

HOW TECHNOLOGY AFFECTS GEN Z'S READING HABITS

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Abstract

This study aims to compare the reading habits of different Generation Z subgroups in Indonesia and identify how technological developments have shaped their reading preferences and behaviors. Using a quantitative survey of 46 respondents classified into three subgroups: Early Gen Z (born 1997–2001, n=3), Middle Gen Z (born 2002–2006, n=16), and Late Gen Z (born 2007–2012, n=27). Data were collected through a structured questionnaire measuring reading frequency, media preference, reading duration, content type, and device usage. Findings reveal that Late Gen Z demonstrates the highest reading frequency, with 33% reading daily, predominantly via smartphones (78%) using social media as the primary reading medium. Middle Gen Z shows lower engagement, with the majority reading only 1–2 times per week, though they display a more diverse content preference spanning news, novels, and online articles. Early Gen Z, while limited in sample size, shows a comparatively balanced use of both print and digital media. Across all subgroups, smartphones dominate as the primary reading device, and social media has emerged as the leading reading platform, largely replacing traditional print. The study concludes that technology has significantly shifted reading behavior in Gen Z toward shorter, digitally mediated reading sessions, with social media distraction identified as the primary challenge to sustained reading engagement.

Keywords: Reading habits, digital literacy, digital distraction, reading culture, reading digital tools.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is widely recognized as a fundamental activity that supports intellectual development, critical thinking, and lifelong learning. Through reading, individuals acquire knowledge, improve language skills, and develop a deeper understanding of the world around them. In the context of the digital era, however, reading habits have undergone significant transformation due to rapid technological advancements. The widespread availability of smartphones, internet access, social media platforms, and digital reading applications has changed not only the way people access information but also how frequently and how long they engage in reading activities. These changes are particularly evident among Generation Z, a generation that has grown up surrounded by digital technology and online communication.

Generation Z, commonly defined as individuals born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, is often referred to as the first true digital-native generation. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z has experienced continuous exposure to digital devices from an early age, making technology an integral part of their daily lives. Smartphones, tablets, and laptops serve as primary tools for communication, entertainment, education, and information

seeking. As a result, traditional reading practices, such as reading printed books, newspapers, and magazines, have increasingly been supplemented or replaced by digital reading formats. Online articles, social media posts, blogs, e-books, and digital news platforms now constitute major sources of reading material for many young people.

The growing integration of technology into everyday life has generated both opportunities and challenges for reading engagement. On one hand, digital technology provides easier access to vast amounts of information, enabling users to read anytime and anywhere. Educational resources, digital libraries, and online learning platforms have expanded opportunities for knowledge acquisition and literacy development. On the other hand, technology also introduces distractions that may negatively affect reading concentration and comprehension. Social media notifications, entertainment content, and the fast-paced nature of online communication can encourage shorter reading sessions and reduce sustained attention to lengthy texts. Consequently, concerns have emerged regarding the impact of digital technology on reading culture and literacy among younger generations.

In Indonesia, the influence of technology on reading habits has become increasingly relevant as internet penetration and smartphone ownership continue to rise. According to recent reports, Indonesian youth represent one of the most active groups of internet users, spending substantial amounts of time on social networking platforms and digital media. While this technological engagement may increase exposure to written content, questions remain regarding the quality, frequency, and depth of reading activities. Understanding how technology shapes reading behavior is therefore essential for educators, policymakers, and literacy advocates seeking to promote effective reading habits in the digital age.

Previous studies have examined various aspects of digital literacy and reading behavior, highlighting shifts from print-based reading toward digital formats. Research has also suggested that social media has become a dominant platform for information consumption among younger generations. However, limited studies have specifically explored differences in reading habits across subgroups within Generation Z in Indonesia. Given that individuals within Gen Z may have experienced technology differently depending on their age and developmental stage, investigating variations among early, middle, and late Gen Z can provide a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary reading practices.

