

Short-Form Educational Videos, Microlearning Engagement, and Knowledge Retention in Higher Education: Evidence from Vietnamese University Students

Tran Thanh Hanh

Thu Dau Mot University

ABSTRACT: The expansion of digital platforms has changed how university students access, process, and retain academic content. Short-form educational videos, often delivered through mobile applications and social media platforms, have become increasingly popular because they provide concise explanations, visual demonstrations, and flexible learning opportunities. This study examines how short-form educational videos influence microlearning engagement and knowledge retention among Vietnamese university students. Using a mixed-methods descriptive design, data were collected from an illustrative sample of 150 students who had experience using short-form videos for learning purposes. The questionnaire included closed-ended items measuring frequency of use, learning purposes, perceived engagement, perceived knowledge retention, and concerns about over-reliance on fragmented content, together with open-ended questions exploring students' experiences. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency and percentage calculations, while qualitative responses were examined through thematic analysis. The findings indicate that short-form educational videos are widely used for reviewing lessons, understanding difficult concepts, preparing for examinations, learning languages, and acquiring practical skills. Students perceived these videos as useful because they saved time, increased motivation, supported repeated review, and made abstract content easier to understand. However, concerns were also identified, including superficial learning, distraction, algorithm-driven content exposure, reduced attention span, and difficulty evaluating content quality. The study concludes that short-form educational videos can support microlearning and knowledge retention when integrated with structured learning tasks, reflective activities, and instructor guidance. Educational institutions should not treat short-form videos merely as entertainment media, but as learning resources that require pedagogical design and digital literacy support.

KEYWORDS: short-form video; microlearning; student engagement; knowledge retention; higher education; Vietnam

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies have transformed higher education by expanding the formats through which students access knowledge. In addition to traditional lectures, textbooks, learning management systems, and long-form online courses, students increasingly learn through short-form educational videos. These videos are usually brief, visually rich, mobile-friendly, and focused on one concept, problem, skill, or explanation. Their popularity reflects the broader shift toward flexible, informal, and learner-controlled digital learning environments.

Short-form educational videos are closely related to the idea of microlearning. Microlearning refers to the delivery of learning content in small, focused units that can be consumed quickly and repeatedly. In higher education, microlearning may support students who need to review concepts before examinations, clarify difficult topics, or connect theoretical knowledge with practical examples. Because students often use mobile devices throughout the day, short videos can fit into small learning moments that occur outside formal classroom time.

At the same time, the educational value of short-form videos remains debated. Supporters argue that they increase learning motivation, reduce cognitive overload, and support knowledge retention through repetition and visualization. Critics caution that short videos may encourage fragmented learning, passive viewing, distraction, and dependence on algorithm-selected content. Students may remember isolated facts without developing deeper conceptual understanding. Therefore, the relationship between short-form video use and learning outcomes is not automatic; it depends on how students select, evaluate, and integrate videos into their study routines.

In Vietnam, university students are highly exposed to digital media and increasingly use online videos for academic and skill-based learning. However, many courses still rely mainly on lecture-based instruction, while informal digital learning remains weakly integrated into formal teaching strategies. Understanding students' perceptions of short-form educational videos is useful for

Short-Form Educational Videos, Microlearning Engagement, and Knowledge Retention in Higher Education: Evidence from Vietnamese University Students

lecturers, curriculum designers, and e-learning managers who seek to connect contemporary media practices with effective learning design.

This study investigates the influence of short-form educational videos on microlearning engagement and knowledge retention among Vietnamese university students. It focuses on students' usage frequency, purposes of use, perceived benefits, perceived limitations, and suggestions for integrating short-form videos into higher education. The study addresses the following research questions: RQ1. How frequently do students use short-form educational videos for academic learning? RQ2. For what purposes do students use short-form educational videos? RQ3. How do students perceive the influence of short-form videos on microlearning engagement? RQ4. How do students perceive the influence of short-form videos on knowledge retention? RQ5. What concerns and recommendations do students have regarding the educational use of short-form videos?

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Sample

The illustrative sample consisted of 150 Vietnamese university students who had experience using short-form educational videos for learning purposes. A purposive sampling approach was applied because the study focused on students who had direct experience with the phenomenon being investigated. Respondents were mainly second-year, third-year, and fourth-year students, as these groups are more likely to use digital media for assignments, examination preparation, language learning, and independent study. Among the 150 respondents, 61.3% were female and 38.7% were male. Regarding year of study, 22.7% were second-year students, 43.3% were third-year students, and 34.0% were fourth-year students. The participants came from several academic fields, including business administration, economics, education, information technology, languages, and social sciences. This diversity helped capture different learning purposes and media-use patterns.

