PODCASTING PEDAGOGIES AND THE SOCIOCULTURAL DYNAMICS OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL STUDY OF GEN Z STUDENTS IN URBAN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the multidimensional effectiveness of educational podcasts as alternative learning media among Generation Z university students in urban Indonesia. The research focuses on the perceptions, experiences, and preferences of digital-native learners toward flexible learning through narrative-based audio media. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research involved ten active students from various study programs in Jakarta who regularly accessed educational podcasts via Spotify for at least the past three months. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observation, and supporting questionnaires, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings reveal that podcast effectiveness is shaped by several key characteristics: storytelling-based narration, optimal duration (15–30 minutes), engaging communication style, and contextually relevant, applicable topics. The impact is multidimensional: cognitively, podcasts enhance comprehension and information retention; affectively, they foster learning motivation and emotional connection; behaviorally, they promote self-directed learning habits, informal discussions, and peer content-sharing. Listening habits integrated into daily routines—such as commuting, exercising, or bedtime—reflect a mobile and flexible learning habitus beyond the conventional classroom. This study expands the discourse in digital humanities and social sciences by framing podcasts not merely as learning tools but as cultural practices that signify a shift in how Gen Z students engage with knowledge. Audio-based pedagogy is recommended for integration into higher education curricula.

Keywords: Educational Podcast, Generation Z, Digital Pedagogy, Urban Students, Cultural Practices

INTRODUCTION

Amid the widespread digital transformation in education, podcasts are becoming increasingly popular as an alternative learning medium, perceived to be more aligned with the lifestyle of Generation Z students—especially those living in urban areas (Berková et al., 2024; Galán-Arribas et al., 2022). This generation has grown up in a technology-driven ecosystem that is fast-paced, personalized, and flexible. They are accustomed to accessing information through mobile devices, consuming content in various audiovisual formats, and learning in ways that are

not always confined to formal time and space. In this context, podcasts serve not only as entertainment but also as an educational channel that offers accessibility, flexibility, and emotional proximity to learning topics (Basenko & Baskakova, 2021; Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2022).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of podcasts as learning tools has yet to be comprehensively examined, especially in relation to the social and cultural dynamics that shape students' learning habits in Indonesia. The key questions are: to what extent can educational podcasts improve the quality of learning for Generation Z? What makes them engaging, relevant, and easily comprehensible to digital native learners? And how is the practice of podcast listening integrated into students' everyday routines?

Previous research has highlighted the potential of podcasts in education. For instance, studies by Besser et al. (2022) and Errabo et al. (2024) show that podcasts can enhance student engagement due to their flexibility and accessibility. Hall and Jones (2023), Meden et al. (2024), and Wakefield et al. (2023) emphasize the benefits of podcasts in aiding information retention and the understanding of complex concepts in higher education. On the other hand, research by Cain et al. (2021) and Chaves-Yuste & de-la Peña (2023) provides a critical review of podcasts in education, suggesting that understanding the social context of students is essential for podcasts to be truly integrated into the learning process, rather than merely supplementary. Furthermore, studies by Lindgren (2023), Nee and Santana (2022), and Rime et al. (2022) highlight the importance of content format, engaging narratives, and topic relevance in determining the effectiveness of podcasts.

In the Indonesian context, some studies—such as those by Rahardi & Noviance (2025) and Renisyifa et al. (2022)—examine podcasts from the perspectives of mass communication and popular culture. Meanwhile, research by Rokhani (2024) begins to explore podcasts as informal educational tools for university students in Yogyakarta. Other studies by Irawan et al. (2022), Rizki et al. (2021), and Waang (2023) show that students prefer audio platforms because they can be used while multitasking, such as commuting or resting. However, most of these studies remain general and have not yet deeply examined students' learning experiences through podcasts in cognitive, affective, and behavioral terms.

