faced with a book or a long reading that requires a longer investment of time to gain understanding or entertainment, they tend to feel frustrated and lose interest. This has an impact on the decline of deep reading skills, which is a reading process that involves deep analysis, critical reflection, and complex information synthesis (Richard Nordquist, 2019).

These changes in consumption patterns also change their expectations of information structure. *Short-form content* that prioritizes hooks at the beginning, quickly delivers key points, and engaging visuals make them expect all content to have similar characteristics. When reading books that have slow *build-up*, gradual character development, or complex arguments, many Generation Alpha children get bored and switch to other activities that provide faster gratification. This phenomenon is exacerbated by social media algorithms that are constantly providing new and interesting content, creating unfair competition with traditional books or reading materials. However, not all impacts of consuming short-form content are negative. Generation Alpha develops extraordinarily high visual literacy capabilities and is able to process multimodal information very efficiently. They can quickly understand the message being conveyed through a combination of images, text, audio, and other visual elements. Their information filtering capabilities are also excellent, where they can quickly determine which content is relevant and which is not in a very heavy flow of information. In addition, exposure to a wide range of topics and perspectives through *short-form content* gives them a broad insight into the world, although it may not be in-depth. To address these challenges, an adaptive approach is needed that harnesses the strengths of Generation Alpha while developing their traditional literacy abilities. *A hybrid learning approach* that combines visual, interactive, and digital elements in

reading materials can help bridge the gap between digital preferences and in-depth literacy needs. Micro-learning strategies, in which children start with shorter reading content and gradually increase in length, can help rebuild their reading stamina. Gamification of reading activities with a reward system and progress tracking can also take advantage of motivation mechanisms that are familiar to them.

The long-term implication of this phenomenon is the need to redefine the concept of literacy in the digital era. Education needs to recognize and harness the power of Generation Alpha in processing multimodal information while ensuring they don't lose the ability to engage with complex and deep thinking. This requires collaboration between educators, parents, and technology platforms to create an ecosystem that supports balanced literacy development. The key is to find a balance between harnessing the digital native strengths of Generation Alpha and maintaining deep analytical and critical thinking abilities, which remain an important foundation for lifelong learning and intellectual development.

The Effect of Short-Form Content Consumption on Children's Reading Resilience

Findings regarding the decline of subjects' reading resistance can be analyzed through the concept *of self-regulation and delay of gratification* developed by Walter Mischel (Ardianti, 2015). The ability to delay pleasure for the sake of long-term goals is a fundamental aspect of *self-control that is essential* for *academic success*. The subject statement *"If I read for a long time, I like to be sleepy, and get bored quickly"* indicates a weak capacity for *delay gratification*, where reading long texts requires the ability to refrain from seeking *immediate pleasure* and maintain focus on activities that provide delayed rewards. *Short-form content*, on the other hand, reinforces patterns of instant gratification by providing *a continuous stream of immediately rewarding stimuli.* Mischel's research on the marshmallow test shows that the ability to delay gratification at an early age is a strong predictor of academic achievement and life success later in life. Intensive consumption of short-form content can erode this ability by creating expectations for immediate rewards and lowering tolerance for boredom or delayed satisfaction.

Statement *"If you have watched videos or played cellphones, you are lazy to study. Sometimes I forget the time. His schoolwork likes to be delayed"* showing a disturbance in self-regulatory capacity that is increasingly worrying. Mischel identified that self-regulation involves the ability to control attention, regulate emotions, and restrain impulses. The consumption of *short-form content* trains the impulse to *seek immediate gratification*, which is contrary to the demands of sustained academic activities. This is closely related to the degradation of the attention span experienced by the subject. Continuous exposure to *short-form content* creates neurological adaptations in which the attention system becomes conditioned for rapid-switching stimuli. *Short-form content* is designed with editing techniques that utilize the attention residue effect, where every few seconds there is a change in visual, audio, or informational content that forces the brain to constantly reorient attention. This pattern creates *addiction-like neural pathways* that make sustained attention neurobiologically challenging.

