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# THE REVIVAL OF LITERARY READING HABITS IN A NONWESTERN CONTEXT THROUGH THE US-ORIGINATED BOOKTOK TREND

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**Abstract**

Social media has become a powerful force in shaping youth behaviour, especially in developing reading habits. TikTok, one of the most popular platforms, has given rise to BookTok, a sub-community where users recommend books and share appealing quotes. This trend has revived interest in reading among the younger generation. This study investigates the impact of BookTok on university students in Pakistan, particularly how a Western-originated trend influences reading behaviours in a non-Western context. A sequential mixed methods approach was employed. In the first phase, a questionnaire was distributed among undergraduate students from the Departments of English Literature and Linguistics at Punjab's University of Okara. It explored their reading frequency, genre preferences, motivations, and awareness of BookTok. The second phase involved interviews conducted before and after exposure to BookTok content. These were thematically analysed to determine changes in reading behaviour and mindset. Guided by the Uses and Gratification Theory, the study highlights how BookTok exposure sparked curiosity, shifted attitudes, and motivated students to explore diverse genres, often reading for personal enjoyment. The findings suggest that BookTok can effectively enhance literary interest in non-Western settings and recommends its integration into literature classrooms to promote reading development.

**Keywords:** *BookTok, TikTok, Literary Reading, Digital Literacy, Reading Motivations, Education , Social Media, Uses and Gratification Theory, Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, Michael Gurevitch*

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## 1. Introduction

Over past few decades, traditional literary reading has been experiencing a decline, particularly in younger generations. While traditional literary reading is essential for cultural literacy, critical thinking, and empathy, the diminishing engagement with literature and books has become a major concern. This decline was not only alarming to one region. In early 2021, a survey was conducted by Pew Research Center which reported that approximately 23% of the American adults does not read a single book in any format over the previous years. Similarly in Pakistan, a survey conducted by Gallup and Gilani Pakistan in 2019, reports that 75% of Pakistani does not read books at all except their academic textbooks. Only 9% are avid readers(enjoy reading regularly). The proliferation of digital entertainment and changing cultural preferences is contributing to this decline.

Books have always ruled the world in the history of mankind. But in a time when literary books reading appeared to be losing its importance, an unexpected revival sparked its relevance again through a digital phenomenon: BookTok. BookTok is a subcommunity on TikTok that talks all about books; discussing and recommending books, sharing reviews and emotional responses to books.

Jacobs (2021) states that "BookTok is a term used to describe the bookish community on TikTok, where people post videos recommending books, making jokes about reading and sharing their love of literature." According to Giovanni Blandino (2024), BookTok trend first emerged in 2020 and it has been driving book sales since then. This revival in literary reading habits among younger generation is significant with over 53.5 Million posts about books reading and recommendations under the hashtag "BookTok," by April 2025. With over more than 200 Billion views, this community highlights not only the revival of reading literature but also the success of publishing market. In 2021, around 20 Million books were sold due to BookTok effect (Curcic, 2023). After the rise of this trend on TikTok, it has spiked the sale of some underrated books to the best-selling, like the book "It Ends With Us" by Colleen Hoover and "The Song Of Achilles" by Madeline Miller. Since the Hoover's book was published in 2016, it got fame in pandemic during the rise of BookTok and it has made over 400 Million copies of this

book to be sold and is now translated in 29 languages plus has also been made into a film (Blandino, 2024). The rise of this trend has made many authors and publishers to be a part of this community (Jacobs, 2021).

Although this trend demonstrates the blockbuster change in literary reading and publishing industry, the popularity of this trend came into being known by some readers sharing their insights about books that highlights the revival of literary reading habits. Curcic (2023), talking about the rise in reading trends, reports a survey conducted in United States: Due to the exposure to BookTok, an increase in the reading habits was seen about 80% in Maine, 70% in Nebraska, 67% in Idaho, New Jersy 35%, Massachusetts 34%, and Washington 33%. Likewise, the Canadian population had a great impact on their literary reading habits due to this trend (Curcic, 2023).

Being exposed to BookTok, people are majorly influenced by certain genres more. One of the most popular genre is Romance with authors like Colleen Hoover and Ana Huang (Washington post, 2025). Another are Fantasy with books having exciting adventures (Michigan Daily, 2025), Young Adult (YA) which are easy to relate (The Weekly Talon, 2025), also a new genre that mixes romance and fantasy, called Romantasy (THU Newsletter, 2024). Finally, many readers are going back to Classics like Fyodor Dostoevsky (The Guardian, 2024). This major shift in literature being read is because of the cultural change, focus on trends in the society, and demographical aspects. The majority of the BookTok community is young women, between 16 and 24 years old. This younger generation has not only shaped the literature preferences but also sparked a broader debate about the impact of social media in modern reading habits. Given the growing popularity of BookTok among young readers, its influence on university student's literary reading habit is noteworthy. Moreover, this trend arises from U.S introduces a major subject of study. While most of the researches on BookTok focuses on its influence within the U.S or western countries. There is a significant research gap in understanding how it influences readers in a non-western context, particularly in Pakistan. Thus, this research aims to find out what genres or types of books are preferred by Pakistani university students and how do these preferences differ between those exposed to BookTok and those who are not and how the awareness of this trend can influence reading habits of Pakistani university students.