International studies, such as those by McNamara & Haegele (2021), even propose podcasts as tools for inclusive education, while Vu et al. (2022), using multimedia learning theory, emphasize the importance of instructional design that integrates both audio and visual elements. Yet most research continues to focus on how effectively podcasts convey content, with little attention paid to sociocultural dimensions and how podcasts become part of a new learning ecosystem—particularly among urban students who live under time pressure and high mobility.

This is precisely why it is important to shift focus toward aspects that have been largely overlooked: that listening to educational podcasts is not merely about learning in a new format, but also reflects how Generation Z negotiates learning spaces within their dynamic and busy daily lives (Latuheru et al., 2024). Podcasts are no longer just alternatives to classroom settings—they

have become part of a fluid, multitasking, and deeply personalized learning lifestyle. Behind the habit of listening to podcasts while commuting, before sleeping, or during free time, lies a social and cultural dynamic that illustrates how young people are forming new learning habitus that is mobile and autonomous.

This is where the uniqueness of this study lies: not merely measuring the effectiveness of podcasts but understanding how they are embedded in students' daily lives, shaping learning behaviors, and constructing new relationships between knowledge and experience. Therefore, this article seeks to fill a research gap in the study of educational podcasts in Indonesia. Rather than treating podcasts solely as learning media, this study frames them as cultural practices embedded with social and emotional meaning in the learning process. Using a qualitative case study approach, this research explores the perceptions, experiences, and preferences of students in Jakarta who routinely use educational podcasts. Thematic analysis is used to investigate the links between podcast content characteristics, their impact on various learning dimensions (cognitive, affective, and behavioral), and how podcasts contribute to learning flexibility. By placing learning experiences through podcasts within the sociocultural landscape of urban students, this study aims to broaden the discourse on digital pedagogy—not merely demonstrating podcast effectiveness, but understanding how learning evolves, how knowledge is constructed in mobile contexts, and how education must adapt to this new, more human-centered reality.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply explore the effectiveness of educational podcasts as alternative learning media among Generation Z university students. The choice of a qualitative approach is grounded in the need to understand subjective experiences, personal perceptions, and the everyday dynamics of students using podcasts as learning tools. This approach allows the researcher to explore the meanings that students construct around their learning practices—something that cannot be adequately captured through a quantitative approach, which tends to prioritize numbers and generalizations (Ghanad, 2023; Priya, 2021). Furthermore, the case study design was selected to provide rich contextual understanding of the phenomenon within specific spatial and temporal boundaries—in this case, the habit of listening to educational podcasts among students in urban areas (Taquette & Borges da Matta Souza, 2022).

The research was conducted in Jakarta, selected deliberately for its significance. Jakarta is both a hub of higher education and digital growth in Indonesia, where access to technology is extensive and student life unfolds at a fast and complex pace. The city represents an urban environment conducive to the development of flexible and mobile learning habits, especially among Generation Z, who dominate the college-age demographic. Student life in Jakarta reflects the realities of a multitasking generation that is highly tech-savvy and accustomed to learning

beyond the boundaries of conventional classrooms.

The study involved ten active students from various programs at different universities in Jakarta. Participants were selected purposively based on strict inclusion criteria to ensure their experiences were relevant to the research topic. These criteria included: (1) being between the ages of 18 and 24, demographically classified as Generation Z; (2) using Spotify to listen to educational podcasts; and (3) regularly listening to podcasts for at least the past three months. This limited number of participants was not intended for statistical representation but for uncovering rich, in-depth, and contextual experiences (Luetke Lanfer et al., 2024; Pahwa et al., 2023).

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. This method was chosen for its ability to facilitate open and reflective dialogue between the researcher and participants, allowing views, experiences, and emotions to emerge naturally while still adhering to a thematic framework. The interview guide was designed based on the study's objectives and an initial conceptual framework focused on learning motivation, content preferences, and perceptions of podcast effectiveness. The guide remained flexible to allow adaptation of questions as conversations evolved, without losing focus on the core variables of interest.