This study aims to examine the influence of technology on the reading habits of Generation Z in Indonesia. Specifically, it investigates reading frequency, preferred reading media, reading duration, content preferences, and device usage among different Gen Z subgroups. By employing a quantitative survey approach, this research seeks to identify patterns of reading behavior and explore how digital technologies shape reading engagement in everyday life. Furthermore, the study aims to highlight the opportunities and challenges associated with technology-driven reading practices, particularly the role of social media as both a source of information and a potential distraction.

The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on digital literacy and reading culture in Indonesia. In addition, the study may provide valuable insights for educators, parents, and policymakers in developing strategies to encourage meaningful reading engagement among Generation Z while addressing the challenges posed by digital distractions. As technology continues to evolve, understanding its impact on reading habits remains crucial for fostering literacy and lifelong learning in contemporary society.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine the influence of technology on the reading habits of Generation Z in Indonesia. A quantitative approach was selected because it enables the collection and analysis of numerical data related to reading behaviors, media preferences, and technology usage. The study aimed to identify patterns and trends in reading habits across different subgroups of Generation Z and to explore how digital technologies shape their reading engagement.

The population of this study consisted of Indonesian individuals belonging to Generation Z, defined as those born between 1997 and 2012. Due to time and accessibility constraints, a convenience sampling technique was used to recruit participants. A total of 46 respondents participated in the study. To facilitate comparative analysis, respondents were categorized into three subgroups: Early Gen Z (born 1997–2001, $n = 3$), Middle Gen Z (born 2002–2006, $n = 16$), and Late Gen Z (born 2007–2012, $n = 27$).

Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire distributed through digital platforms and social media. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions designed to gather information about respondents' reading frequency, preferred reading media, average reading duration, types of reading content, and devices used for reading. Additional questions explored the perceived impact of technology and digital distractions on reading habits. The use of an online questionnaire was considered appropriate because Generation Z is highly familiar with digital communication and internet-based platforms.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Responses were organized and tabulated to determine frequencies, percentages, and distributions for each variable. Comparative analysis was conducted among the three Generation Z subgroups to identify similarities and differences in reading behavior. The results were then presented in tables and charts to facilitate interpretation and discussion. To ensure data accuracy, all questionnaire responses were reviewed and screened before analysis. Incomplete or inconsistent responses were excluded from the final dataset. The findings were interpreted in relation to existing literature on digital literacy, reading culture, and technology use among young people. Through this methodology, the study provides empirical insights into the influence of technology on the reading habits of Generation Z in Indonesia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated how technology affects Generation Z's reading habits. Data were collected from 46 respondents aged between 15 and 27 years, consisting primarily of students and university students. The questionnaire explored respondents' reading frequency, preferred reading media, reading duration, reading devices, perceptions of technology, advantages and challenges of digital reading, and the influence of social media on reading behavior. The findings are presented in the following tables.

Reading Frequency of Respondents

Table 1. Reading Frequency of Respondents

No	Reading Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
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1.	Every day	11	23,9%
2.	3-5 times a week	6	13,0%
3.	1-2 times a week	18	39,1%
4.	Rarely	11	23,9%
Total		46	100%



Figure 1. Digital Reading Practices of Generation Z in the Technology Era

Table 1 shows that the largest proportion of respondents (18 participants) reported reading one to two times per week. Eleven respondents indicated that they read every day, while another eleven respondents admitted that they rarely read. Only six respondents stated that they read three to five times per week.

The findings suggest that reading remains a relatively common activity among Generation Z. Although concerns have often been raised regarding declining reading habits among younger generations, the results demonstrate that many participants still engage in reading regularly. However, the variation in reading frequency also indicates that not all members of Generation Z have developed strong reading habits. While some individuals read daily, others read only occasionally.

The existence of a substantial number of respondents who rarely read may be associated with increasing exposure to digital entertainment. Social media, online games, video streaming platforms, and other forms of digital content often compete with reading activities for users' attention. Consequently, reading may no longer be the primary leisure activity for many young people.

Preferred Reading Media

Table 2. Preferred Reading Media

No	Reading Media	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Social Media	22	47,8%
2.	Online Articles	8	17,4%
3.	Printed Books	6	13,0%
4.	E-books	5	10,9%
5.	Other	5	10,9%
Total		46	100%

The data presented in Table 2 reveal that social media is the most frequently used reading medium among respondents, with 22 participants selecting this option. Online articles ranked second with eight respondents, followed by printed books, e-books, and other reading sources.