This study is important because traditional reading habits are declining around the world, especially in Pakistan. Although TikTok was initially made for entertainment, the rise of BookTok has encouraged the younger generation to start reading again. This research highlights how BookTok is helping university students to get interested in reading. Most studies focuses on Western countries, so this research focuses on students

reading in a non-western context. The results can help instructors, institutes, and policymakers to understand how social media can be reinforced positively in curriculum to reignite the love for reading among younger generation.

### 1.1. To sum up, this research explores these research questions:

1. How aware are University students of BookTok as a literary trend in Pakistan?
2. What genres are preferred by Pakistani university students compare with those promoted by BookTok?
3. What psychological, emotional, or social needs do Pakistani university students fulfill through reading books discovered via BookTok?
4. Could the introduction of BookTok trends potentially influence or revive literary reading habits among Pakistani university students in the Future?

This research aims to find how an American-originated trend can influence the genre preferences and literary reading habits in Pakistan, particularly in the context of globalized social media trend.

## 2. Literature Review

The rapidly changing world due to digital platforms altered the ways students engage with literature. BookTok – a subcommunity of TikTok that posts books related content, has shaped the literary reading habits among people especially university students. Many researches have examined how these trends on social media causes the revival of literary reading habits among younger generation.

Jerasa (2025) breaks down that BookTok isn't necessarily a site to suggest books ; it's where diverse culture and language patterns readers come together to show their true self and find representation. Three international BookTok creators from Iran, Curaçao, and the Philippines are examined in this study and found how they located community and confidence to represent their religion and heritage through book-sharing. This research points out that BookTok can be the safe haven in times of political conflict, construct reading identities, and facilitate multilingual communication.

Rozaki (2023) discusses the role of BookTok in changing literary reading in the present era based on the case study of Colleen Hoover's bestselling novel It Ends With Us. The study reveals how BookTok enable readers not only to read but also to approach text more creatively. Through thematic analysis of BookTok video content, Rozaki demonstrates that the BookTok trend has made it easy for readers to find new books and

has also impacted book sales. The findings confirm that the TikTok algorithm recommends some books to the viewers based on their taste and interest from there for you page and demonstrates how reading books, particularly Romance fiction, is cool again. This research highlights the way reading culture has been rejuvenated by BookTok and how it empowers authors and publishers.

Pósfai (2024) through video analysis and interviews identifies that reading books is no longer a solitary activity, it is interactive, social, and emotional. The content of BookTok such as experience sharing, emotion expression in response to books, and following reading progress in short relatable videos has facilitated online communities and rekindled reading interests particularly among Gen-Z. This thesis addresses how BookTok has transformed reading into cultural identity and market-driven content. This research indicates how BookTok has transformed reading behaviors in the rapidly evolving digital era and makes literature more interactive across cultures.

While most Studies focuses on the emerging trendy genres in literature, Cluberson (2024) studied how BookTok is becoming a major concern in the decline of traditional literature canon. This study explores how BookTok recommends particular genres of literature and boosting sales sidelining the classical traditional literature. Cluberson highlights how BookTok is not only reshaping marketing strategies in publishing but also shows which books may be considered important or classic in the future.

De Melo (2024) researched BookTok and examine how the publishing industry is impacted by BookTok especially in literary criticism and diversity. This research illustrates how creators of BookTok unwittingly perpetuate stereotypes on diversity trends without necessarily verifying marginalized voices.

Guiñez-Cabrera and Mansilla-Obando (2022) provide a first in-depth studies of Latin American BookTok influencers by interviewing 13 Booktokers. This study showcases how and why they use TikTok to share Book-related content. This study highlights their several key motivations: enjoyment, community-building, and the ease of content creation. The unique perspective of this study is showing how a U.S originated trend was adopted meaningfully within a non-western context. This study showcases that BookTok is not only a revival of literary reading but also its reshaping how different cultures promote books and connect across diverse boundaries.

Ridzuan and Ahmadrashidi (2023) reveals through qualitative study that BookTok is a central space for young readers, especially women. Although Malaysia's reading culture was declining because of more Western or tech- forward nations, the

#BookTokMalaysia illustrates that how this U.S generated trend is being localized to bridge cultural and generational gaps in reading practices.

Meddahi and Braik (2024) examines how TikTok particularly BookTok can influence literary reading habits if being integrated into literature classrooms to engage Gen Z learners. The study was conducted in Algeria and it combines qualitative and quantitative methods to study students readiness for Book-style activities. The findings demonstrates that BookTok can increase engagement, enhance creativity, critical thinking and interest in literature among EFL learners.

The rise of BookTok, on TikTok, has had a significant impact on world reading trends, especially among young people. In the US, almost 48% of users of TikTok indicated that they were reading more due to BookTok, with an average of 60% volume of reading increase (Casino.org, 2023). In Canada, 53% indicated a 58% rise in reading, and Saskatchewan provinces have even higher use (Statista, 2023). The phenomenon has also caught fire in the United Kingdom, where 14% of book consumers use TikTok, rising to 37% among the 13–24 age range (Nielsen Book, 2023). BookTok was one of the top community hashtags in Australia, with booksellers such as Dymocks saying at least half of their bestsellers are BookTok-related (Information Age, 2023). The Middle East and North Africa region itself has contributed more than 1.9 billion views of BookTok content, with Saudi Arabia being the leader in regional views (CMOs Magazine, 2023). In Pakistan, though there are no official statistics, this trend is steadily increasing. These trends reflect BookTok's wide reach and its changing role of reviving literary culture across various contexts worldwide.