In addition to interviews, the researcher conducted limited participant observation by following the online activities of participants who agreed to share their study routines, including how and when they listened to podcasts. This process was supplemented with a brief questionnaire to reinforce the initial profiling of participants and their general preferences regarding content types and podcast usage timing. This multi-method strategy ensured that the data were not only drawn from verbal narratives but also observed within the context of participants' everyday lives, thereby adding validity to the findings.

To maintain credibility and accuracy of interpretation, triangulation was conducted in several ways. First, source triangulation was implemented by comparing data across different participants to identify consistent patterns and meaning deviations. Second, method triangulation was applied by combining interviews, observations, and questionnaires as complementary data collection techniques. Third, investigator triangulation was used by involving fellow researchers in reviewing interview transcripts and discussing emerging thematic categories to avoid single-researcher bias. All data were analyzed using thematic analysis, as developed by Bingham (2023) and Khoa et al. (2023), through stages of identification, coding, and interpretation of recurring themes from interviews and observations.

Limitations are acknowledged, particularly regarding the number of participants and the geographical scope limited to Jakarta. However, these limitations are balanced by the depth of data obtained and the fact that Jakarta serves as a representative setting for the dynamics of urban student life in the digital era. This research does not aim for broad generalization but offers a rich understanding of how a medium like podcasts can hold personal, social, and cultural significance in the learning practices of today's youth.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gen Z's Perception of Podcasts as a Learning Medium

Generation Z students, born and raised amid the rapid growth of digital technology, possess distinct perspectives and learning needs compared to previous generations. They are accustomed to accessing information quickly, flexibly, and in a way that suits their dynamic lifestyles. In this context, podcasts have emerged not merely as entertainment media but as alternative learning spaces that align more closely with their habits and lifestyles. From a number of interviews conducted, most informants expressed a sense of intimacy and comfort when learning through this audio medium. One informant, M (22 years old, Communication Studies student), stated that she could "retain" material more effectively when listening to podcasts than when reading academic articles, which she found too heavy and rigid. For her, podcasts provide a learning experience that feels more "close" and "non-intimidating."

This aligns with the ideas of Davis (2023) and Nguyen & Tuamsuk (2022), who argue that in a digital learning ecosystem, learners increasingly have control over how, when, and where they learn. Learning no longer takes place solely within the confines of formal classrooms but blends into everyday life—while walking, commuting, or even before going to bed. Field observations at a co-working space in the Kuningan area of Jakarta reinforced these findings. Several students were seen listening through earphones while working on laptops or jotting notes in small notebooks. Even though the room was not completely quiet due to other ongoing activities, they appeared undisturbed. Rather than viewing the surroundings as distractions, they integrated these various stimuli into their learning patterns. This shows how podcast-based learning has become part of a "living" learning practice—seamlessly integrated into daily life.

Furthermore, Gen Z's perception of the effectiveness of podcasts as a learning medium is closely linked to the comfort offered by the audio format itself. Several informants stated that podcasts made them feel like they were being talked to rather than being lectured at. R (21 years old, Psychology student), for instance, found it easier to understand complex topics like mental health when they were delivered in the form of stories and casual conversations via podcasts. She felt that she was not being "taught" but rather "invited to think." This format offers a distinct affective experience—one of intimacy, emotional closeness, and even personal engagement. This illustrates how the audio medium can create a more humanistic and relational learning space, aligning with Giannakos & Cukurova's (2023) theory of Multimodal Engagement, which posits that learning engagement is shaped not only by content but also by form and delivery atmosphere.

This phenomenon also reflects how Gen Z students position podcasts as a relevant alternative to traditional classrooms, which are often perceived as overly structured and sometimes unresponsive to their learning rhythms. In an interview, S (23 years old, Information Technology student) shared that he often listens to educational podcasts on his way home, when he is mentally too exhausted to absorb material in a formal manner but still wants to "take something in." For him, this is a more humane way of learning—unforced and allowing space for

reflection.