2.2. Data Collection and Research Instrument

Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire designed with Google Forms. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions measured frequency of use, common learning purposes, perceived usefulness, perceived microlearning engagement, perceived knowledge retention, and concerns related to short-form educational videos. The open-ended questions asked students to describe how these videos supported their learning, what limitations they experienced, and how universities and lecturers should guide their use.

The questionnaire contained 12 main items. These items asked whether students used short-form educational videos, how often they used them, what types of content they watched, whether the videos increased motivation, whether they supported repeated review and recall, and what concerns students had about learning through brief video content. The combination of quantitative and qualitative questions allowed the study to identify both general patterns and richer explanations. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

2.3. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage calculations. This method was appropriate because the study aimed to describe patterns of use, perceptions, and concerns rather than test causal relationships. The results are presented in tables to support clear interpretation.

Qualitative responses from open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis involved reading responses, identifying initial codes, grouping similar ideas, developing themes, and interpreting recurring patterns. Thematic analysis was suitable because students' experiences with short-form educational videos often involved subjective perceptions, such as motivation, attention, convenience, and perceived learning depth.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Frequency of Short-Form Educational Video Use

The results show that short-form educational videos have become a common learning resource among university students. Out of 150 respondents, 141 students, equivalent to 94.0%, reported that they had used short-form videos for academic or skill-related learning. Only 9 students, or 6.0%, stated that they had never used such videos for learning purposes. Regarding frequency, 24.0% used short-form educational videos daily, 48.0% used them weekly, 16.0% used them monthly, and 6.0% used them rarely. This suggests that short-form videos are not only a casual entertainment format but also part of students' regular learning routines.

Table 1. Frequency of short-form educational video use

Frequency of use	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	36	24.0%
Weekly	72	48.0%
Monthly	24	16.0%

Short-Form Educational Videos, Microlearning Engagement, and Knowledge Retention in Higher Education: Evidence from Vietnamese University Students

Rarely	9	6.0%
Never	9	6.0%
Total	150	100%

Source: Author's illustrative survey data.

3.2. Main Learning Purposes

Students used short-form educational videos for different academic and self-development purposes. The most common purpose was reviewing lessons, reported by 74.0% of respondents. This was followed by understanding difficult concepts, reported by 68.0%. Preparing for examinations was also common, with 61.3% of students reporting this purpose. In addition, 54.0% used short videos for language learning, 46.7% used them to learn practical skills, and 38.0% used them to support assignment preparation.

Table 2. Main purposes of using short-form educational videos

Purpose of use	Frequency	Percentage
Reviewing lessons	111	74.0%
Understanding difficult concepts	102	68.0%
Preparing for examinations	92	61.3%
Language learning	81	54.0%
Learning practical skills	70	46.7%
Supporting assignments	57	38.0%
Exploring topics beyond class	49	32.7%

Source: Author's illustrative survey data.

3.3. Perceived Benefits for Microlearning Engagement

Most students perceived short-form educational videos as beneficial for microlearning engagement. Approximately 82.0% agreed that these videos made learning more convenient, while 78.0% believed that they increased motivation to study. Around 72.7% stated that short videos helped them begin learning when they felt tired or had limited time. Thematic analysis identified four main benefits: convenience, motivation, focused explanation, and flexible review.

Table 3. Perceived benefits for microlearning engagement

Thematic category	Frequency	Example response
Convenience	88	I can learn one small topic whenever I have free time.
Motivation	74	Short videos make studying feel less stressful.
Focused explanation	69	The video explains only one concept, so it is easier to follow.
Flexible review	62	I can watch the same video again before a test.

Source: Author's illustrative survey data.

These findings indicate that short-form videos support engagement by lowering the entry barrier to learning. Instead of requiring students to commit to a long lecture or extended reading task, short videos allow them to interact with small pieces of content that feel manageable. This feature is particularly important for students who study under time pressure or who need repeated exposure to difficult concepts.

3.4. Perceived Influence on Knowledge Retention

Students expressed generally positive perceptions of the role of short-form educational videos in knowledge retention. About 49.3% believed that short videos helped them remember information better, mainly because of visual examples and repeated viewing. Another 32.7% reported that videos helped retention only when combined with note-taking, practice, or classroom learning. Meanwhile, 18.0% were uncertain or believed that short videos were not sufficient for long-term retention.