In spite of these encouraging trends, the current literature covers only the Western context, more specifically, the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and European countries. The current research indicates a clear absence of evidence of how BookTok affects readers in non-Western environments, for example, Pakistan. There certainly is a study on how BookTok is influencing the book sales in Pakistan. As, Yusuf (2023) highlights that when the large bookstores in big cities like Lahore noticed that BookTok was becoming popular so they started selling books that went viral on BookTok. One popular bookstore, Readings, even made a special section in the store dedicated to BookTok, called “TikTok Made Me Buy It” (Yusuf, 2023). Despite this, there is a significant gap; how many students in Pakistani universities are aware of this trend and how much they engage with it. This study fill in the gaps by exploring what literature is being read in Pakistan, being influenced by this trend. Also, this study highlights the accessibility or awareness of Pakistani students to this trend, whether the students are reading on the same pace as of U.S students. Additionally, to what frequency they have

developed reading habits after the exposure with BookTok. This study highlights how a western dominated trend can influence the reading habits and genre preferences among students in a non-western context, most likely in Pakistan.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

In addition, This study is driven by Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974). UGT illustrates how people make use of media to meet certain needs and desires like information, entertainment, identity, and social interaction. Unlike other theories that approach the audience as the passive receiver, this theory approaches the audience as the active receiver who individually selected the media to satisfy certain requirements (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974).

UGT breaks media use into five general gratification categories, all of which are highly applicable to the subject matter of how students use BookTok. They are:

1. **Cognitive needs** – These are the desire to learn information, knowledge, or understanding. For students on BookTok, they could be reading book-related pages so that they can find new books, find out about book genres, or learn about themes, writers, and literary trends. The website enables people to get quick and easy entry into books, and therefore it is possible to make informed choices about what to read.
2. **Affective needs** – These are associated with emotional experiences like enjoyment, pleasure, or escapism. BookTok videos are typically created to produce powerful emotional reactions with respect to narrative that is applicable, cinematic soundscapes, or individual reading experience. The students will view these videos not only to learn but also to be emotionally engaged, entertained, or inspired.
3. **Personal integrative needs** – These are needs for self-confidence, credibility, and personal identity. BookTok allows students to define and establish their reader identities. Through participating in specific trends, book suggestions, or reacting to postings that reflect the student's values or personality, they establish their self-confidence within online reader communities.
4. **Social integrative needs** – This type is concerned with connecting with others, having similar interests, and belonging to a group. BookTok achieves the sense of belonging through enabling people to engage in group reads, comment debate, or shared book recommendations. Students have

here a site where they can socially connect based on common literature interests.

5. **Tension release** – It is the process of using media to unwind, get away from, or divert from daily stress. Students are often stressed in school, and BookTok is a soothing, pleasant diversion in the form of short, artistic videos that are low-stress and laid-back. Such relaxed consumption can re-enter reading in a less stressful, more inviting manner.

These five dimensions turn UGT into an incredibly useful model to apply here in this research, since they enable the research to not only consider how the students are utilizing BookTok, but also why, and in what ways needs are being met in the process. They move away from technology in isolation towards motivation, intention, and interpretation of the user, bestowing control onto the student reader.

In the context of BookTok, university students are not passive recipients of literary information; rather, they are actively participating in book-related videos to fulfill diverse needs. For example, they can search for information on new books, entertainment as creative book reviews, building personal identity in terms of identification with particular reading communities, or social interaction through recommendation and discussion.

Using UGT in this research enables one to study the particular reasons for which students are using BookTok and how these reasons affect their reading of literature. It also enables one to study how students in a non-Western context, i.e., Pakistan, utilize BookTok differently or in the same way as their Western peers. Using this theoretical framework, the research seeks to confirm the active agency of students in rekindling their interest in literature through digital media. The viewers utilize Digital Media platforms in order to please themselves, to gain pleasure and to satisfy their emotional needs. Moreover, individuals use such platforms ( like Booktok) to gain something constructive and to get information plus entertainment at the same time. (Khan, 2022)

## 4. Research Methodology

This section unpacks the type of research conducted, the participants involved, the tools used for data collection and sampling techniques used to analyze data, the ethical Considerations taken into practice throughout the study. This section provides a detailed overview of both quantitative and qualitative approaches adopted under a sequential mixed methods design.

### 4.1. Research Design

This work used a sequential mixed methods research design to gain a proper understanding of How BookTok influences reading habits among university students in Pakistan and what genre they prefer to read. The research was conducted in two phases. Initially a quantitative research method was utilized by designing an online survey and then distributed it to a larger number of participants. Finally, drawing on the findings, a qualitative approach was employed to collect data through semi-structured interviews in the case of students who didn't know the trend, quasi-experimental research was conducted through the pre-test and post-test method. The sample of those students who never heard or used Booktok or this trend was considered. They were exposed to an awareness session and their response was noted down before and after exposure to BookTok.

