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The Effect of Tiktok on Mental Health and Psychological Wellbeing of University Students

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Abstract

In this world of the digital era, social media, is becoming quite popular and provides users with different platforms on whichpeople can do many things. TikTok is one of the social media platforms that is becoming quite popular among people of all ages. TikTok is loaded with many types of content and people watching different types of content can derive the meaning according to them. TikTok is a social mediaapplication that is creating a disturbance in our society. Beauty complex, superiority complex, child pornography, cyberbullying, parental disengagement, and many other issues are increasing because of this application. This research is about to find out why TikTok is a more highlighted application than other social media applications and highlight the psychological effect on the young generation who are inspired by TikTok videos and TikTok stars. The deductive approach and the convenient sampling technique will be used in this study. This research will be quantitative, and the data will be collected through surveys. The questionnaire will be used to collect data from a student who was adopted. Statistical analysis through SPSS will be performed to check the hypothesis. This research is conducted to create awareness that they are wasting their time on something useless, and their friends and family should help them to drive out this addiction which is affecting them badly.

Keywords: tiktok, mental health, psychological wellbeing, university, awareness

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1. Introduction

The way that society communicates has changed drastically since the 1990s shift to the digital era. Particularly, there has been a significant transformation in the media landscape, such as traditional media like newspapers, books, radio, and television have shifted towards digital media. Social media might be the most popular form of digital media. (Pavlik, 2008). Social media refers to methods of communication where individuals produce, share, or exchange knowledge and concepts.

Social media provides us with numerous platforms to connect with others globally, there are more than 3.8 billion users of social media. The world of social media is always expanding and changing, with new applications like TikTok entering the ranks of well-established social networks like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. (DOLLARHIDE, 2021). "Musical.ly" was a popular short form of "15 seconds" video streaming used by a hundred million users. This application contains music dialogue options with which users can lip sync and make funny and entertaining videos. In August 2018, this application was taken by the Chinese company "Byte Dance" and it moved to "Tiktok" That is how Tiktok came into being. Now millions of people use TikTok but mostly youth are using it. The effect on mental health is also increasing day by day because this application is very addictive and almost every age group uses this application. In 2011, TikTok was under the page butin the period of 2014 to 2018, TikTok jumped from 14 million users to 524 million users and continuously spread all over the world. With this rapid increase in the usage of TikTok the effect is also increasing so in this

research we will find out the effect of excessive use of TikTok on the young generation (students).

1.1 Problem Statement

TikTok affects the mental health and psychological wellness of students of the universities of Islamabad. TikTok is a mainstream medium, everyone is using this application and the usage of this application is spreading day by day and affecting the psychological well-being of youth. It brings out the behavior changes in people and affects their sleep patterns and so many different types of complexes like inferiority and superiority complex have arisen.

1.2 Research Objectives

- > To find out the psychological effects of TikTok on students.
- > To identify the changing behavior of students by using this application.

1.3 Research Questions

- > What effects does TikTok have on the young generation, particularly university students?
- > Is TikTok the root of increasing psychological problems in youth?
- > Is the behavioral change in youth the result of excessive use of TikTok?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this research study is that it will help understand the negative effects of the Usage of Tiktok on affecting the mental health and psychological wellness of the students of the youth, and in particular, students of the Universities of Islamabad.

2. Literature Review

Social media is one of the most important revolutions in the world. Just rewind your hindsight and one will come to know that even in the ages of cell phones, it was very difficult to connect with people and friends with such ease as one is doing with the way now. There is no doubt in contending that social media has revolutionized the lives of almost every person on the planet and now no one can even imagine a life without social media (Raza et al., 2021). TikTok is a globally used social media platform used by people of all ages, people tries to show only one side of an image by posting content that is only perfect, influencers on TikTok flaunt their perfect body making people believe that they have the most perfect bodies which make young boys and girls want to lose weight only fat people are being influenced, skinny people try to gain weight too to become perfect so they can fit themselves in the world of perfectionists. These TikTok influencers unknowingly promote unhealthy eating habits mostly in young men and women. Slightly overweight people start to starve themselves and get eating disorders and skinny people try to gain weight to look perfect by methods that harm them in various ways (Kaufman, 2020). (Korbani, 2021) stated that with the rise of social media, young people's dissatisfaction with their bodies has increased, leading to a variety of negative consequences such as eating disorders. The TikTok app is the newest form of social media, encouraging users to post creative videos and provide commentary. People keep watching these videos because TikTok's algorithm, which creates a relationship between user interest in this type of content and a means to satisfy these interests, has promoted the long-standing theme of body image dissatisfaction on social mediaapps. The more users express interest in toxic body trends, the more this content is promoted by theapp. Young people may now express themselves on TikTok in a variety of ways. The platform encourages users to copy one another and to take part in various trends. Social media platforms are reportedly filled with unrealistic ideal bodies, or what the bodies of men and women should look liketo make them appealing, according to reports of daily TikTok video viewing, consumers after watching these perfectionists may feel they are not appealing to others. (Liu, 2021). Dempster (2020) stated that young users of a major video-sharing social media platform are creating and sharing a massive volume of content promoting "extremely dangerous" weight-loss techniques and binge eating disorders. The videos contain potentially harmful content that has the potential to reinforce negative feelings, attitudes, and behaviors related to body image, food, and diet in a vulnerable youth audience. TikTok