From these findings, it is evident that podcasts are not merely seen as channels of information but as part of a broader, personalized learning experience connected to students' real-world contexts. They do not only learn from podcasts but also through the experience of listening itself—a process that is affective, reflective, and contextual. Thus, Gen Z's perception of podcasts as a learning medium illustrates a paradigm shift: from "distant" learning to "engaged" learning, from rigid and formal to fluid and adaptive to life.

Characteristics of Engaging and Relevant Educational Podcasts

In the ever-evolving digital learning landscape, Gen Z students demonstrate consistent interest in educational podcasts that exhibit certain characteristics—not merely due to their topics, but due to their delivery style. This research highlights that a light, narrative, and contextual presentation format is key to fostering optimal cognitive engagement. This underlines the importance of understanding how the structure and form of podcasts influence their effectiveness as learning tools. In this regard, Duran et al. (2022) and Hanham et al. (2023) stress that overly complex content or unstructured delivery can overload listeners' cognitive capacity, disrupt information processing, and ultimately reduce learning effectiveness. Therefore, a concise structure, narrative usage, and friendly communication style play crucial roles in keeping cognitive load manageable.

Most informants in this study indicated that the podcasts they found most helpful used a storytelling approach rather than a one-way lecture format. S (21 years old, Sociology student), for instance, said she was especially drawn to podcasts that narrated real social cases and unpacked them through stories, as it made her feel "as though she were inside the story itself." This process not only conveys information but also actively invites listeners to construct meaning. Field observations at a private university library in Jakarta also showed that students tended to choose podcasts with clear storylines, opened with curiosity-piquing introductions, and followed with thematically structured discussions. Several students were seen jotting down specific podcast segments, particularly when the host related stories to phenomena being studied in class.

Podcast duration also emerged as an important factor. Informants revealed that 15–30 minutes was the ideal duration, allowing them to stay focused without feeling overwhelmed. R (22 years old, Management student) explained that overly long podcasts often caused her to lose focus midway, while excessively short ones felt too shallow. This corresponds with the principle of managing intrinsic cognitive load in Hanham et al.'s (2023) theory, which suggests that information packaged in short, focused units is more easily processed by the brain, especially when delivered sequentially and without overlap.

Beyond content and duration, the host's communication style is equally crucial. Hosts who are relaxed, informal, and capable of building personal connections with listeners are perceived as more engaging. Many informants mentioned that they felt more "at home" listening

to certain podcasts because the hosts felt like they were "chatting," not "lecturing." T (23 years old, Law student) stated that he preferred learning via podcasts where the host used everyday language, occasionally slipped in humor, and sometimes shared personal reflections. He felt that this style made him feel not just like he was learning, but that he had company. This underscores the importance of the affective aspect in the relationship between the messenger and the audience in audio media—a relationship that is not only instructional but also emotional.

Observations at a study café in the Tebet area of South Jakarta also revealed that some students preferred educational podcasts as background audio while working on assignments. Interestingly, they tended to choose podcasts with communication styles that were not too "noisy"—that is, with calm voices, minimal sound effects, yet still communicative. This situation illustrates that podcasts with a balanced communication style—not too flat but also not overly theatrical—are easier to integrate into study contexts requiring medium-term focus.

Based on these findings, it is clear that the success of educational podcasts depends not only on their content but also significantly on their form and delivery. A light narrative approach, controlled duration, and friendly communication style are the three key elements that can simultaneously bridge cognitive and affective engagement. In the context of Generation Z—who are used to fast content and multitasking—this combination enables learning processes that are not only information-efficient but also experientially enjoyable. Therefore, it can be concluded that podcasts that are engaging and relevant for students are not those that are most technologically advanced, but those that adopt the most human-centered approaches.

The Multidimensional Impact of Podcasts on Learning

The impact of podcasts on the learning process of Generation Z students in urban areas of Indonesia appears to be multidimensional, simultaneously affecting cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects in an interconnected and mutually influential way. This finding aligns with the Multimodal Engagement Theory developed by Giannakos & Cukurova (2023), which explains that digital media such as podcasts can create complex forms of learning engagement that go beyond mere information reception. Students are not only intellectually engaged but also emotionally involved and influenced in their daily learning habits. This is important for understanding how this audio technology not only delivers content but also creates a new and adaptive learning atmosphere in tune with the rhythms of Gen Z students' lives.