### 4.2. Population and Sampling

Population of the study included undergraduate students from Pakistani universities i.e., University of Okara, with majors in English Literature and English Linguistics as well. In the qualitative phase, a sample of 20 students was selected. Meanwhile for the quantitative phase, an online survey was shared with over 40 students out of which 36 were selected. This selection was made to ensure the diversity in reading habits, exposure to BookTok, and technological gaps(if any) present. In qualitative phase where a pre and post test was conducted through interviews; a purposive sampling was employed. Those students were selected only who were neither familiar with BookTok nor read books outside academic. The objective was to explore whether BookTok has the potential to influence students to read literary text outside academic settings.

### 4.3. Research Setting

The qualitative data was collected from University of Okara located in (semi)urban area of Pakistan. Interviews were conducted during regular academic hours during empty slots. On the other hand, the online survey was distributed among students through WhatsApp groups in 2025.

### 4.4. Data Collection Tools

For quantitative data collection, the online survey included close-ended questions focusing on genre preferences, awareness level, and frequency of reading literary text. The survey was developed on Google Forms. For qualitative stage, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore awareness, reading, and motivations for BookTok among the student. The interviews did not stick to guiding questions but also allowed open discussion. The interviews were approximately 20 minutes in length and audio-recorded.

### 4.5. Tool Development or Adaptation

The interview questions were developed by researcher after reviewing relevant literature on BookTok, youth reading habits, and social media trends. A set of 10 questions was developed which was later reviewed by a faculty member to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research. The online survey was developed considering the research gaps needed to address.

### 4.6. Validity and Reliability

All qualitative tools were reviewed by two experts in literature studies to ensure validity. A pilot focus group discussion was conducted with three students not included in the final Study to refine the questions. For the survey, reliability of the instrument was checked through a small pilot survey (n=5), to improve clarity and consistency essential revisions were made in the light of their responses.

### 4.7. Data Collection Procedure

To explore the potential of BookTok in reviving literary reading habits, a short pre-test was conducted for unaware students to explore their motivation level, reading frequency and genre preferences. This was followed by an interactive awareness session for the aim of introducing BookTok, its origin, and how it fuels the drive in reading locally and internationally. Post-test was then administered in an attempt to determine any change in their motivation towards reading and literary genre preference.

To conduct interviews, permission was obtained from the heads of department. Participants were contacted in advance, and their informed consent was also obtained. Each interview was audio-recorded and was later transcribed for analysis.

The survey link was distributed through academic WhatsApp groups. Participants were given a week to respond and both the phases involved anonymous participation.

### 4.8. Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed about the study objectives and their consent was obtained to record interviews and collect responses. They were guaranteed they could withdraw themselves from the research at any point and their details would not be disclosed. Nobody's information was published and only for academic ends, data were utilized.

### 4.9. Data Analysis

The quantitative survey was analyzed using the graphs and pie charts auto-generated by Google Forms. Qualitative data was then transcribed and coded according to thematic analysis. The transcribed data was read multiple times by researcher to identify recurring themes and patterns.

### 4.10. Delimitations

The study was limited to a small number of participants, so the findings may not fully represent all Pakistani university students. Some participants may have given socially desirable responses during interviews or surveys. Possibly a research at a larger scale can be conducted to gather locally expected statistical data. Moreover, this study is limited to university students in Pakistan and English Literature and English Linguistics content only.

### 4.11. Summary Line

This research design helped gather in-depth and broad-based data to understand how BookTok is emerging as the revival of literary reading habits and shaping genre preferences among Pakistani university students.

## 5. Results

Results are derived, based on the data collected through Pre and post-test experimental approach to identify how BookTok, a reading community on TikTok can influence literary reading habits among university students who are unaware of this trend of Pakistan especially those students majoring in English. Also, a broad survey was made to be filled from the students, to explore the frequency of reading with or without exposure to BookTok, preferred genres, preferred literarture(whether reading local or English literature), and their motivation to read such literature. This results section highlights the pattern of BookTok usage and influence on Pakistani students reading habits.

This section will first present the findings of the survey, conducted to get a broader perspective of students(both aware & unaware of BookTok) reading habits, preferences and motivation. Later, it will be discussing the impacts it laid, after raising awareness of the students.

### 5.1. Quantitative Findings:

Through the use of quantitative approach, a questionnaire was designed and distributed among university students. This questionnaire demonstrates the key results.

### 5.1.1. Reading Frequency of Non-Academic Books

To assess Pakistani students' general reading habits outside the curriculum, some questions were asked. Those questions showed the following results:

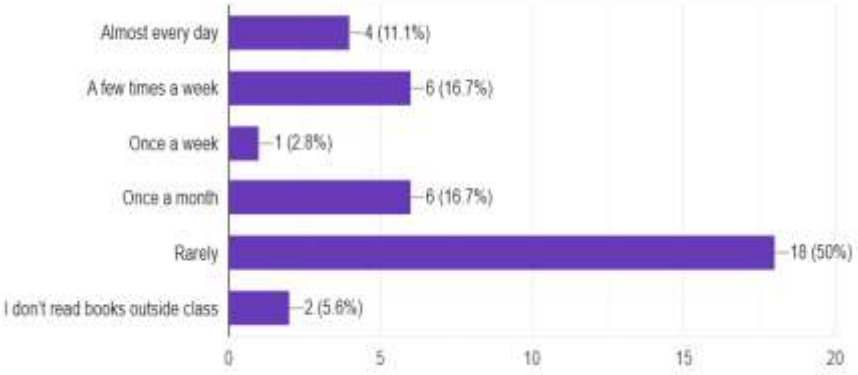



**Fig.1.** *How often do you read books that are not part of your syllabus?*

This shows that from total, only 11% students reported to read actively almost every day. While 50% of the respondents appear to read "Rarely". 16.7% indicated to read either "a few times a week" or just "once a month." A 2.8% of the respondents read only "once a week" and 5.6% admitted that they do not read outside class at all. This data demonstrates a generally low engagement with literary readings outside class, which sets the stage for exploring whether BookTok can influence these reading habits positively.

Another question highlights how much Pakistani students read based on the total books they read in past few months, which shows how many books they can read for exploring their reading habits in depth.

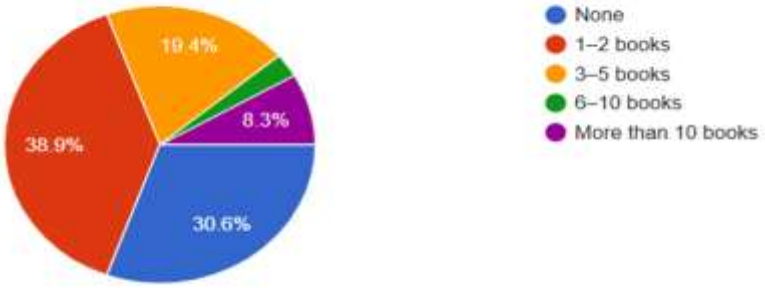



***Fig.2.*** *In the last 6 months, how many non-academic books have you read?*

This figure illustrates that only 8.3% respondents frequently engage in reading, while majority like 38.9%, read just 1-2 books and 30.6% have read nothing.

### 5.1.2. Language and Author Preferences of Pakistani students

Some questions were asked to better understand the students preferences of reading beyond academic curriculum, whether they read Urdu literature or English Literature, and whether they prefer Pakistani (local) authors or International authors in the circumstances of reading literature in English.

These questions highlights how the cultural and linguistic dimensions of a society impacts on students reading habits particularly in a multilingual society like Pakistan. Identifying these reading patterns of Pakistani students help evaluate valuable insights into their accessibility to global and local literature. These insights prove helpful when analyzing such platforms like BookTok influence reading preferences and whether these platforms are promoting global and local literature on equal basis.

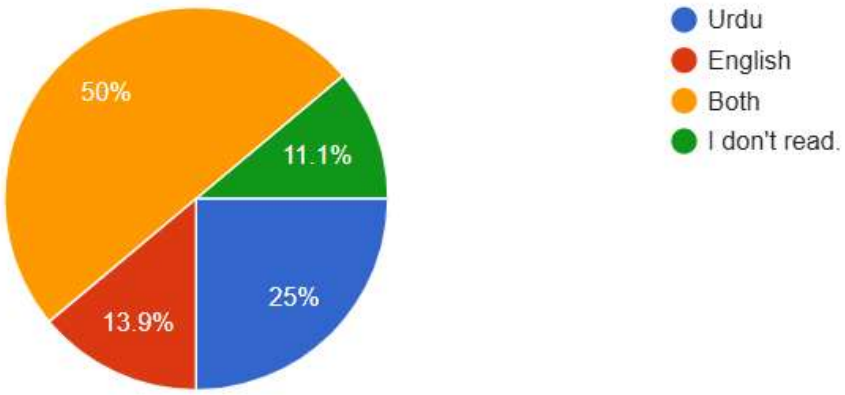



***Fig.3.*** *What type of literature books do you usually read outside academic?*

50% which means half of the respondents were in favor of reading both the English and Urdu Literature on equal basis. While 25% do not read any of the literature. 13.9% respondents reported to read only English Literature, which is a favorable response to BookTok as only English Literature is more dominant over there.

To delve deeper into this aspect, a related question was asked which revealed just average inclination toward international authors.

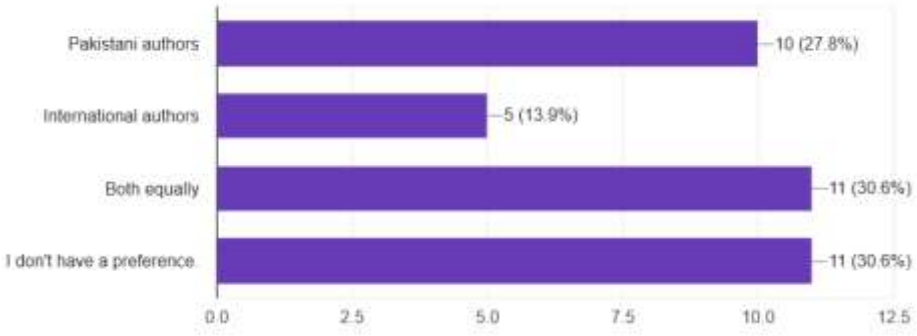



***Fig.4.*** *Do you read local (Pakistani) authors or international authors?*

Just like 13.9% respondents showed interest in English literature, likewise 13.9% reported to read international authors only. While majority were in favor of both authors equally and not having any author preference.