is aimed at a younger audience as youngsters are more into modernism and into being socially desirable lifestyles and they believe what is shown to them and they want to fit them in the manner which is in trend. The greater issue is a lack of moderation and safety communication. TikTok's user- generated and largely unmonitored nature makes protecting people from harmful content extremely difficult as people become attracted to it and want to be likewhat others are becoming popular with. According to "The Butterfly Foundation" It is very alarming.

According to (Infurna, 2021), what people see on social media apps like Instagram and TikTok can have a big impact on them. A significant portion of what they will see on Instagram and TikTok will be other people like them, and they are displaying the best version of themselves. People on these apps with "perfect bodies" give these young viewers the impression that this is a realistic image of beauty. These "perfect bodies" are all what society considers attractive; however, the young people who see these ideal body types do not look the same at themselves; they feel unworthy and less beautiful which leads them to compare themselves with what they see on TikTok and feel disappointed about they look. Since its debut, TikTok has become extremely popular and claims to work hard to create an atmosphere in which users feel more comfortable, confident, and secure to be themselves while freely expressing their true selves. Nevertheless, most of the content on the app fails to create a supportive environment for those who struggle with body image. This frequently encourages poor eating disorders and body dysmorphia in a lot of people, many content creators share body-harming material that has a significant negative impact on many people. Additionally, there are a variety of filters on TikTok that have been found to promote body dysmorphia. These filters can be used to flip the image of the content creator and they become totally different from how they appear in real life. Many people believe that these filters might be seriously detrimental to consumers and individuals who do not fit that mold become subject to insecurities. Filters make people slim and desirable which can influence a consumer in a negative way. There are many creators trying to promote positivity, but only a single video can change a consumer's mind and make them question how they look (Grlic, 2021). Both positive and negative unforeseen effects have resulted from this rapid expansion.

The spread of misinformation, information that is either false, misleading, or a combination of the two has been a negative consequence that has been the subject of more discussion and investigation over the course of the past ten years. The TikTok algorithm has an impact not only on the quality but also on the quantity of misinformation that a user may see over time (Kilroy, 2022). Conggiao (2021) stated that TikTok has a direct impact on the body image of young adults in a variety of ways and to various extents. People who watch TikTok videos of people with ideal bodies may question or feel insecure about their body image. At the same time, TikTok has an indirect impact on young adults' body image. People who feel confident about their bodies can be affected by the negative comments under their videos also watching people's negative comments under videos of other creators can affect them just by reading comments, they think if the following person can be treated like this then I may be the next victim. On TikTok, young adults use overly dramatic methods to cater to their body image, like losing weight in a very unhealthy way or even undergoing plastic surgery. This modification has a negative impact Minadeo, (2022) stated that TikTok is a popular social media platform among young adults and teenagers. Food, diet, and weight-related videos are common on TikTok, but the content of these posts is poorly understood or people have little understanding. The displayed content in TikTok videos is prominently weight normative, with a lack of professionals providing nutrition and health information to achieve health and low weight. Young people are the most frequently involved in and creators of diet culture content. There are a lot of trends that show weight loss and how to be skinny and beautiful, but these trends exclude lifestyle factors that influence weight and health, leaving viewers with the message that weight loss and thinness are easy to achieve and attractive to all, potentially leading to unhealthy attitudes and expectations regarding food, weight, and self-image. (Ross, 2021) stated that, as social media takes over society, new apps are constantly emerging with new forms of online social interaction. The most popular these days is TikTok, which has been downloaded over 2.6 billion times. Since TikTok is a great source of entertainment, the app also has some harmful aspects. People can watch countlessvideos on TikTok's For You page, which is the primary stage of interaction and influence, so there is actually little or no control over what your audience sees. While there's certainly a lot to learn about the various topics on the For You page which can be beneficial there are also potentially harmful videos about body image and diet. Part of TikTok's online culture is having different types of videos or "challenges" by having numerous creators recreate the same type of videos that look harmless but promote unhealthy ways of losing weight and how to gain a perfect body.