When subjects are faced with texts that require sustained focus, there is a cognitive dissonance between the expectation of rapid stimulation and the reality of linear text processing. The statement *"Just watch videos, understand them immediately, be quick"* reflects a preference for short-term cognitive efficiency that actually comes at the expense of the development of deep processing skills. The concept of cognitive overload is also relevant in this context, where although short-form content seems easy to consume, it actually creates information overload that requires the brain to process multiple streams of information simultaneously. This phenomenon depletes *cognitive resources* that should be available for sustained attention tasks such as reading. *Immature executive function* in 8-year-old children makes them *particularly vulnerable* to cognitive overload. The prefrontal cortex responsible for attention control, impulse regulation, and

working memory is still in the developmental stage (Tetteh-Quarshie & Risher, 2023). The decline in reading resistance is not caused by the subject's "laziness", but is a neurobiological adaptation to the dominant stimulation pattern in the digital environment. Attention systems trained for rapid switching have difficulty when they have to maintain focus on a single task for extended periods. This creates attentional fatigue that makes reading activities cognitively exhausting, so subjects tend to avoid these activities and choose alternatives that provide stimulation according to the neurological condition that has been adapted.

A decrease in reading resistance in children as a result of the consumption of *short-form content* requires strategic handling rooted in strengthening *self-regulation skills* and *delays of gratification*. This strategy begins with increasing digital literacy and psychoeducation for children and parents (Wulandari & Dewi, 2024). This education aims to build awareness about the long-term impact of consuming short content on the executive function of the brain, particularly in the context of self-control and tolerance for delayed gratification. The understanding that a child's inability to focus is not solely caused by laziness, but rather the result of neurological adaptation to rapid and repetitive stimuli, is an important foundation in changing parenting and learning patterns. The next intervention was carried out through a gradual reading resilience training program. Children are trained to progressively increase the duration of reading, starting from short sessions of 10 to 15 minutes, by applying techniques such as Pomodoro to maintain focus. The selection of reading materials is also adjusted adaptively, starting from illustrated texts with simple narratives to long texts with higher complexity. This strategy is complemented by a delayed reward system, to train children to resist impulses and build positive associations with reading activities as a process that requires effort but provides long-term results.

In terms of managing the consumption of *short-form content*, it is necessary to limit the time of use of digital devices, sort the type of content consumed, and create time and free space for gadgets in the home environment. This approach aims to reduce dependence on instant stimuli and improve the ability to sustain attention. To support the strengthening of *self-regulation*, children can also be involved in simple mindfulness exercises, such as focusing breathing or short meditation, to increase the capacity to control attention and emotions. Monitoring child development is a crucial aspect of this strategy. Parents and educators can use simple measuring tools to assess a child's reading duration, distraction level, and quality of focus. Evaluations are carried out periodically and involve reflection with children to foster *self-awareness* of their processes and achievements. For this strategy to be sustainable, it is important to integrate it into the formal education curriculum through engaging literacy activities, character building, and teaching digital technology management. With this holistic approach, it is hoped that children will not only be able to restore reading resilience, but also develop self-regulation skills that are essential for their academic success and long-term development.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a profound transformation in children's media consumption patterns and their corresponding cognitive behaviors, particularly concerning reading interest and resilience. Based on the case of subject AJ (8 years old), it is evident that short-form content consumption has become a dominant mode of information engagement, shaping both cognitive processing and behavioral tendencies. In line with Piaget's theory of cognitive development, children in the concrete operational stage (7–11 years old) naturally prefer learning through tangible, visual, and experiential means rather than abstract text. This explains AJ's inclination toward short videos, which provide multisensory stimulation that aligns with his developmental needs. However, the overexposure to such stimuli risks constraining the development of abstract and logical thinking abilities required in the next cognitive stage. In this sense, the attraction to short-form content can be viewed as both developmentally appropriate

and developmentally limiting serving immediate cognitive comfort while potentially impeding long-term intellectual growth.

Moreover, Bandura's social learning theory provides a complementary perspective to understand the behavioral shifts observed in AJ. Children's learning is significantly shaped by observation and imitation of influential models many of whom, in this era, are digital content creators. The design of short-form platforms like YouTube Shorts or TikTok, which emphasizes rapid transitions, entertainment, and instant gratification, promotes a consumption habit that prioritizes excitement and efficiency over depth and endurance. AJ's statements reflect this internalization process, where engagement with content becomes conditioned by visual appeal and immediate comprehension rather than sustained curiosity or reflection. Over time, this redefines children's expectations of all learning materials they begin to anticipate that all information should be quick, visually engaging, and instantly rewarding. Consequently, reading activities that demand prolonged attention and cognitive effort may feel laborious, reducing motivation and persistence in literacy development.