Cognitively, most informants mentioned that they found it easier to understand certain concepts or topics after listening to podcasts, particularly when those podcasts used analogies or contextual stories. M (22, a psychology student) explained that she could recall personality theories more effectively when listening to a podcast that discussed fictional characters with specific traits. This narrative approach, according to her, helped "bring to life" theories that previously felt abstract. These findings indicate that podcasts can bridge theoretical knowledge with everyday realities, enhancing comprehension and information retention. Field observations conducted in a shared study space at a private university in Jakarta showed several students

wearing earphones while studying with their laptops open—some apps indicated they were listening to podcast episodes while summarizing or noting key points. This demonstrates multimodal learning practices that promote cognitive elaboration.

Table 1 Cognitive Impacts of Podcasts on Gen Z Student Learning

Cognitive Aspect	Field Findings	Practical Example
Comprehension	Easier understanding of concepts through narratives	Podcast on "Political Economy" linked to local issues
Information Retention	Able to remember podcast content long-term	Remembering nonverbal communication theory through real-life stories
Inter-topic Connections	Podcasts facilitate inter-course connections	Relating a "cultural sociology" podcast to anthropology assignments

Source: Research Analysis Results, 2025

In addition to the cognitive domain, the affective dimension of podcast use also emerged strongly. Most informants admitted they felt more comfortable and motivated to learn when listening to podcasts compared to reading academic texts. K (21, a communication student) expressed that she felt "closer" to her favorite podcast host, as if being personally addressed by a senior who understood her struggles. This sense of connection creates emotional comfort that makes the learning process feel lighter and less burdensome. In Multimodal Engagement Theory, this falls under emotional engagement—emotional involvement that reinforces attachment to the learning material. Observations on campus showed that some students listened to podcasts while relaxing in the garden or campus café, indicating that learning through podcasts occurs in a relaxed yet productive atmosphere. This pattern demonstrates the formation of an intimate yet cognitively engaged emotional relationship.

A third significant impact is behavioral, particularly related to independent learning habits, informal discussions, and content sharing. Many informants mentioned that after listening to a podcast, they were encouraged to explore the topic further—even initiating discussions with friends outside of class. N (23, an industrial engineering student) recounted that after listening to a podcast on business ethics, he invited his dorm friends to have a casual evening discussion over coffee. On the other hand, content sharing also grew organically. Some students said they frequently shared interesting episodes in their class WhatsApp groups or on their personal social media. This activity shows that podcasts are not merely consumed passively but also encourage active participation in building a collective learning space. Observations in an introductory sociology class revealed that students often referred to certain podcasts as supplemental reading or reflection materials during group discussions. A summary of the behavioral dimensions of these findings is presented in the following table:

Table 2 Behavioral Impacts of Podcasts on Gen Z Student Learning

Behavioral Aspect	Field Findings	Practical Example
Independent Learning	Initiative to explore new topics independently	Searching for related episodes after class discussions
Informal Discussion	Discussing podcast content outside class	Casual conversations about business ethics with dorm mates
Content Sharing	Spreading podcasts within learning communities	Sharing podcast episodes in WhatsApp groups and on Instagram

Source: Research Analysis Results, 2025

These three dimensions interact and form a new learning engagement pattern among Gen Z students. In a life context full of distractions and high mobility, podcasts offer a flexible learning space that allows students to learn anytime and anywhere without sacrificing depth. As Bond & Bedenlier (2020) argue, learning engagement triggered by digital media like podcasts should not be viewed linearly but rather as an integration of thinking, feeling, and doing processes. In this context, podcasts are not merely auxiliary technology but have become part of the learning habitus of contemporary urban students.