Although TikTok has community guidelines banning content that promotes eating disorders or unhealthy weight loss, creators are encouraged to make videos functional, such as using numbers and other symbols to replace letters in inappropriate words due to which creators keep it going to make this type of video. (Hülsing, 2021) stated that TikTok's negative effects are primarily caused by standards of beauty, which include a thin-ideal body for females and a muscular-ideal body for males. These negative consequences are especially relevant for young people, who frequently face mental health issues and are more prone to engaging in social comparison. TikTok consumption hasa far more complex impact on body image. TikTok can be a threat to young people's psychological wellbeing in a variety of ways. One of the most visible issues is the influence on young people's body image perception, which can have negative consequences for their mental health.

2.1 Advantages of TikTok

Entertainment

While many argue that social media outlets, such as TikTok, can be distracting for youth (remember, users have to be at least 13 years of age to use this app), the fact that they are using it simply to be entertained can't be denied. TikTok is full of comedy sketches, duets, and interesting dances, all of which are very amusing for viewers. Additionally, because TikTok is so darn popular, teens can feel left out if they aren't using it. The fear of missing out (FOMO) syndrome can be a real thing for them.

Socialization:

TikTok is considered a social network because it offers great potential for making new friends and forming new connections. This platform has millions of users worldwide, so it can also be great for inclusiveness. Some teens are naturally shy, so making in-person friends can be difficult. However, social media removes the pressure of communicating directly, and face-to-face, making ita lot easier for some to express their thoughts, and feelings, and make new connections.

Creativity :

While it might not appear so from the get-go, there is actually an art to making good TikToks. For example, when making dancing videos, you have to choose between different filter options, make suitable music choices, and think of and execute interesting dance moves. When making TikTok comedy sketches, you have to come up with a script and think of fun ways to act everything out. So, there is some method to the madness, which can be beneficial for teens' self-expression and creativity. **Earning Potential:**

It is widely known by now (especially by teens) that TikTok creators are among some of the top paid in the influencer world. Currently, there are dedicated TikTok scouting agencies, dedicated TikTok creator houses, and a whole set of sponsors waiting to show off their products to their target audiences through this platform. Although only a small percentage of users get to this lucrative point, there's always a chance that your teen might make it in the TikTok industry.

Disadvantages of TikTok:

You Could Potentially Get Exposed to Sexual Predators:

While the platform is working hard on mitigating issues concerning sexual predators reaching out to underage kids, this issue is still prevalent on TikTok. Even though the platform is aimed at younger users, there are still many older users too, which is completely fine – who are we to judge how you express yourself? However, if these older individuals send explicit messages and images to teens (or worse, to kids who should not be on the app in the first place), it becomes problematic. There have been numerous instances where parents had to report predatory behavior to law enforcement. Harm Privacy:

TikTok can harm your and your teens' privacy. Generally, teens aren't aware of the privacy concerns that come with putting their lives on display for others. Often, they film in front of their homes, show off their homes' interiors, share their locations, show off their parent's cars, and display license plates, etc. The world is full of crazy people, and it only takes one bold enough to use this information for malicious purposes. That's why you should consider installing a VPN on your teen's device. What is a VPN? VPNs are software solutions that act as a gateway between the user and the web. They will conceal the user's original IP address, ensuring that their online activities remain private and secure.

Its Prone to Negative Comments:

Negativity is a prevalent issue with all social media platforms these days. The more one uses a platform, the greater the chances of receiving negative comments. Even the platform's top creators have expressed concerns in regard to negative comments. Even they feel worried and insecure when reading them. Negative comments can severely impact one's self-esteem and confidence and even result in self-harm or body image issues. Teens must be resilient if they are going to use this app to post videos.