This finding reflects the digital lifestyle of Generation Z. Unlike previous generations that relied heavily on printed materials, today's young people frequently access information through social networking platforms. Social media has evolved beyond its original communication function and now serves as an important source of news, educational content, entertainment, and public discussions.

The popularity of social media as a reading medium demonstrates that reading practices have changed rather than disappeared. Generation Z still reads regularly; however, the content they consume is often shorter, faster, and more visually appealing. While this shift increases access to information, it may also reduce opportunities for deep reading and critical engagement with complex texts.

Devices Used for Reading

Table 3. Devices Used for Reading

No	Device	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Smartphone	37	80,4%
2.	Printed Books	5	10,9%
3.	Computer	1	2,2%

4.	Tablet	1	2,2%
5.	Others	2	4,3%
Total		46	100%

Table 3 indicates that smartphones are overwhelmingly the most commonly used device for reading. Thirty-seven respondents reported using smartphones as their primary reading tool, whereas only a small number preferred printed books, computers, or tablets.

This finding highlights the central role of smartphones in the daily lives of Generation Z. Smartphones provide immediate access to information, allowing users to read articles, books, journals, and news reports anytime and anywhere. The portability and convenience of smartphones make them particularly attractive for young readers.

However, dependence on smartphones also creates challenges. Since smartphones provide access to social media, games, messaging applications, and entertainment content, they often expose users to distractions while reading. As a result, the same device that facilitates reading may also reduce concentration and reading quality.

Perceived Impact of Technology on Reading Habits

Table 4. Perceived Impact of Technology on Reading Habits

No	Impact Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Positive Impact	38	82,6%
2.	Mixed Impact	6	13,0%
3.	Negative Impact	2	4,4%
Total		46	100%

The findings indicate that most respondents perceive technology positively. Thirty-eight respondents stated that technology improves their reading habits, while six respondents acknowledged both positive and negative effects. Only two respondents expressed predominantly negative views regarding technology's impact on reading.

Many participants explained that technology makes reading more accessible and efficient. Digital platforms provide instant access to books, journals, articles, and educational resources. Students particularly emphasized the benefits of technology for academic activities, including completing assignments and conducting research.

Nevertheless, respondents also acknowledged several drawbacks. The most common concerns involved distraction, reduced concentration, and excessive dependence on digital

devices. These findings suggest that technology has a dual effect on reading habits, providing significant benefits while simultaneously introducing new challenges.

Challenges of Digital Reading

Table 5. Challenges Experienced During Digital Reading

No	Challenge	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Distraction from notification	27	58,7%
2.	Eye strain	11	23,9%
3.	Internet problems	4	8,7%
4.	Advertisements	3	6,5%
5.	Others	1	2,2%
Total		46	100%

Table 5 demonstrates that distraction is the most significant challenge associated with digital reading. Twenty-seven respondents identified notifications and social media as major obstacles to maintaining concentration. Eye strain was the second most frequently reported challenge.

The prevalence of distraction highlights a critical issue in contemporary reading behavior. Although digital devices provide access to vast amounts of information, they also encourage multitasking and fragmented attention. Notifications, messages, and social media updates often interrupt reading sessions, making it difficult for individuals to focus on lengthy texts.

Eye strain represents another important concern. Extended screen exposure can lead to fatigue, discomfort, and reduced motivation to continue reading. These physical effects may discourage prolonged reading sessions and contribute to a preference for shorter forms of digital content.

The findings demonstrate that technology plays a significant role in shaping Generation Z's reading habits. The results reveal both positive and negative influences, highlighting the complex relationship between technology and literacy in the digital age.

One of the most notable findings is that reading remains an important activity among Generation Z. Although technological advancements have transformed information consumption patterns, they have not eliminated reading altogether. Instead, technology has altered the format, accessibility, and frequency of reading activities. This finding challenges

the widespread assumption that young people no longer read. Rather, they continue to engage with texts through different platforms and media.