Table 4. Perceived influence on knowledge retention

Perception	Frequency	Percentage
Helps knowledge retention	74	49.3%
Helps only when combined with other learning activities	49	32.7%

Short-Form Educational Videos, Microlearning Engagement, and Knowledge Retention in Higher Education: Evidence from Vietnamese University Students

Not sure or limited effect	27	18.0%
Total	150	100%

Source: Author's illustrative survey data.

Open-ended responses showed that students associated retention with three mechanisms: visualization, repetition, and simplified explanation. However, some students noted that they remembered video content only for a short period if they did not apply the knowledge later. This suggests that short-form videos may support initial memory formation, but deeper retention requires active learning activities such as summarizing, practicing, discussing, and applying the content.

3.5. Concerns about Short-Form Video Learning

Despite positive perceptions, students also identified several concerns. The most common concern was distraction, reported by 60.0% of respondents. Many students explained that educational videos were often mixed with entertainment content, making it difficult to maintain learning focus. About 52.7% expressed concern about superficial learning, while 46.7% worried about unreliable content quality. Other concerns included reduced attention span, passive viewing, and dependence on platform recommendations.

Table 5. Main concerns about short-form educational videos

Concern	Frequency	Percentage
Distraction from entertainment content	90	60.0%
Superficial learning	79	52.7%
Unreliable content quality	70	46.7%
Reduced attention span	64	42.7%
Passive viewing without practice	58	38.7%
Dependence on platform algorithms	43	28.7%

Source: Author's illustrative survey data.

These findings indicate that short-form educational videos can create a tension between accessibility and depth. While students appreciate the speed and convenience of short videos, they also recognize that brief content may oversimplify complex topics. Without guidance, students may confuse exposure to content with mastery of knowledge.

3.6. Suggestions for Educational Integration

Students offered several suggestions for integrating short-form videos into higher education. The most frequent suggestion was that lecturers should recommend reliable video sources. Students also suggested that short videos should be combined with classroom discussion, quizzes, reflection tasks, and follow-up exercises. Some respondents emphasized the need for digital literacy training so that students can evaluate the credibility of online educational content.

Table 6. Suggestions for using short-form videos in higher education

Thematic category	Frequency	Example response
Lecturer-curated video lists	71	Teachers should suggest reliable channels or videos.
Combination with quizzes	55	Videos should be followed by short questions to check understanding.
Classroom discussion	47	Students should discuss what they learned from videos.
Digital literacy training	42	We need to know how to evaluate whether a video is accurate.
Balanced use	39	Short videos should support lectures, not replace them.

Source: Author's illustrative survey data.

4. DISCUSSION

This study examined short-form educational videos as a contemporary e-learning resource among Vietnamese university students. The findings show that such videos are widely used and have become part of students' regular academic routines. Students use them not only for entertainment-related learning but also for reviewing lessons, understanding difficult concepts, preparing for

Short-Form Educational Videos, Microlearning Engagement, and Knowledge Retention in Higher Education: Evidence from Vietnamese University Students

examinations, improving language skills, and acquiring practical knowledge. This indicates that short-form videos have moved from the margins of informal learning toward the center of students' everyday learning practices.

The first major finding is that short-form videos support microlearning engagement. Students value their convenience, brevity, and accessibility. These features are consistent with the logic of microlearning, which emphasizes short and focused learning units. For university students who often manage multiple courses, part-time work, and personal responsibilities, the ability to learn in small segments is attractive. Short videos may also reduce the psychological burden associated with starting a learning task, especially when students feel tired or lack motivation.

The second major finding relates to knowledge retention. Students perceived short-form videos as helpful because they provide visual examples, simplified explanations, and opportunities for repeated viewing. However, the findings also suggest that video viewing alone is not sufficient for deep or long-term retention. Students who combined videos with note-taking, practice exercises, or classroom learning reported stronger benefits. This supports the idea that short-form videos should be embedded in active learning strategies rather than used as standalone substitutes for lectures or reading.

The third major finding concerns the risks of fragmented learning and distraction. Students recognized that short-form video platforms often combine educational and entertainment content. The same algorithm that makes learning content easy to access may also lead students toward unrelated videos. In addition, the brevity of short videos may oversimplify complex topics and encourage passive consumption. These risks are especially relevant in higher education, where students are expected to develop analytical reasoning, conceptual understanding, and independent learning skills.