### 5.1.3. Genre Preferences of Pakistani Students

In order to investigate the genre choice of students, a specific question was framed which throws light on the type of books students of Pakistan are reading these days.

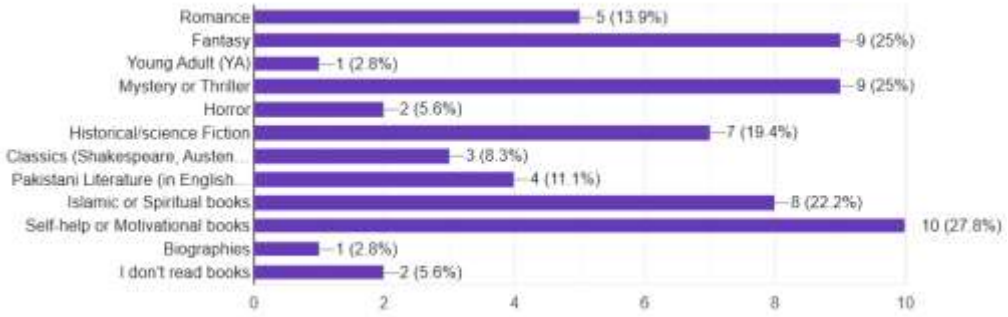



***Fig.5.*** *Which types of books do you like reading the most?*

Students were free to choose multiple options, highlighting the majority is likely to read self-help and motivational books more as of 27.8% responses recorded in this favor. While other selective genres that are most popularized by BookTok are Romance, Fantasy, and Young Adult (YA). Students have shown less interest in YA, and Romance(BookTok popularized genres) as compared to other genres, with only 5 students responded with Romance and 1 student with YA. This highlights the frequency of students unaware of BookTok and this type of literary content.

### 5.1.4. Motivational Factors

One particular question was added to record the motivational factors of Pakistani students in their reading. This highlights why students read a particular piece of literature, whether it is to console their emotions, or to just build a personality in society.

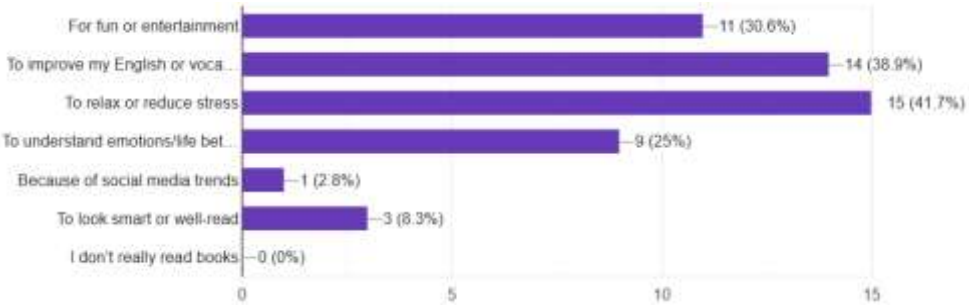



***Fig.6.*** *What motivates you to read books (besides academic needs)?*

This question aimed to explore the intrinsic or extrinsic motivators. Identifying these motivations is essential to understand students' reading behaviors beyond their academic curriculum. The responses to this question provide valuable insights into how students engage with literary texts and what encourages them to choose books.

### 5.1.5. Platforms Use for Book Recommendations & BookTok Awareness

To gain insight into which platform Pakistani students are using for books recommendation, participants were asked a question specifically framed for it. This was ought to look deep into how many students are using TikTok for book recommendations and how many are aware of BookTok.