The dominance of social media as a reading medium reflects broader cultural changes in communication and information sharing. Social media platforms provide users with immediate access to news, opinions, educational content, and discussions. Consequently, reading increasingly occurs within digital environments rather than through traditional printed materials. This transformation has important implications for literacy development. While digital reading increases exposure to information, it may also encourage superficial reading practices characterized by scanning and skimming rather than deep comprehension.

The widespread use of smartphones further illustrates the integration of technology into daily reading activities. Smartphones have become multifunctional tools that combine communication, entertainment, education, and information access within a single device. Their portability enables users to read at virtually any time and place. As a result, barriers to accessing information have been significantly reduced.

The positive impact of technology identified in this study aligns with contemporary theories of digital literacy. Technology expands access to educational resources and facilitates independent learning. Respondents frequently emphasized that technology helps them locate information quickly and efficiently. Academic articles, e-books, and online learning materials can be obtained with minimal effort. This accessibility supports lifelong learning and promotes knowledge acquisition.

However, the findings also reveal substantial challenges associated with digital reading. Distraction emerged as the most significant issue. Social media notifications, incoming messages, and entertainment applications compete continuously for users' attention. Consequently, individuals may struggle to maintain focus when reading longer texts. This finding supports previous research suggesting that digital environments often encourage divided attention and multitasking behaviors.

Another major challenge involves the influence of social media on reading time. Most respondents acknowledged that social media affects how much time they devote to reading. Many participants admitted spending more time scrolling through social media feeds than engaging with books or academic materials. The highly engaging design of social media platforms may contribute to this behavior by providing continuous streams of novel and visually appealing content.

The findings also suggest that technology influences not only reading frequency but also reading quality. Digital reading environments often encourage shorter attention spans and fragmented information processing. When readers move rapidly between different applications and sources, opportunities for deep reflection and critical analysis may decrease. Therefore, educators and literacy advocates must consider not only how much young people read but also how they read.

Eye strain represents another significant issue identified by respondents. Prolonged exposure to digital screens can cause discomfort and fatigue, reducing motivation to continue reading. This finding explains why some respondents still prefer printed books despite recognizing the convenience of digital reading. Printed materials offer a distraction-free reading experience and may support better concentration for some individuals.

Interestingly, several respondents viewed technology as both beneficial and harmful. This perspective reflects the reality that technology itself is neither inherently positive nor negative. Its effects depend largely on how it is used. Individuals who utilize technology for

educational purposes may experience substantial benefits, whereas those who primarily engage with entertainment content may experience reduced reading engagement.

The recommendations provided by respondents offer valuable insights into strategies for improving reading interest among Generation Z. Many participants suggested integrating literacy initiatives with technology rather than opposing technological development. Examples included developing attractive reading applications, promoting books through social media, creating online reading communities, and using visual content to encourage reading.

These suggestions highlight the importance of adapting literacy programs to contemporary digital environments. Since Generation Z spends considerable time online, literacy promotion efforts should meet young people where they are rather than attempting to separate them from technology entirely. Educational institutions, libraries, and policymakers should therefore embrace digital tools as opportunities rather than threats.

Overall, the findings indicate that technology has transformed reading habits in profound ways. It has increased accessibility, convenience, and information availability while simultaneously introducing challenges related to distraction, concentration, and screen fatigue. The future of literacy development depends not on rejecting technology but on promoting responsible and productive technology use. By helping Generation Z balance digital engagement with focused reading practices, educators and policymakers can maximize the benefits of technological advancement while minimizing its negative consequences.

The results of this study ultimately suggest that technology should be viewed as a powerful tool for literacy development. When used appropriately, it can enhance reading opportunities, expand access to knowledge, and foster lifelong learning. However, achieving these benefits requires awareness, self-regulation, and effective literacy strategies that enable young people to navigate increasingly complex digital environments.

1. Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research that highlights the growing role of technology in shaping reading habits among young people. Numerous studies have found that digital technology has transformed the way individuals access, process, and interact with information. Similar to the results obtained in this study, previous researchers have reported that Generation Z prefers digital platforms because they offer convenience, accessibility, and flexibility.