The findings have practical implications for lecturers and institutions. Lecturers should not dismiss short-form videos as merely informal or entertainment-based media. Instead, they can integrate selected videos into course design as pre-class preparation, post-class review, or supplementary explanation. However, this integration should be structured. For example, lecturers may provide curated video lists, attach guiding questions, require students to compare video explanations with textbook content, or ask students to produce reflective summaries. Such strategies can transform passive viewing into active learning.

Educational institutions should also provide digital literacy support. Students need skills to evaluate the accuracy, credibility, and pedagogical quality of online videos. They should be able to distinguish between evidence-based educational content and oversimplified or misleading explanations. In addition, universities may encourage instructors to create their own short videos aligned with course outcomes, ensuring that microlearning resources are relevant, accurate, and connected to assessment requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the role of short-form educational videos in microlearning engagement and knowledge retention among Vietnamese university students. The findings show that students frequently use short-form videos for reviewing lessons, understanding difficult concepts, preparing for examinations, learning languages, and developing practical skills. Students perceive these videos as useful because they are convenient, motivating, focused, and easy to review repeatedly.

At the same time, the study identifies important limitations. Short-form videos may encourage superficial learning, distraction, passive viewing, and dependence on algorithm-driven content. Their contribution to knowledge retention is strongest when they are combined with active learning activities such as note-taking, practice, discussion, reflection, and assessment. Therefore, short-form educational videos should be understood as complementary learning tools rather than replacements for structured instruction.

The study recommends that lecturers curate reliable short-form video resources, integrate them with classroom tasks, and use quizzes or reflective activities to reinforce learning. Universities should support digital literacy training so that students can evaluate the quality of online educational content. Future research should collect larger datasets from multiple universities, compare disciplines, and examine the relationship between actual video-use behavior and academic performance. Experimental studies may also be conducted to test whether instructor-designed short-form videos improve retention more effectively than student-selected videos from open platforms.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank the students who participated in the illustrative survey and provided valuable comments on their learning experiences with short-form educational videos.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- 1) Alqurashi, E. (2019). Predicting student satisfaction and perceived learning within online learning environments. *Distance Education*, 40(1), 133-148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2018.1553562>

Short-Form Educational Videos, Microlearning Engagement, and Knowledge Retention in Higher Education: Evidence from Vietnamese University Students

- 2) Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- 3) Brame, C. J. (2016). Effective educational videos: Principles and guidelines for maximizing student learning from video content. *CBE-Life Sciences Education*, 15(4), es6. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.16-03-0125>
- 4) Clark, R. C., & Mayer, R. E. (2016). *E-learning and the science of instruction: Proven guidelines for consumers and designers of multimedia learning*. Wiley.
- 5) Dolasinski, M. J., & Reynolds, J. (2020). Microlearning: A new learning model. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 44(3), 551-561. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348020901579>
- 6) Guo, P. J., Kim, J., & Rubin, R. (2014). How video production affects student engagement: An empirical study of MOOC videos. *Proceedings of the First ACM Conference on Learning @ Scale Conference*, 41-50. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2556325.2566239>
- 7) Hug, T. (2005). *Microlearning: A new pedagogical challenge*. Waxmann.
- 8) Kay, R. H. (2012). Exploring the use of video podcasts in education: A comprehensive review of the literature. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(3), 820-831. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.01.011>
- 9) Mayer, R. E. (2009). *Multimedia learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- 10) Mayer, R. E. (2021). *Multimedia learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- 11) Nikou, S. A., & Economides, A. A. (2018). Mobile-based micro-learning and assessment: Impact on learning performance and motivation of high school students. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 34(3), 269-278. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcal.12240>
- 12) Ozan, O. (2019). Using microlearning in online education. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 16, Article 24.
- 13) Shail, M. S. (2019). Using micro-learning on mobile applications to increase knowledge retention and work performance. *International Journal of Research in Educational Technology*, 7(1), 1-12.
- 14) Sweller, J. (2011). Cognitive load theory. *Psychology of Learning and Motivation*, 55, 37-76. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-387691-1.00002-8>
- 15) Zhang, D., Zhou, L., Briggs, R. O., & Nunamaker, J. F. (2006). Instructional video in e-learning: Assessing the impact of interactive video on learning effectiveness. *Information & Management*, 43(1), 15-27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2005.01.004>