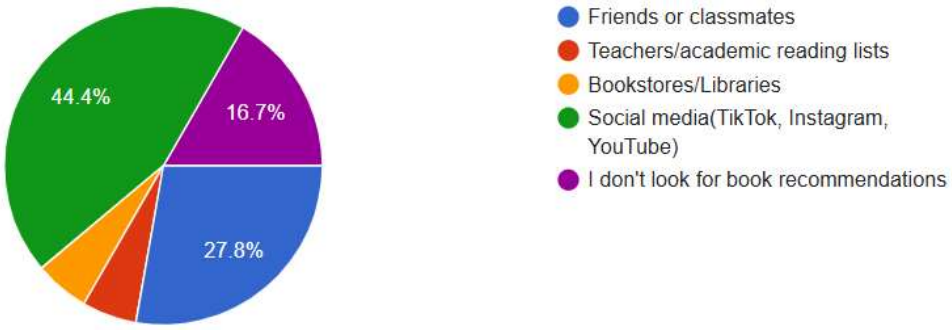



***Fig.7.*** *Where do you usually get book recommendations?*

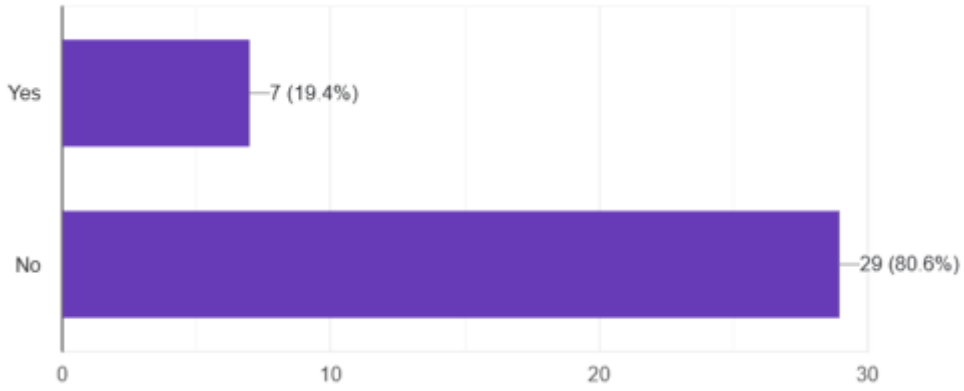



***Fig.8.*** *Have you ever heard of BookTok?*

These two figures highlights that even though students use TikTok for Books related content but majority is unaware of this particular term called BookTok. Only 19.4% (n=7) has reported of having awareness about this community on TikTok.

### 5.1.6. Students' Willingness to Engage with BookTok

A particular question was framed for those students who were unaware of the BookTok community. In that question they were provided with BookTok context and they were asked if they will try engaging with BookTok for literary content.

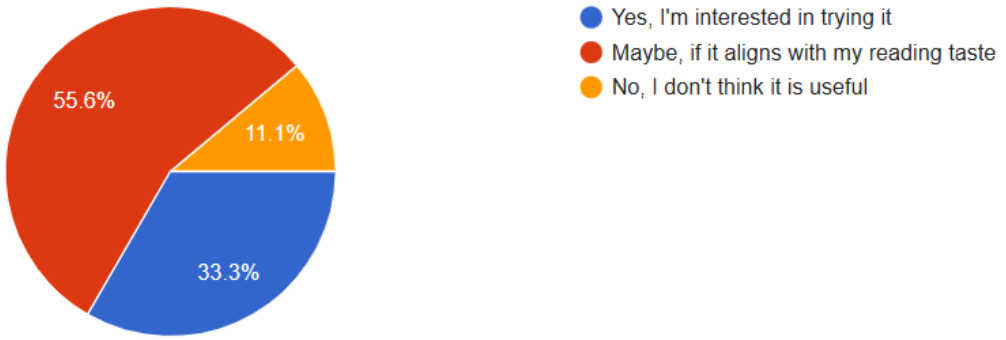



***Fig.9.****If you are unaware of BookTok: It is a TikTok trend where people create short videos recommending and reviewing books. Would you like using BookTok to get reading suggestions or engage with literary content?*

About 55.6% of the participants were unsure and responded with "maybe, if it aligns with my reading taste," while 33.3% a total of 12 participants were eager and excited to try it.

Later, a question was asked about BookTok-style activities adopted in classrooms, how they will respond to it.

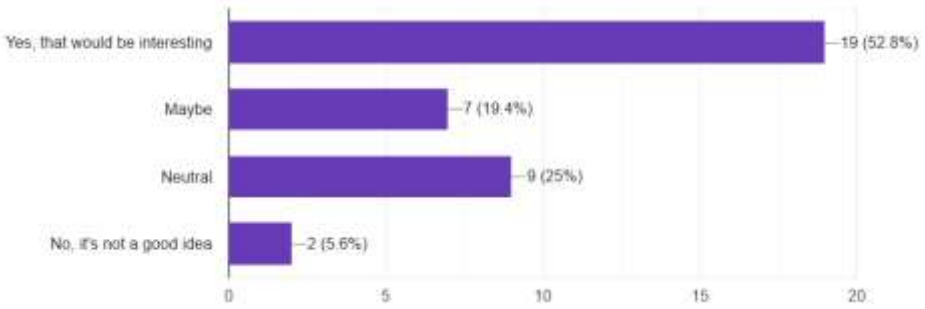



***Fig. 10.****Should teachers or universities include BookTok-style activities in class (like recommending books via TikTok or discussions)?*

These questions were asked to find out whether students are open to using BookTok, and will they consider using it for reading suggestions and engage with literary texts.

### 5.2. Qualitative Findings

After conducting the survey, a group of unaware students(who did not know about BookTok) was constituted. For Pre-Test, they were made to answer some questions which was about their reading frequency, reading behaviors, and genre preferences. They were later subjected to an awareness session of BookTok. After that, a post-test consisted of semi-structured interview was conducted and analyzed through thematic analysis to explore any change in their reading attitudes or behaviors and three major themes emerged.

#### 5.2.1. Awareness and Curiosity sparked by BookTok

Students unaware of BookTok, after being exposed to it expressed curiosity among students to try it for making their reading part more engaging and exciting. Majority had not encountered it before, but after exposure to it they started developing interest.

One participant shared:

"I thought TikTok was only for fun. But this has made me curious about reading some books."

The other participant stated:

"I did not expect reading to be this trendy."

This theme shows that BookTok was unknown to most at first, but being exposed to it has helped realize it's potential as an engaging and motivating space in reviving literary reading habits and discover more books as compared to before.

