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Montessori Thinking as a Solution to the Learning Concentration Crisis Among Indonesian Students in the Era of Fast-Paced Digital Content

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Abstract
The development of short-form digital content, such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts, presents challenges for students in maintaining concentration during learning activities. This study aims to analyze the relevance of Montessori educational principles in supporting students' learning concentration amid digital distractions, particularly within the context of Indonesian education. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using the library research method. Literature on Montessori education, learning concentration, attention, and digital media use was explored through Google Scholar. Sources were purposively selected based on their thematic relevance, credibility, and alignment with the research objectives. The data were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification by grouping and comparing information according to the research themes. The synthesis results indicate that the principles of the prepared environment, uninterrupted work cycle, use of concrete learning materials, and responsible freedom in learning have conceptual relevance in supporting sustained attention, independence, and student engagement. These principles can also serve as considerations in designing a more focused learning environment that provides opportunities for exploration and in-depth understanding. The contribution of this study lies in integrating Montessori education with the challenges of digital distraction and learning concentration within the context of Indonesian education. Since this study is based on library research, it does not directly measure students' concentration levels or establish the effectiveness of Montessori implementation. Further empirical research is needed to investigate the application of these principles in Indonesian schools.

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Introduction

The development of digital technology has transformed the way younger generations consume information, making it faster, more visual, and more instantaneous. The emergence of platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts has made students increasingly accustomed to receiving information in short formats. This phenomenon is consistent with the high rate of internet use among Indonesian students. According to data from Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS) in *Education Statistics 2025*, 83.80% of students aged 5–23 have used the internet. Among these internet users, 92.19% access the internet for entertainment and 68.88% for social media (BPS, 2025). The high level of internet use indicates that digital activities have become an integral part of students' daily lives. One form of digital activity that has become increasingly familiar to students is consuming short-form videos. This habit is associated with attention span and academic performance (Haliti-Sylaj and Sadiku, 2024). Such conditions may contribute to a tendency toward a *short attention span* among students, referring to difficulties in maintaining attention for relatively extended periods (Itsna, 2025).

This phenomenon has become an important concern in Indonesian education because concentration is a key factor in successful learning. Learning concentration can be understood as students' ability to focus and sustain their attention on learning activities while ignoring irrelevant distractions (Stevens and Bavelier, 2012). Research by Rahmawati et al. (2025) examined the relationship between social media use intensity, concentration, and learning outcomes among elementary school students, although it found no statistically significant relationship. On the other hand, Khotimah et al. (2019) demonstrated that visual media can attract students' attention during the learning process. These two studies indicate that attention and learning concentration are important aspects that need to be considered when designing learning environments that support sustained student engagement.

One aspect of learning closely related to the ability to sustain attention is deep reading. However, cultivating a culture of deep reading among Indonesian students remains a challenge. Low reading interest and limited literacy habits have resulted in students becoming less accustomed to reading and understanding lengthy texts in a comprehensive and critical manner (Tahmidaten and Krismanto, 2020). Digital environments filled with notifications and short-form content can divert students' attention during the learning process. The consumption of short-form videos has been associated with students' attention and academic achievement (Gong & Tao, 2024). Furthermore, distractions while reading can affect text comprehension (Luke and Jensen, 2023). These conditions have the potential to reduce students' opportunities to engage in deep reading and maintain concentration. Research on students' digital literacy indicates that uncontrolled social media use can negatively affect students' learning focus and academic discipline (Riyadi et al., 2025).

This issue is also related to learning approaches that remain dominated by lecturing and memorization. Although these methods continue to play a role in education, excessive reliance on teacher-centered instruction may limit students' opportunities to explore, participate actively, and develop independent learning skills. Research by Rikawati and Sitinjak (2020) indicates that one-way instruction tends to restrict student participation, whereas interactive

lectures can increase student engagement in the learning process. Therefore, a learning approach that provides students with opportunities to participate actively, explore knowledge, and develop meaningful learning experiences is necessary. In this context, Montessori education represents an alternative approach worth examining in addressing the challenges of learning concentration in the digital era. Developed by Maria Montessori, this approach emphasizes child-centered learning, independence, responsible freedom, and a carefully prepared learning environment (prepared environment). One of its fundamental principles is the uninterrupted work cycle, which provides children with extended periods of uninterrupted learning time so that they can engage deeply in learning activities. These principles position concentration as a skill that develops through meaningful learning experiences and children's active engagement (Lillard, 2017; Marshall, 2017).