Podcasts and the Dynamics of Flexible and Mobile Learning

In the fast-paced, dynamic, and digitally connected academic lives of Generation Z students, educational podcasts have not merely complemented learning but have fundamentally changed how and when students engage with learning. This transformation is not solely due to the form of the media, but also how students integrate learning into their packed, flexible daily routines—often misaligned with the structure of formal classrooms. Here, the concept of digital habitus by Huc-Hepher (2021) becomes relevant, which states that digital practices, including podcast use, are not just responses to technology but part of a socio-cultural construction that reshapes how individuals access, comprehend, and experience knowledge.

Field findings reveal that students no longer view learning as something that must take place within rigid classroom settings. Instead, they are starting to utilize "non-learning" times— such as commuting, exercising, or preparing for sleep—as potential learning moments via podcasts. S (20, a law student), for example, shared that she usually listens to legal podcasts while commuting home from campus via commuter train (KRL). She felt that what was previously idle time spent scrolling social media had become more productive and reflective. A similar narrative emerged from N (21, an interior design student), who routinely listened to podcasts before bed— not just to gain information but also to calm her mind and prepare herself for the next day. In this practice, podcasts become not only knowledge sources but also parts of one's emotional rhythm and daily routine.

Field observations reinforced this narrative. At a busy bus stop in the Sudirman area, several students were seen wearing earphones while browsing digital notes on their phones. Upon closer inspection, one of them had the Spotify app open with a playlist of educational

podcasts on student financial management. This activity took place amidst noisy city traffic, yet the learning process remained uninterrupted. A similar scene occurred in a campus gym, where two students were using treadmills while listening to podcasts through small personal speakers. These activities prove that learning spaces have shifted—from formal, quiet, and disciplined settings to fluid, mobile spaces aligned with students' bodily rhythms and daily schedules.

In this context, podcasts no longer function as passive learning tools but as learning companions integrated into everyday life (Gu & Huang, 2022). They are adaptive companions, easily entering private spaces and transitional times previously not associated with learning. This reflects a deep transformation in students' perceptions of time and space for learning. Learning time is no longer linear but fragmentary and continuous, shaped by opportunities found in daily life. Learning spaces are no longer confined to classrooms or libraries, but extend to bus stops, bedrooms, gyms, and coffee shops. This is a new form of learning ecology rooted in the digital habitus of the younger generation: they learn in their own ways, in spaces they choose, and at times they find most comfortable.

Theoretically, these findings enrich the discourse on digital habitus by showing that digital learning practices such as podcast listening are not just adaptations to technological advances, but part of a broader cultural transformation in learning behavior. Students are not only receiving content—they manage how to access it, choose the right time, and integrate podcasts as part of their identity and learning lifestyle. This is the new habitus that subtly yet powerfully shapes how knowledge is constructed and reproduced in the digital academic era. As Huc-Hepher (2021) asserts, when technology enters the rhythm of life, learning is no longer bound by formal time and space, but becomes part of one's social landscape and personal experience. In the context of urban Gen Z students in Indonesia, podcasts have taken on this role significantly—filling in life's pauses with meaning, shaping a more fluid learning ecosystem, and ultimately affirming that learning can happen anytime, anywhere, and in ways most connected to life itself.

Podcast as a Cultural Practice in Higher Education

In an increasingly digital and fragmented landscape of higher education, podcasts have transformed from mere tools for conveying information into cultural practices deeply embedded in students' academic lives. This phenomenon not only reflects a shift in how students access knowledge but also in how they construct and negotiate their learning identities. As Bećirović (2023) and Bitar & Davidovich (2024) argue, digital education is not merely about online content transfer; it is a field where culture, identity, and learning communities are shaped through interactions with technology. In this context, the use of podcasts among Generation Z students in Jakarta reflects learning practices that are symbolic, expressive, and communal.

