

TikTok Addiction Among Teenagers: Causes, Effects, and Solutions

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ABSTRACT

The rapid rise of TikTok among teens has raised concerns about excessive screen time, schoolwork, mental health, and social skills. This study examines the thoughts and actions that influence TikTok use among young people. It checks why they use it, how long they use it affects their thinking and feelings, and what it does to their school and social life. Using Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973), the research examines how TikTok meets many needs, such as fun, self-expression, and social approval. It also shows some such negative effects, such as reduced focus, increased stress, and lower grades. The study also finds ways to help cut down on too much TikTok use by teaching better online habits and ways to help self-control. By sharing what it finds about how teens use media, this study hopes to help teachers, parents, and leaders develop effective plans to balance TikTok use and reduce its negative effects.

Keywords: TikTok, online habits, teenage behavior, digital addiction, Malaysian adolescents

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Social media has changed how teens talk, see the world, and form bonds. TikTok is one of the fastest-growing apps, with millions of users. Its fun, short videos and a smart system that shows content tailored to users keep people hooked for a long time. TikTok offers joy, opportunities for creativity, and a sense of belonging, making it a key part of teen social life. However, many parents, educators and mental health professionals are concerned about the addictive nature of TikTok. A lot of teens spend too many hours watching videos, not minding the time. This can harm their mental health, schoolwork, and personal social life. Spending too much time on the app may make it hard to focus, lead to trouble sleeping, and could even cause feelings of worry or sadness for some. Excessive reliance on TikTok can impair real-life communication and interpersonal relationships. With these risks, it's important to look at what causes TikTok addiction in teens. Knowing why they use it too much, how it affects their mind and social skills, and what can help them use screens less will help parents and teachers. This study will examine what leads teens to become addicted to TikTok, assess its effects on their minds and social lives, and suggest ways to help them develop better habits with their devices.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The work on social media use, especially on TikTok, has grown significantly in recent years. Experts have examined how thoughts, social ties, and actions contribute to teens' high use of social media. This part brings together past studies to build a base for knowing TikTok use. It discusses algorithm-driven content, peer pressure, entertainment, and escapism as key contributors to addictive usage. It also shows how Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and the ways the app keeps users engaged are big parts of the problem. By examining these parts, this review aims to provide a clear view of why many teens struggle to control their TikTok time and how this aligns with what we know about media habits and addiction.

2.1 Factors Contributing to TikTok Addiction

2.1.1 Algorithm-Driven Content and Dopamine Triggers

TikTok has a smart system that picks content for each user. This keeps users coming back for more, which makes the brain feel good with a burst of dopamine. This can lead users to spend too much time on the app (Andreassen et al., 2017). Research shows that social media sites use tricks like those in gambling. They keep users engaged by providing fun, fresh, and ever-changing content that makes them want to stay (Montag et al., 2021). The endless scroll feature makes it even harder for young people to stop using the app (Orben et al., 2019).

2.1.2 Peer Influence and Social Validation

Teens look for approval from likes, comments, and followers, which makes them more active online. According to Social Learning Theory, they tend to imitate what they see from friends and social media stars (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). TikTok's trend-driven style pushes teens to join challenges, making them feel they need to fit in with what is cool online. Studies show that friends play a significant role in the media teens use, as teens worry about missing out on fun when they are not online (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2017).

2.1.3 TikTok as an Escape Mechanism

For some teens, TikTok is a way to escape schoolwork and social issues. It makes them rely on digital fun (Kuss & Griffiths, 2015). Many users turn to TikTok to feel better, using it to cope with stress and loneliness (Haidt & Twenge, 2022). But if they use it too much, it can become a way to hide from real life. This leads them to avoid doing what they need to do, creating a cycle of putting things off and needing them more (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

2.1.4 The Role of Psychological Needs and Pleasure

Uses and Gratifications Theory posits that people use social media to meet their needs for fun, connection, and self-expression (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). TikTok gives users quick joy with its content, making it very attractive to young people who want to feel strong emotions. Studies show that the platform's fun features, like duet songs, comments, and live chats, help keep users on the site longer by making them feel part of a group (Fardouly et al., 2015).

2.1.5 The Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

FOMO is a common thought that plays a big role in social media habits. Teens feel they have to stay active on TikTok to avoid missing out on trends, news about stars, or chats with friends (Rosen et al., 2013). Research shows that FOMO leads people to check their feeds frequently, as they want to avoid feeling left behind (Andreassen et al., 2017). This can cause more worry, less work done, and a hard time staying away from screens (Orben et al., 2019).

3. FINDINGS

The growth of TikTok habits in teens has sparked many worries about its bad effects on mental health, school work, and health. Several studies show that spending too much time on the app can lead to mood swings, poor time management, and reduced physical activity. The next sections will explain the main effects observed in teens who use TikTok excessively.

3.1 Effects of TikTok Addiction

3.1.1 Mental Health Implications

TikTok addiction is a big worry for mental health. Studies show that spending too much time on social media can raise anxiety, sadness, and low self-worth in teens. The app shows a fake world where perfect looks and dreams are all over, causing users to compare themselves to others and feel bad. This links to 'doom scrolling,' where users can't stop looking at upsetting content, which helps keep bad thoughts going. Also, TikTok's fast rewards, like likes and comments, make users rely on others' opinions, hurting how they feel about themselves. Using TikTok too much has been tied to higher anxiety and sadness. Seeing too many perfect lives on the app makes it easy to judge and feel bad about oneself.