Furthermore, Montessori introduced the concepts of normalization, sensitive periods, and didactic materials, which support children's development. Normalization is associated with the development of concentration, self-regulation, and independence through meaningful activities, while sensitive periods refer to specific developmental stages during which children demonstrate particular readiness to acquire certain skills. Meanwhile, didactic materials are concrete learning materials that encourage exploration and independent learning experiences. These concepts demonstrate that Montessori education emphasizes the importance of learning environments and activities that are aligned with children's developmental needs (Lillard, 2017; Marshall, 2017).

Various principles of Montessori education have attracted attention in several studies, particularly those related to early childhood development, cognitive abilities, and learning independence. For instance, Rizkiyah (2024) examined the implementation of the Montessori approach in supporting children's independence and cognitive abilities in the digital era. Meanwhile, Agrawal et al. (2017) discussed the phenomenon of digital distraction in the context of technology use. Although these studies provide important perspectives, the relationship between Montessori principles and the challenges of learning concentration caused by digital distractions still requires further investigation. Therefore, there is an opportunity to integrate these two areas of research into a conceptual framework relevant to the Indonesian educational context.

Based on this research gap, this study aims to analyze the relevance of Montessori educational principles in supporting students' learning concentration amid the growing prevalence of short-form digital content. Through library research, this study integrates literature on Montessori education, learning concentration, and digital distraction to develop a conceptual understanding of the role of the Montessori approach in addressing educational challenges in the digital era. Theoretically, this study is expected to expand the discussion of Montessori education in the context of digital educational challenges. Practically, the findings of this synthesis may serve as a reference for teachers and schools in designing learning environments that support students' attention, independence, and engagement in learning.

Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach through library research to examine the relevance of Montessori educational principles in supporting students' learning

concentration amid the increasing prevalence of short-form digital content. The study focuses on reviewing and synthesizing literature on Montessori education, learning concentration, and challenges to students' attention in the digital era. The research materials comprise primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include Maria Montessori's seminal works, particularly *The Montessori Method* and *The Absorbent Mind*, which provide the theoretical foundation for understanding Montessori principles concerning independence, concentration, and the learning environment. Secondary sources consist of scientific journal articles, academic books, educational reports, and other scholarly publications addressing learning concentration, digital media use, digital literacy, and educational challenges in Indonesia. Literature was retrieved primarily through Google Scholar and selected purposively based on thematic relevance, academic credibility, and alignment with the research objectives. Priority was given to publications from the last ten years, while classical works by Maria Montessori were retained for their foundational theoretical contributions. Sources that lacked academic credibility or had limited relevance to the research focus were excluded. The collected literature was analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data condensation, relevant information was identified, selected, and categorized into three main themes: learning concentration, digital distractions, and Montessori educational principles. The categorized information was subsequently organized and compared during data display to identify conceptual relationships between the challenges of maintaining students' learning concentration in the digital era and the educational principles proposed by Montessori. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified through cross-source comparison and synthesis, considering the consistency and relevance of the findings across the selected literature. For analytical purposes, learning concentration is conceptualized as students' ability to direct and sustain attention throughout the learning process while minimizing responses to irrelevant stimuli. The analysis specifically addresses sustained attention, the ability to maintain focus, and attentional disruptions associated with digital media use. As this study relies exclusively on library research, learning concentration is examined through existing theoretical and empirical literature rather than directly measured using tests, observations, surveys, or psychological instruments. Accordingly, statistical procedures and instrument reliability tests, such as Cronbach's alpha, are not applicable to this study.

Results and Discussion

Results

Challenges of students' learning concentration in the digital era. Learning concentration refers to students' ability to focus and sustain their attention throughout the learning process. Attention is one of the cognitive abilities that plays an important role in supporting students' learning processes and academic achievement (Stevens and Bavelier, 2012). However, the development of digital technology has introduced new challenges in maintaining attention. Lestari et al. (2025) discussed the impact of digital content exposure on children's ability to focus their attention, particularly in relation to digital overstimulation. In the Indonesian context, challenges related to learning concentration also need to be examined in terms of students' digital media usage habits and reading practices. Tahmidaten and Krismanto (2020)

outlined various challenges concerning reading culture in Indonesia, including low reading habits. In a broader study, Hare et al. (2024) examined children's reading outcomes through digital and print media. These studies illustrate that reading habits and the types of media used are important aspects to consider when understanding students' learning activities.