Harm Self-Esteem:

This goes hand-in-hand with the previous point. A large volume of negative comments, or even a single one, can have a devastating impact on a kid's self-esteem. TikTok, and other social networks, such as Instagram and Facebook, have been criticized for having negative effects on one's confidence. This can deeply hurt one's mental health. There have been instances where kids turned to self-harm or faced other issues, such as anorexia and bulimia, because of social media.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

In this research, Social Media Dependency Theory and Uses and Gratification were used. Media Dependency Theory: Media dependency theory is a systematic approach to the study of the effects of mass media on audiences and of the interactions between media, audiences, and social systems. It was introduced in outline by the American communications researchers Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur in 1976.

Uses and Gratification: in this theory, people seek out specific media to fulfill their specific needs. This theory is related to the effect of TikTok and how they are ruining the young generation. People use TikTok for the sake of enjoyment. Nowadays, people fulfill their need for attention by making such inappropriate and vulgar videos which are causing cancer in the young generation. (Mehrad, 2016).

2 MethodologyResearch Design

In order to achieve the research purpose, this study adopted the quantitative research method. The results from the study were analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The selected data collection method for this study is a survey. A survey is a type of study that collects data from a predetermined group of people in order to gather knowledge and insights about a variety of issues. Sampling is basically the selection of a subcategory of the total population in the research study. Sampling is to choose the specific group that will be used for the required data collection for the research. A random sampling type was used in this research study. I used the non-probability sampling technique in this study.

Sample Size

The sample size was 200 students of Bahria University and Air University, Islamabad Campuses. In this study, the tool that was used to collect data was a survey. The sample was accessed digitally through Google Forms as it was a convenient, cost-effective, generalizable, and reliable method to use and give results. The data used for this study was obtained over a certain period of time depending on the researcher's resources, convenience, and time. The sample size was 200 because of

the accessibility of the researcher.

Data Analysis

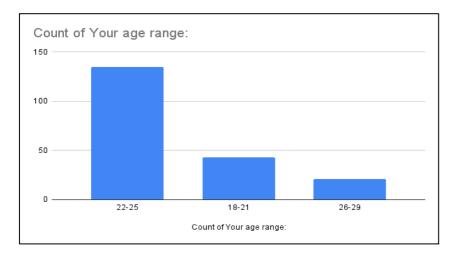
Inferential and descriptive statistics have been used to analyze the data gathered for this study. Surveys were used to acquire the information. The participants' demographic features have been described using descriptive statistics like frequencies and percentages. To provide a clear and simple description of the findings, the results have been broken down into the form of tables, charts, and figures. The data has been interpreted in the context of the research questions and used to draw conclusions.

Reliability Analysis

A reliability analysis was carried out using SPSS to ascertain the internal consistency and reliability of the survey instrument employed in this study. I was able to evaluate the survey instrument's overall consistency. An adequate level of internal consistency is generally regarded as having a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 or above. The reliability analysis for our study produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.805, indicating the survey instrument had a good degree of internal consistency and reliability.

3 Findings and Analysis

The sample in this study was made up of 200 respondents including both genders between the ages of 18 to 29 years that are usually university students. In terms of age group, 67.8% (141 students) of my sample were from the age group 22 to 25, 21.2% (44 students) were from the age group 18 to 21 and the rest of the 11.1% (23 students) belonged to 26 to 29 age group.



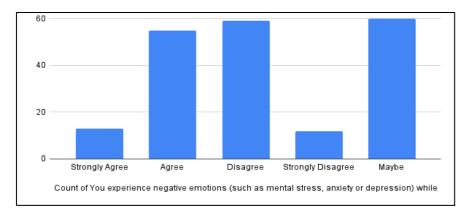


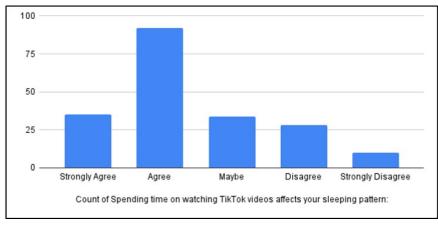
Correlation analysis measures the strength of a relationship between two variables. Correlation analysis evaluates correlation coefficients. Correlation coefficients indicate how much one variable changes when another variable changes. (Kameta, 2018). In this study, Pearson product-moment correlation is used in order to know the influence of TikTok on the mental health of both genders. The results of the test revealed that both genders are highly influenced by TikTok videos. If a Pearson Correlation Coefficient has an associated P-value below 0.05, then it can be considered statistically significant. As shown in the table below, the Pearson product-moment correlation is p=.000, a test revealed a positive significant value which tells us that the excessive use of TikTok videos has a greater influence on mental health.