3.1.2 School Work Decline

Excessive TikTok use negatively affects academic performance. Research shows that students who waste time on social media perform worse in school. They tend to lose focus, put things off, and see their grades drop. The short videos on TikTok train the mind to want quick fun, making it hard to focus on long tasks like studying or reading. Many students stay up late using the app, which leaves them tired and affects how they learn, participate in class, and perform on tests. In the worst cases, TikTok addiction leads to missed homework, less interest in school, and low drive to do well. Too much time on TikTok often leads to procrastination, reduced focus, and lower grades.

3.1.3 Sleep Problems and Health Issues

Using TikTok too much, especially before bed, causes sleep problems and health issues. Studies find that looking at screens before bed disrupts sleep hormones, leading to poor sleep, fatigue, and reduced brain power. Many teens binge-watch late at night, making it hard to stick to a sleep schedule. Poor sleep not only makes one grumpy but also harms health by weakening the body's defence system, increasing the risk of weight gain, and lowering activity levels. Plus, using TikTok for long periods means users sit still for hours, increasing the risk of weight gain, poor posture, and lower overall fitness. Using TikTok late at night is linked to sleep loss, leading to fatigue and long-term health risks.

4. PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

To help teens with their TikTok use, we need a mixed plan that includes learning, habit changes, and tech support. The suggested ways focus on teaching digital skills, limiting screen time, finding fun things to do offline, and being smart about online use. By using these ideas, teens can build a better way to use social media and reduce the negative effects of spending too much time on TikTok.

4.1 Strategies to Reduce TikTok Addiction

4.1.1 Teaching Digital Skills

One good way to fight TikTok addiction is to teach digital skills. Schools and parents need to teach teens how to use social media wisely. They should talk about the problems with too much screen time and how it can harm mental health. Digital skills classes should teach kids about

keeping their data safe, staying safe online, and why it is key to have a good balance of screen time. Livingstone & Helsper (2007) say that knowing more about online habits helps folks pick better ways to act online. Adding classes on social media use in schools can give teens the tools they need to manage their time online and avoid excessive TikTok use. Teaching teens about good social media use with digital skill programs can help them make better choices about how much time they spend on TikTok (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

4.1.2 Setting Limits on Screen Time

Keeping track of time on TikTok is key to breaking the habit. Parents can use tools on phones and in the TikTok app to set limits on how long they can use the app each day. Studies show that cutting back on screen time improves learning, reduces stress, and increases productivity (Montag et al., 2021). Also, making 'no-phone' spots or times at home and school can help teens do other fun things away from screens. Using apps that track phone use can help users review and reduce their time online. TikTok offers tools to help manage screen time and set rules for better use (Montag et al., 2021).

4.1.3 Helping Teens with Offline Fun

Teens often go to TikTok when they are bored or have no other fun options. Giving them fun things to do, such as sports, music, art, or community service, can help them shift their focus away from social media (Orben et al., 2019). Research shows that participating in sports and hobbies can reduce time spent on screens and improve overall well-being. Moms, dads, and teachers should push for real-life conversations, group activities, and classes that teach practical skills. These things can give teens joy that goes beyond online stuff. Schools and community groups can set up programs that focus on playtime outside and getting together with friends.

This can help lessen the need for social media for fun and to feel good about themselves. Offering fun options like sports, arts, and social activities can help take teens' minds off excessive social media use (Orben et al., 2019).

4.1.4 Training Teens for Smart Online Use

Teens need to learn to use their phones and apps like TikTok in a smart way. Smart use means knowing how much time they spend online, what they watch, and how it makes them feel (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2017). There are ways to help them form better habits. They can turn off unnecessary alerts, use 'Do Not Disturb' when they study, and set small goals for what they watch. These steps can lead to a better use of time. Also, trying a break from TikTok for one day or even a week can help change their screen habits and help them gain control. Being mindful of social media will help them use it in a more balanced and planned way. Ideas like taking breaks, turning off alerts, and trying short breaks from TikTok can help with overuse (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2017).

5. CONCLUSION

Teenage addiction to TikTok is a big worry that needs quick action. The site's fun design, friends' influence, and instant rewards create a need-based addiction that harms teens' minds, schoolwork, and how they get along with others. Using TikTok too much is tied to more anxiety, sadness, trouble sleeping, and can even lower thinking skills. Plus, it leads to procrastination, less focus, and worse grades. This shows we need to be aware of this issue right away. TikTok is easy to get and gives quick rewards, making it hard for teens to control how much they use it, often leading to work avoidance and time spent online. To solve this problem, we need to mix

teaching about the safe use of tech, managing screen time, and promoting more fun activities offline. Schools, parents, and those who make rules have a big part in helping everyone learn about safe social media use. Teaching teens about the risks of using

TikTok is too much, and ways to control its use can help people build better online habits. Using tech tools like screen time limits and content filters can also help control what they see. Getting teens to join in physical games, social events, and fun hobbies can give them good ways to spend time instead of sitting in front of a screen, helping them find a more balanced life. TikTok addiction in teens is a new worry that greatly affects their mental health, school work, and social life. By understanding how this urge works, we can develop effective ways to reduce its negative effects. Digital education, smart screen time use, and encouraging offline fun are key ways to help teens have a better mix with social media.

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