The broader implications of this phenomenon extend to the defining characteristics of Generation Alpha, a cohort raised in an ecosystem of algorithm-driven short-form media. The dominance of fast-paced, visually rich information has contributed to the shortening of attention spans and a decline in the ability to engage in deep reading an essential skill involving critical thinking, analytical interpretation, and reflective comprehension. While the visual literacy and multimodal processing skills of this generation are impressive, these capabilities often come at the expense of depth, patience, and cognitive endurance. The brain's reward system, accustomed to instant gratification through digital stimuli, finds it challenging to adapt to the slow, linear processing required by traditional reading. Therefore, interventions should not merely attempt to "return" children to old modes of literacy but rather aim to integrate digital familiarity into literacy-building strategies that accommodate and gradually reshape their cognitive preferences.In terms of reading resilience, the findings resonate strongly with Walter Mischel's concept of self-regulation and delay of gratification. The subject's tendency to avoid long reading tasks and preference for fast, entertaining media illustrates the weakening of self-control mechanisms. Short-form content conditions the brain to expect constant novelty and immediate satisfaction, thereby lowering tolerance for delayed rewards an essential trait for academic perseverance and lifelong learning. The decrease in reading resilience is not simply a matter of motivation or discipline but a reflection of neurobiological adaptation. Repeated exposure to rapidly shifting visual stimuli restructures attention networks in the brain, making sustained concentration increasingly difficult. For developing children, whose prefrontal cortex is still maturing, this shift can have lasting implications on executive function and cognitive regulation.

To address these challenges, a multidimensional approach is necessary one that combines cognitive training, behavioral strategies, and environmental restructuring. Strengthening self-regulation skills through structured routines, mindfulness exercises, and progressive reading programs can help rebuild attention capacity and tolerance for delayed gratification. Implementing micro-reading sessions and gamified literacy programs may also align better with children's digital tendencies while fostering intrinsic motivation for reading. Parents and educators play a crucial role in moderating short-form content exposure and modeling balanced media habits. Furthermore, formal education systems must adapt by integrating multimodal literacy practices that blend visual, auditory, and textual learning experiences, gradually reintroducing deep reading as a valued and rewarding activity.

The impact of short-form content consumption on children's reading interest and resilience reflects a broader cognitive and cultural shift in the digital era. While Generation Alpha demonstrates exceptional adaptability to visual and rapid information processing, the erosion of sustained attention and reflective reading poses significant educational and developmental

challenges. The key lies not in rejecting digital media but in harmonizing it with traditional literacy frameworks cultivating a generation that can navigate both the immediacy of digital information and the depth of analytical thought. Achieving this balance will determine whether technology serves as a bridge or a barrier in nurturing the next generation's intellectual and emotional development.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the consumption of *short-form content* has a significant negative impact on the reading interest and resilience of Generation Alpha children through complex neurobiological and psychological mechanisms. A decrease in reading interest occurs due to the observational learning process that changes children's expectations of information formats, while a decrease in reading resilience is a consequence of weakening the ability to *delay of gratification* and the adaptation of the attention system to quick stimuli. These findings show that the phenomenon is not solely a matter of motivation, but rather a cognitive adaptation to a digital environment that requires strategic psychopedagogical intervention. Recommended treatment strategies include gradual reading resilience training, strengthening self-regulation through mindfulness techniques, and limiting the consumption of short-form content with a non-punitive but educational approach. The limitation of this study lies in the use of a single subject which limits the generalizability of the findings, so further research is recommended using a broader sample and longitudinal design to understand the long-term impact of this phenomenon. The practical implication of this research is the need to redefine the literacy approach in the digital era that integrates the advantages of digital natives with the strengthening of in-depth analytical skills to prepare the Alpha generation to face future academic and intellectual challenges.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

If needed, the author can add appreciation to this section.

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