| Pearson Correlation | 1 | .431** |
|---------------------|--------|--------|
| Sig (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| Ν | 135 | 135 |
| | | |
| Pearson Correlation | .431** | 1 |
| Sig (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| Ν | 135 | 135 |
| | | |

Table 1 Correlation between usage of TikTok and Mental Health Issues

When the respondents were asked about their reason for using TikTok, more than 56% replied that they use it for killing their time and entertaining themselves. They feel good while using it, and they can relate to the content on TikTok, which is related to the Uses and Gratification theory, which says that people seek out specific media to fulfill their specific needs. When the respondents were asked whether they experienced negative emotions (such as mental stress, anxiety, or depression) while using TikTok, more than 56% agreed with the statement.

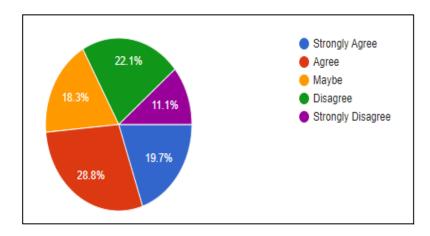




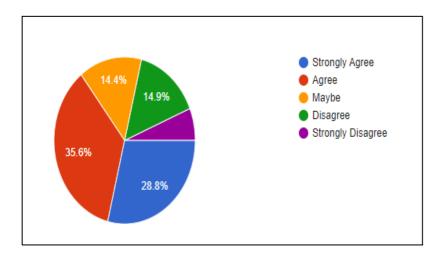
Graph 2

Graph 3

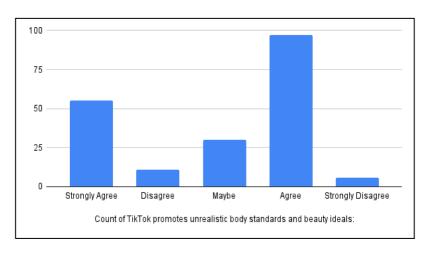
When the respondents were asked if spending time watching TikTok videos affects their sleeping patterns, more than 64% agreed with the statement. This shows that TikTok affects the normal sleeping routine with automatically has an impact on mental health.



When the respondents were asked if they compare themselves with the TikTok content creators and their videos make them feel unattractive, and if they wish to have a lifestyle and facilities like the TikTok content creators, most of the respondents agreed with the statement, and few of them were not sure. Very few were the ones who disagreed. This result shows that TikTok also has psychological effects on the minds of people.



When the respondents were asked that you feel addicted to TikTok or experience difficulty in limiting your TikTok usage and TikTok has replaced other physical activities that you used to enjoy, most of the respondents agreed with the statement. It means that TikTok is an addiction and since it has replaced the physical activities, it is becoming a source of mental health issues.



When the respondents were asked if TikTok promotes unrealistic body standards and beauty ideals, most of them agreed with the statement. It shows that TikTok plays with the psychological aspect of people and their minds.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

This is the era of the digital world and the way society has communicated has changed since the shift to the digital era in the 1990s (Pavlik, 2008). The traditional ways have been changed towards digital media the most popular form of digital Media is social media which provides its users with different platforms. In this study, the media that I explored is TikTok which is an extraordinary social media platform since its launch TikTok has gained popularity (Christian Montag, 2021). The reason behind choosing TikTok is that it is relatively a new platform and has not been explored greatly for knowing the influence it has on the mental health and psychological wellness of university students. TikTok is a social media platform that has taken the world by storm. While it can be a fun and entertaining platform, it has also been linked to several negative effects that can be harmful to an individual's mental health and society. Firstly, spending too much time on TikTok can have negative effects on mental health. The app uses a sophisticated algorithm that keeps users hooked for longer periods. This can lead to addiction, which may cause anxiety, stress, and depression. Too much time spent on the app can also negatively affect the quality of sleep and affect social interactions outside of the app. Secondly, the content on TikTok is often toxic and may promote dangerous and harmful trends. Younger users may see and imitate dangerous stunts or engage in risky behaviour to get likes and followers. This has the potential to cause serious injury, and even death, and can also lead to cyberbullying and other negative social interactions on the app. Lastly, the app has been found to be particularly harmful to the mental health of young children. Young children may not have the emotional maturity to deal with the negative social interactions that can occur on the app. This can lead to lasting emotional damage that can extend beyond social media use. Overall, while TikTok canbe a fun and entertaining platform, it is essential to be aware of the potential negative effects of its use. It is crucial to use the app responsibly and limit screen time to mitigate potential harm. Parents should also take an active role in monitoring their children's use of the app and ensure they are engaging in safe and positive interactions.