The relationship between social media use and learning concentration has also been examined by Rahmawati et al. (2025). Their study investigated the relationship between the intensity of social media use, concentration, and learning outcomes among elementary school students but found no statistically significant association. This finding indicates that the relationship between social media use and learning concentration cannot be interpreted simplistically. Therefore, other factors within the learning environment and instructional process also need to be considered. In addition to digital media use, the ability to sustain attention is closely related to learning activities that require continuous focus. Reading lengthy texts, comprehending learning materials, and completing assignments are activities that require students' sustained attentional engagement. Therefore, challenges to learning concentration in the digital era need to be examined not only in terms of media consumption patterns but also through the characteristics of learning environments that can support students' attention and engagement. Based on the reviewed literature, challenges to students' learning concentration in the digital era are associated with several aspects, including exposure to digital content, social media usage patterns, reading habits, and the characteristics of learning environments. However, the relationship between digital media use and learning concentration is not always direct. Therefore, learning environments that support sustained attention, active engagement, and in-depth learning habits are necessary.

The influence of fast-paced digital content on learning focus. Social media platforms based on short-form content, such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts, have become part of the younger generation's information consumption patterns. Short, fast-paced content with engaging visual stimulation allows users to access entertainment and information within a brief period. However, this habit presents challenges when students transition to learning activities that require sustained attention and continuous comprehension. One characteristic of social media use is scrolling behavior, which involves continuously moving from one piece of content to another. Ruslan et al. (2025) explained that the culture of infinite scrolling and information overload encourages younger generations to prioritize the speed of information acquisition over depth of understanding. The study also described a tendency toward rapid reading (*skimming*), which may result in superficial understanding. These findings provide insight into the challenges of deep reading in digital environments.

Exposure to fast-paced and repetitive digital content is also associated with the ability to maintain attention. Lestari et al. (2025) discussed the relationship between digital content exposure, overstimulation, and children's ability to focus their attention. These findings highlight the importance of considering digital content consumption patterns, particularly when children are also expected to engage in learning activities that require persistence and sustained attention. Social media use is also related to time management and learning activities. Ainiyah (2018) discussed social media as a means of information and communication among adolescents, while Fitri (2017) described the effects of social media use on children's social

changes, including the tendency to become overly absorbed in social media. Both studies illustrate that social media use offers positive aspects as well as challenges when it is not properly managed. In the context of learning, excessive digital media use may reduce the time and attention available for reading, reviewing learning materials, and completing school assignments. Based on the reviewed literature, fast-paced digital content presents challenges to learning focus through short-form information consumption patterns, the habit of switching between content, and reduced opportunities for engaging in deep reading activities. However, its effects need to be understood by considering students' age, media usage patterns, and the characteristics of their learning activities. Therefore, learning environments should provide opportunities for students to develop sustained attention, persistence, and the ability to comprehend information in depth.

Limitations of conventional learning approaches. In addition to the influence of digital media, learning approaches that do not sufficiently encourage active student participation are another aspect that needs to be considered when addressing the challenges of learning concentration. A learning system that is excessively teacher-centered tends to position students as passive recipients of information. When instruction relies heavily on one-way lectures and memorization, students' opportunities to explore, ask questions, and independently construct their understanding become limited. Less interactive learning approaches may also reduce student engagement throughout the learning process. When students merely listen to teachers' explanations for extended periods without participating in activities that directly involve them, their attention may become more easily distracted. Research by Rikawati and Sitinjak (2020) indicates that the use of interactive lecture methods can improve students' learning participation. This finding suggests that the delivery of learning materials should be accompanied by interaction and student involvement to create a more active learning process.

In addition to instructional methods, opportunities to develop independence and self-regulation are also important aspects of learning. Learning environments that excessively restrict students' exploration may limit their opportunities to take initiative and participate actively in the learning process. In the Montessori approach, independence and responsible freedom are essential principles for supporting children's development (Lillard, 2017; Marshall, 2017). Self-regulation is also associated with executive functions, which support the control of attention and behavior during the learning process (Dörrenbächer-Ulrich and Bregulla, 2024). These limitations indicate the need for learning approaches that focus not only on content delivery and academic achievement but also on students' learning processes. Learning environments that provide opportunities for exploration, concrete experiences, and active engagement may serve as an alternative for supporting the development of students' independence and attention. This provides a basis for examining the Montessori approach as a learning model that positions children's needs and activities as essential components of the educational process. Based on these considerations, the challenges of conventional learning do not lie solely in the use of lecture-based methods but also in the limited opportunities provided for students to participate actively, explore, and develop independent learning skills. Therefore, learning approaches that balance teacher guidance with responsible freedom in learning are

necessary. This principle provides an important rationale for examining the relevance of Montessori education in supporting students' learning concentration in the digital era.