### 5.2.2. Shift in Reading Attitudes

Participant shared that reading books before, felt like a difficult and boring task tied to academics. But, BookTok has made them try reading again , this time for personal use because of its relatable and engaging content.

Two students explained:

"I have always thought that books are boring and only for exams, but BookTok has made me read while having fun."

This shift suggests that digital content can influence students mindset and make them read outside academic curriculum.

### 5.2.3. Change in Reading Preferences

This theme demonstrates that BookTok can potentially change reading preferences of students making them try its popularized genres. Students of English Literature has reported to read only Urdu books or novels initially, after being exposed to BookTok there was a significant change in their reading choices.

One student commented:

"Being a student of English Literature, I felt English books to be boring so I never gave a chance to read any. BookTok content on English books made me try those books fearlessly."

The other shared:

"BookTok made me realize there are so many genres I have not explored."

The pre-test revealed limited reading habits and lack of awareness of BookTok among university students of Pakistan. However, the post-test interviews demonstrated that after being exposed to BookTok, students became more aware, motivated, and open to exploring different literary texts.

## 6. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to find out whether BookTok, a readers' community on the social media famous platform TikTok, could impact literary reading habits among Pakistani university students, specifically those who were not aware of BookTok and had reported low levels of engagement with books outside their class. The study used both quantitative approach( questionnaire) and qualitative approach (pre-test and post-test interviews) to determine significant shifts in students' awareness, motivation, and reading attitudes upon exposure to BookTok content.

The quantitative results showed the high frequency at which students read rarely or never outside of their area of study. The majority of the students indicated poor engagement with fiction or popular reading genre of Romance, Fantasy, and young adult (YA) that serve as the foundation for BookTok's wide popularity. In addition, students further showed poor familiarity with BookTok itself despite the everyday use of apps such as TikTok and Instagram to access content. This ignorance indicates a disconnect between student media consumption and exposure to pedagogical or literary sub-communities of such media.

The pre and post-test interviews, however, provided strong qualitative evidence of change. Thematic analysis elicited three dominant themes: awareness and interest generated by BookTok, change in reading attitudes, and change in reading preferences. These are the themes that suggest even short exposure to BookTok content will lead students to consider reading as more enjoyable, accessible, and social. Students who had already considered reading as dull or test-oriented were now drawn in by books, most particularly when presented through short, entertaining videos made by individuals around their age.

Additionally, students reported greater interest in trying out genres they had formerly avoided, like Romance, Romantasy, Classics, and best-selling YAbooks featured on BookTok. That shows that social media trends, if presented in a proper way, can make students' reading lists extend beyond culturally or academically "safe" texts. This observation is in line with the Uses and Gratification Theory, which implies that people

actively seek out media meeting their particular needs, here, relatable, bite-sized book content that allows for recreational reading.

The shift witnessed in reading behavior among participants is also indicative of the level of belongingness and acceptance by peers fostered by BookTok, something that might not be experienced in conventional classrooms. If students witness peers like themselves reading as well as recommending books, reading acquires a more relatable and enjoyable connotation, instead of a solitary or academic one.

These results are of significant value to Pakistani teachers. With most of the students receptive to in-class activities driven by BookTok (i.e., book review or discussion within short-form video posts), having such materials incorporated into literature classes would fill the gap between academic aspiration and individual interest. This, in turn, could induce a long-term reading culture outside the classroom.

Briefly, the current research proposes that BookTok can be used to restore literary reading traditions among Pakistani university students if they are exposed to the platform in guided and contemplative manners. Although more research involving larger samples is required, the current research lays the groundwork for exploring the potential of social media-supported literary communities to augment reading practice in non-Western worlds.

## 7. Conclusion

This study was conducted to explore whether BookTok can influence reading habits of university students especially of Pakistan. Initially, it was obvious that the students rarely read books outside their academic needs and they were unaware of BookTok. After being exposed to BookTok, it potentially brought significant changes in students reading behaviors, preferences, and attitudes.

The findings of the survey and interviews highlighted the potential of BookTok to make reading more engaging and relatable for students. It made them feel more fun while reading compared to before as it felt like boring and tied to exam. Students felt encouraged to try different genres and reading for personal interest extensively.

In short, this study concludes that BookTok can potentially revive literary reading habits among university students, especially when they are made aware of it. It also illustrates the use modern digital platforms in education to connect with students in ways that match their interests. With the right support and integration, BookTok can help build a stronger reading culture in academic settings across Pakistan.

## 8. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Universities or faculty members can use BookTok-style activities like short video reviews or creative book discussions to bridge the gap between academic reading and personal interest and make literary reading more engaging and interesting for students.
2. As not every student knows about BookTok, online sessions or workshops can be held to introduce students to these kinds of platforms. It can be inspiring for students to explore more books related content online.
3. To enhance students reading experiences, they should be encouraged to explore different genres they have not explored before.
4. Educational institutions can collaborate with students' societies to promote reading or book recommendations through the platforms students already use such TikTok, Instagram, Facebook. Making reading visible for everyone can yield positive results.
5. Encouraging students to create BookTok accounts to promote books in English or Urdu can make the platform culturally relatable and can promote local authors and stories as well.
6. Departments can consider including "reading for pleasure" time to give space to students for non-academic reading and supports overall literacy and critical thinking.

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