The purpose and objective of this study were to explore the influence of TikTok and the effects of TikTok on the mental health and psychological wellness of university students of IslamabadThe sample in this study was made up of 200 respondents that included both genders between ages of 18 to 29 years that are usually university students. In terms of age group, 67.8% (141 students) of my sample were from the age group 22 to 25, 21.2% (44 students) were from the age group 18 to 21 and the rest of the 11.1% (23 students) belonged to 26 to 29 age group. The methodology that was used to

collect data was quantitative methodology and for sampling non- non-probability convenience sampling was used to collect data. Respondents fill out the data through a survey that was sent to them online via Google Forms. The study revealed that most people think that TikTok has effects on mental health and psychological wellness. In addition to that the excessive use of social media, including TikTok content that is associated with people having ideal bodies and people with perfect body gaining more appreciation have a negative impact on people already struggling with body dissatisfaction and have negative perceptions of their own body. This is particularly true for content that focuses on physical appearance, such as body-related content.

According to the previous literature, TikTok became popular since its arrival and is known to be the most addictive app and its trends have "gone viral "among young people. However, as concerns about weight reduction and "healthy routines" have started to take center stage, TikTok's two primary themes, dancing, and music, are degrading. This trend not only promotes unrealistic dietary behaviors and results but creates hazardous idealizations for those who are most vulnerable. It also shows a false emphasis on body image. (Hargreaves, 2020). This culture of idealized bodies is playing with the mental health as well as the physical health of youth.

5.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate and find out the effects of TikTok on the mental health and psychological wellness of university students of Islamabad. It began by demonstrating the excessive use of social media, particularly among young people. It was made clear by evaluating and reviewing already existing literature, that prior studies have indicated the frightening consequences of watching TikTok videos on TikTok is a social media platform that has gained tremendous popularity, particularly among younger demographics. While the app is touted as an entertainment platform, it has raised concerns regarding its psychological effects. Here are some of the ways TikTok can impactone's psychological well-being:

Addiction: TikTok's algorithm is designed to keep users hooked on the platform for longer. This leads to addiction, which has serious psychological and physiological effects. Users may experience anxiety, stress, and even depression when they're not on the app; they may also experience strains in interpersonal relationships due to their addiction. Self-Esteem: TikTok is builton attracting likes, followers, and shares. While this can increase one's social capital, it also may negatively impact self-esteem. Users may develop a sense of inadequacy or inferiority when their content fails to receive recognition. This sense of inadequacy can lead to low self-esteem, reduced confidence, and even depression. Social Comparisons: TikTok is a global app, and users can view content from across the world. This can lead to social comparisons, which can be detrimental to one's psychological health. Users may think that other people have better lives, and are more attractive, talented, or successful than themselves, leading to negative feelings.

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying is prevalent on most social media platforms, and TikTok is no exception. Cyberbullying can have profound psychological impacts, including anxiety, depression, and even suicidal ideation. TikTok users, particularly younger ones, are susceptible to cyberbullying, leading to long-term psychological harm. Sleep Disturbances: TikTok's design and algorithm can significantly impact users' sleep quality. The app's infinite scroll feature can keep users engaged for hours on end, leading to sleep disturbances, insomnia, and reduced sleep quality.

In conclusion, TikTok has several psychological effects, both positive and negative. While it is entertaining, the app can negatively impact users' psychological well-being and should be used with care. It is essential to take breaks from the app, limit screen time, practice self-care, and seek professional help if necessary. The findings of this study revealed that males and females both are under the negative influence of TikTok videos. Influencers and developers of social media platforms like TikTok are creating expectations that are unrealistic. The trends may have another meaning to

show people healthy habits to spend life but as people perceive the meaning differently these trends have become an unhealthy obsession for people, people watch these videos of people with ideal bodies and start to compare their selves to these people, through TikTok to find 15- to 30-second reels that are not realistic depictions of normal people have a great impact on people. The percentage of youth that is involved in social comparisons just by consuming TikTok content continues to rise, which is alarming. (Strano, 2021.

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