Discussion

The concept of concentration in montessori's philosophy. Maria Montessori viewed concentration as one of the essential aspects of children's intellectual and character development. According to Montessori, the ability to concentrate is not formed solely through coercion or authoritarian discipline but can develop when children engage in interesting and meaningful activities. Such engagement provides children with opportunities to develop independence, perseverance, and self-control. Lillard (2017) explains that, within the Montessori approach, children's freedom to choose activities that correspond to their interests and developmental stages is one of the conditions that supports the development of concentration and self-discipline. In Montessori's philosophy, concentration is also developed through concrete activities performed actively and repeatedly. Children are given opportunities to select and complete learning activities according to their readiness and developmental stages. Thus, the learning process does not depend entirely on teacher instructions but also involves children's initiative and responsibility. This perspective is consistent with the study by Moss and Wheeler (2024), which discusses autonomy support in Montessori education. Their study illustrates that providing children with opportunities to develop independence is one of the characteristics that distinguishes the Montessori approach from more controlling instructional practices.

In addition to freedom of activity choice, Montessori emphasizes the importance of an orderly learning environment that supports children's engagement. When children participate in activities that correspond to their needs and developmental stages, they have opportunities to develop more focused and sustained attention. Lillard (2017) explains that environmental order, opportunities to choose activities, and active engagement are essential elements in supporting the development of concentration in Montessori education. Therefore, within this approach, concentration is not regarded as an ability that emerges merely through instructions but rather as a capacity that can be cultivated through appropriate learning experiences. Based on these considerations, concentration in Montessori's philosophy is understood as an ability that can develop through children's active engagement in meaningful activities, responsible freedom of choice, and supportive learning environments. These principles demonstrate that the development of concentration is not solely related to individual abilities but is also influenced by the conditions of the learning environment. Therefore, the organization of the learning environment (prepared environment) is one of the essential aspects to examine when addressing the challenges of digital distraction.

Prepared environment as a solution to digital distraction. One of the fundamental principles of Montessori education is the prepared environment, which refers to a learning environment designed to support children's development, independence, and concentration. This environment includes classroom organization, the provision of learning materials, and the arrangement of activities that enable children to learn independently and actively. Marshall (2017) explains that the Montessori environment provides children with structured freedom to choose activities according to their developmental stages. Thus, the learning environment plays

an important role in supporting children's attention and engagement throughout the learning process. The principle of the prepared environment is relevant in addressing educational challenges in the digital era. Notifications, short-form videos, and rapid transitions between digital content can become sources of distraction when students engage in activities that require sustained attention. The abundance of information and stimuli may also increase cognitive load (Sweller, 1988), requiring students to manage their attention more selectively. Therefore, learning environments need to be designed to provide students with opportunities to focus without unnecessary distractions.

The implementation of this principle can be achieved through classroom organization, the provision of reading corners, the use of concrete learning materials, and the regulation of gadget use according to learning needs. Technology does not necessarily have to be eliminated entirely; rather, its use should be directed toward supporting learning objectives. Teachers also play an important role in preparing activities and providing guidance to ensure that learning freedom is accompanied by responsibility and the ability to manage attention. Nevertheless, the implementation of the prepared environment in Indonesia needs to be adapted to school conditions, including limited facilities, class sizes, the availability of learning materials, and teachers' readiness. Therefore, implementation does not require the adoption of all Montessori facilities but can begin with organizing classrooms, using simple concrete learning materials, and minimizing digital distractions during learning activities. Based on these considerations, the prepared environment can be regarded as a conceptual foundation for creating learning environments that support students' attention, independence, and engagement. Such environments also provide opportunities for students to engage in deeper learning experiences (deep learning).

Montessori and the enhancement of deep learning. The growing prevalence of short-form digital content presents challenges for learning processes that require sustained attention and in-depth understanding. Rapid and fragmented information consumption patterns pose challenges for students when engaging in learning activities that require continuous attention, such as reading, comprehending learning materials, and completing assignments. Liu (2005) examined changes in reading behavior in digital environments, including the tendency to read quickly and selectively. These conditions highlight the importance of developing learning habits that focus not only on the speed of information acquisition but also on in-depth understanding and information processing. The Montessori approach is relevant to supporting deep learning because it emphasizes concrete experiences, exploration, and active student engagement. Through concrete activities, students have opportunities to observe, experiment, and construct understanding based on their learning experiences. Lillard (2017) explains that meaningful activities aligned with children's developmental stages are essential components of the Montessori approach. Thus, learning is not directed solely toward information acquisition but also toward the process of constructing understanding through experience.