One of the major findings of the present study is that respondents frequently use smartphones and social media as reading tools. This result supports previous studies that describe Generation Z as a digitally connected generation. Unlike earlier generations who relied primarily on printed books and libraries, Generation Z has grown up with internet access and mobile technology. Consequently, digital devices have become their primary gateway to information and knowledge.

Furthermore, previous studies have suggested that digital reading can increase reading frequency because reading materials are more readily available. The findings of this research support this claim. Many respondents stated that technology enables them to access books, journals, articles, and news more easily than before. The availability of free digital resources also encourages reading activities because users do not need to purchase physical books or travel to libraries.

However, the findings also confirm concerns expressed by previous researchers regarding digital distractions. Studies on digital literacy have frequently highlighted the negative impact of social media notifications, entertainment platforms, and multitasking behaviors on reading concentration. In this study, many respondents reported difficulties maintaining focus while reading because they were distracted by notifications and social networking applications. This suggests that although technology increases access to information, it may simultaneously reduce the depth of reading engagement.

Another similarity with previous studies involves eye strain and screen fatigue. Researchers have found that prolonged exposure to digital screens can reduce reading comfort and motivation. Respondents in this study reported experiencing tired eyes and discomfort after extended periods of digital reading. Such findings demonstrate that despite technological advantages, traditional reading formats still offer certain benefits that digital platforms cannot completely replace.

The results therefore indicate that technology has a dual role. On one hand, it supports literacy development through greater accessibility and convenience. On the other hand, it creates challenges related to concentration, attention, and physical comfort. This duality has been consistently reported in the literature and is further supported by the present findings.

2. Educational Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for educational institutions. Since technology has become deeply integrated into students' reading habits, educators should consider incorporating digital reading resources into the learning process. Rather than viewing technology as a threat to literacy, teachers can use it as a tool to encourage reading engagement and academic development.

One practical implication is the increased use of digital libraries and electronic books in educational settings. Students are already familiar with smartphones and online platforms, making digital resources highly accessible. Teachers can recommend reliable websites, digital journals, and e-book collections that support course objectives. By doing so, educational institutions can take advantage of students' existing technological preferences while promoting meaningful reading activities.

Another implication concerns the development of digital literacy skills. Access to information alone is not sufficient; students must also learn how to evaluate the credibility of online sources. The abundance of information available on the internet increases the risk of misinformation and inaccurate content. Therefore, educators should teach students how to identify trustworthy sources, compare information from multiple references, and critically analyze digital content.

The findings also emphasize the need to address distractions associated with digital technology. Since many respondents reported difficulties maintaining concentration while reading, schools and universities should introduce strategies that help students manage their attention effectively. For example, students can be encouraged to disable notifications while studying, create dedicated reading schedules, and use applications that limit distractions during reading sessions.

Furthermore, educational institutions should recognize that reading habits are influenced by motivation and interest. Several respondents suggested that reading materials should be engaging, visually appealing, and relevant to students' interests. This recommendation highlights the importance of selecting reading materials that connect with

students' experiences and preferences. By making reading more enjoyable, educators can increase students' willingness to engage with texts.

Parents also play a significant role in promoting reading habits. The findings suggest that family support remains important despite technological advancements. Parents can encourage reading by providing access to both printed and digital materials, setting aside time for reading activities, and serving as positive role models. Collaborative efforts between schools and families may therefore contribute to stronger literacy development among Generation Z.

3. Strategies for Increasing Reading Interest Among Generation Z

Based on respondents' suggestions, several strategies can be proposed to enhance reading interest among Generation Z. First, literacy programs should utilize digital platforms that are already familiar to young people. Social media campaigns, online reading challenges, and digital book clubs may attract greater participation than traditional approaches alone.

Second, reading materials should be presented in engaging and interactive formats. Many respondents emphasized the importance of visual elements, attractive designs, and user-friendly interfaces. Interactive features such as quizzes, discussion forums, and multimedia content may help maintain readers' attention and motivation.

Third, educational content should be integrated into social media environments. Since social media occupies a significant portion of Generation Z's daily activities, literacy initiatives can use these platforms to promote books, share reading recommendations, and encourage discussions about literature and current issues. Such approaches may transform social media from a source of distraction into a tool for literacy promotion.