Field findings show that listening to podcasts has become part of students' daily narratives in seeking a more personal and contextual meaning of learning. Several informants stated that choosing a podcast was not solely based on its topic, but also on the host's voice tone, language style, and even their ideological values. B (21, a Communication student) mentioned

that she felt more comfortable learning through podcasts because it felt like "listening to a friend who gets it," rather than being lectured by a teacher. The use of the word "friend" reveals a cultural dimension to the learning process—emotional closeness and social identification between listener and speaker.

his is consistent with field observations showing that students do not always listen to podcasts alone, but also use them as conversation starters in campus cafés, during group study sessions, or as reference materials when working on assignments. At a café in the Tebet area, for example, researchers observed two economics students discussing a podcast episode about Islamic finance while taking notes on their laptops for an upcoming presentation. They referred to the podcast as a "conversation spark" that enlivened their discussion. This practice shows that podcasts have entered students' social spaces as part of a collective learning culture—not just as a personal, individualistic activity.

Furthermore, podcasts have also become a medium for shaping learning identities that are autonomous, dynamic, and open to exploration. Some students, like T (22, a Psychology student), said they felt more "empowered" when they could choose what content to listen to, whenever they felt the need. In T's narrative, learning is no longer confined to the rigid structure of a campus curriculum, but becomes a self-managed experience aligned with personal interests and emotional needs. These choices reflect the construction of identity as digital learners who do not passively await instructions but actively build their own learning pathways. Bećirović (2023) refers to such practices as the "cultural inscription of pedagogy," in which digital education inscribes new values, symbols, and power relations into the learning process.

To illustrate this cultural transformation more clearly, the following conceptual table outlines the cultural dimensions of podcast use as a learning medium in higher education:

Table 3 Cultural Dimensions in the Use of Podcasts as Learning Media

Cultural Dimension	Manifestation in Student Practice
Personal expression	Choosing podcasts based on the host's language style, tone, or ideological values
Social interaction	Informal discussions in cafés, group study spaces, or online chats based on podcast content
Learning autonomy and agency	Choosing when, what, and how to engage with content based on life rhythm and emotional needs
Identity construction	Identifying as independent, critical learners connected to digital learning communities

Source: Research Analysis Results, 2025

From this table, it is evident that podcasts not only function as practical learning aids but have evolved into new cultural terrains where students shape worldviews, build social relations, and articulate their academic identities. In other words, podcasts have become a form of digital cultural pedagogy, where voice, narrative, and personal choice intersect within the increasingly complex and fluid landscape of higher education.

The implication is that higher education institutions need to view podcasts not merely as supplementary content or adaptive online learning strategies, but as integral elements of how the younger generation lives and learns. This opens the possibility of designing curricula that are more responsive to students' digital cultural practices and encourages the integration of audio-based pedagogy into learning designs that are humanistic, reflective, and contextually grounded. In an academic world increasingly defined by connectivity and flexibility, the podcast emerges not just as a format, but as a new way of experiencing and understanding learning itself.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and analyses, it can be concluded that educational podcasts serve not only as alternative learning media for Generation Z students in urban Indonesia but also as mediums that reflect the distinctive social and cultural dynamics of learning among digital natives. The effectiveness of podcasts as pedagogical tools lies in their ability to provide personal, contextual, and flexible learning experiences through engaging narratives, manageable durations, and humanistic, dialogical communication styles. Beyond being a channel of information, podcasts foster multidimensional engagement—cognitive, affective, and behavioral—which integrates learning more seamlessly into students' daily rhythms. In this context, podcasts have transformed into cultural learning practices that blur the lines between formal and informal spaces and reconstruct how students relate to knowledge in the digital era. Therefore, this study affirms that podcasts are not merely supportive learning media but represent a pedagogical strategy with strong potential for integration into higher education curriculum design that is more responsive to the needs, preferences, and digital habitus of today's students.

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles, including informed consent, protection of informants' confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Special consideration was given to participants from vulnerable groups to ensure their safety, comfort, and equal rights to participate. No external funding was received, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. All data and information presented were collected through valid research methods and have been verified to ensure their accuracy and reliability. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was limited to technical assistance for writing and language editing, without influencing the scientific substance of the work. The authors express their gratitude to the informants for their valuable insights, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this article.

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