The principle of the uninterrupted work cycle is also closely related to deep learning. Providing uninterrupted learning time allows students to complete activities, explore learning materials, and develop understanding in a more focused manner. In this context, concentration and perseverance become essential components of the learning process. However,

opportunities for uninterrupted learning should still be adapted to students' ages, needs, and abilities, while being accompanied by appropriate teacher guidance. This principle can serve as a consideration in designing learning activities that provide students with opportunities to think, explore, and reflect on their learning outcomes. Within the context of Indonesian education, these Montessori principles are relevant to the need for learning that emphasizes conceptual understanding, critical thinking skills, independence, and reflection. Their implementation can take the form of project-based activities, simple experiments, discussions, deep reading, and problem-solving activities related to everyday life. Therefore, Montessori offers a conceptual foundation for supporting deep learning through concrete experiences, active engagement, and sustained attention. These principles can also serve as considerations in developing more meaningful learning experiences amid the challenges of digital environments.

The relevance of Montessori education in the digital era of Indonesia. Montessori educational principles are relevant to examine in addressing the challenges of learning concentration and digital distraction in Indonesia. This approach positions students at the center of the learning process by providing opportunities to explore, choose activities, and develop independence according to their developmental stages. These principles are consistent with the need for learning approaches that focus not only on academic achievement but also on student engagement and the learning process itself. The relevance of Montessori education can also be associated with the Merdeka Curriculum, which provides opportunities for student-centered learning, flexibility, and competency development according to students' learning needs (Permendikbudristek Nomor 12 Tahun 2024; Permendikdasmen Nomor 13 Tahun 2025). Although the two approaches have different foundations and implementation frameworks, they share an emphasis on student activity and independence. The distinctive feature of the Montessori approach lies in the combination of freedom of activity choice, a prepared learning environment, the use of concrete materials, and opportunities for uninterrupted work. These principles can be adapted through project-based learning, exploratory activities, the use of concrete learning materials, and literacy development.

Nevertheless, the implementation of Montessori education in Indonesia needs to consider the conditions of individual schools, including limited facilities, the costs of providing learning materials, teacher readiness, and class sizes. Therefore, implementation does not necessarily require schools to replicate the entire Montessori model. Instead, schools can adapt its principles through simple strategies that support students' independence, active engagement, and concentration. Digital technology also does not need to be avoided entirely but should be used purposefully to support the learning process. The contribution of this study lies in integrating Montessori principles with discussions of digital distraction and learning concentration within the context of Indonesian education. An orderly learning environment, responsible freedom, concrete activities, and opportunities for uninterrupted learning have conceptual relevance in supporting sustained attention and deep learning. Thus, Montessori education can serve as one perspective for designing learning approaches that are more responsive to the challenges of the digital era.

Conclusion

The growing prevalence of short-form digital content presents challenges to students' learning processes, particularly in maintaining concentration. The habit of accessing various forms of content rapidly, distractions from digital media, and less supportive learning environments may affect students' attention during classroom activities. Therefore, learning approaches that provide students with opportunities to engage actively and develop a better understanding of learning materials are necessary. Based on the literature review, Montessori educational principles are relevant to addressing these challenges. The concepts of prepared environment, uninterrupted work cycle, the use of concrete learning materials, and responsible freedom in learning can serve as a foundation for creating learning environments that support concentration, independence, and student engagement. These principles also provide students with opportunities to learn through direct experiences, exploration, and meaningful activities. The contribution of this study lies in examining the relationship between Montessori principles, digital distraction, and learning concentration within the context of Indonesian education. This study has limitations because it relies solely on a literature review and does not involve direct observation or measurement of students' concentration. Therefore, its findings cannot establish that Montessori implementation directly improves learning concentration. Further research should be conducted in Indonesian schools to investigate how Montessori principles can be implemented and how they relate to students' learning concentration, while considering teacher readiness, available facilities, and school conditions. In conclusion, Montessori educational principles can serve as an alternative perspective for developing learning approaches that address the challenges of the digital era. Their implementation needs to be adapted to the needs and conditions of schools in Indonesia to support students' concentration, independence, and engagement throughout the learning process.

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Authors' Note

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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