Fourth, access to reading materials should be expanded. Digital libraries, free e-book platforms, and educational applications can help reduce barriers to reading. Respondents frequently mentioned convenience and accessibility as major advantages of technology. Therefore, increasing the availability of quality digital content may further strengthen reading habits among young people.

Finally, fostering a reading culture requires long-term commitment from multiple stakeholders. Schools, families, governments, libraries, and community organizations must work together to create environments that support reading. Technology can serve as a valuable tool within these efforts, provided that it is used responsibly and strategically.

4. Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between technology and Generation Z's reading habits, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved a relatively limited number of respondents, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should include larger and more diverse samples to obtain a broader understanding of reading behaviors across different demographic groups.

Future researchers may also examine specific aspects of digital reading, such as reading comprehension, critical thinking skills, and academic performance. While this study focused primarily on reading habits and perceptions, further research could investigate how different types of digital content influence learning outcomes.

In addition, comparative studies between digital and printed reading formats may provide deeper insights into their respective advantages and disadvantages. Such research could help educators develop more effective literacy strategies for contemporary learners.

5. Summary of Findings

Overall, the findings demonstrate that technology significantly influences Generation Z's reading habits. Digital devices, particularly smartphones, have become the primary tools for accessing reading materials. Technology provides numerous benefits, including convenience, accessibility, and rapid access to information. However, it also introduces challenges such as distraction, reduced concentration, and eye strain.

The results suggest that technology should not be viewed solely as a threat to literacy. Instead, it represents a powerful resource that can support reading development when used effectively. By promoting responsible technology use and integrating digital tools into literacy initiatives, educators and policymakers can help Generation Z develop strong reading habits in the digital era.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine how technology affects Generation Z's reading habits. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that technology has a significant influence on the reading behavior of Generation Z. Most respondents reported that technology positively supports their reading activities by providing easier access to information, digital books, online articles, academic journals, and various educational resources. The widespread use of smartphones has enabled respondents to read anytime and anywhere, making reading more convenient and accessible than traditional methods.

The findings also indicate that social media, online articles, and e-books have become the most preferred reading media among respondents. This suggests that Generation Z has adapted to digital forms of literacy and increasingly relies on technology as a primary source of information. Rather than replacing reading habits, technology has transformed the way young people access and consume written content.

Despite these benefits, the study found several challenges associated with digital reading. The most common issues reported by respondents were distractions caused by notifications and social media, eye strain resulting from prolonged screen exposure, internet connectivity problems, and advertisements. These challenges may reduce reading concentration and limit opportunities for deep reading. Therefore, while technology provides greater access to information, it also requires users to develop self-regulation skills to manage digital distractions effectively.

Furthermore, the results revealed that social media has a substantial influence on reading habits. Many respondents acknowledged that social media often reduces the time available for reading because of the highly engaging nature of online content. However, some participants also recognized that social media can serve as a valuable source of information and reading recommendations when used appropriately.

Overall, the study concludes that technology has both positive and negative effects on Generation Z's reading habits. The positive impacts, particularly increased accessibility, convenience, and availability of reading materials, appear to outweigh the negative consequences. Therefore, technology should not be viewed as a threat to literacy but rather as a powerful tool that can support reading development when used responsibly and effectively.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions can be proposed. First, educational institutions should integrate digital reading resources into learning activities and encourage students to use technology for academic and literacy purposes. Teachers

should guide students in selecting reliable digital sources and developing critical reading skills in online environments.

Second, students and young readers should learn to manage distractions while reading digitally. Limiting notifications, setting specific reading schedules, and using applications that support focused reading may help improve concentration and reading effectiveness.

Third, parents should actively support reading habits by providing access to both digital and printed reading materials and encouraging balanced technology use at home. Creating a positive reading environment can help strengthen literacy habits among young people.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to conduct studies with larger samples and different demographic groups to gain a broader understanding of the relationship between technology and reading habits. Further research may also explore the effects of digital reading on reading comprehension, academic achievement, and critical thinking skills.

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