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ENGAGEMENT OR ENLIGHTENMENT? UNDERSTANDING TIKTOK'S ROLE IN LEARNING: A STATISTICAL EXPLORATION

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ABSTRACT

TikTok, a video-sharing social media platform, has rapidly become one of the most popular social networking sites in recent years, with over 1 billion monthly active users, making it an effective and engaging tool for learning. With its easy-to-use interface, short-form videos, and viral content, TikTok provides an innovative way for educators to engage and educate students. This paper aims to investigate the usefulness of TikTok as an effective educational tool by creating a fun and interactive learning environment. TikTok is an ideal platform for effective and engaging learning for several reasons, such as allowing students to be creative and use their imagination to create unique, meaningful content for a variety of subjects, such as science, math, social studies, and language arts. Furthermore, TikTok encourages students to communicate and collaborate with their peers, which enhances their learning experience. Several studies have shown that TikTok can be a valuable learning tool, improving students' engagement, motivation, and overall learning experience. Despite its popularity, TikTok use in education also raises concerns and challenges that need to be addressed by scholars. Data were collected from KPTMAS students via an online survey, and findings reveal notable differences in TikTok usage and educational perceptions across various locations. Results suggest that while TikTok offers engaging and accessible learning content, it also presents challenges such as content regulation and potential distractions. Despite these challenges, the study highlights TikTok's growing role as an informal learning tool, particularly for younger, digitally adept generations. However, the platform's educational use remains underexplored, warranting further investigation into its structured integration in academic environments.

Keywords: TikTok, Learning tools, engaging, online learning, social media

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 endemic has had a profound impact on education systems around the world. To prevent the spread of the virus, many schools and universities have transitioned to online learning, allowing for greater flexibility and access to education, especially for those who may not have been able to attend classes in person (Ali, 2020). However, the transition to online learning has also brought about numerous challenges. One of the most significant challenges is unequal access to technology and reliable internet connections, particularly in low-income areas and developing countries. This has widened the digital divide and prevented some students from participating in online classes, putting them at a disadvantage.

Students who learn online, however, miss out on several aspects of classroom-based learning, such as the social connections fostered in a purpose-built learning environment. Additionally, the traditional classroom setting encourages social interactions, enabling students to engage with peers and instructors, share their ideas, and collaborate on assignments. In contrast, online learners' study from the comfort of their homes or wherever they have access to a computer and the internet. Students may lack a sense of belonging to a community and feel isolated from peers and instructors, which can have a negative impact on their motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes (Thamri et al, 2022). Therefore, social media applications have emerged as one of the often taken-for-granted ways for people to interact, and they have been adopted in the learning environment (Jacobs, Pan & Ho, 2022; Escamilla-Fajardo, et al., 2021; Hayes, et al., 2020). In the past decade, numerous social media platforms have experienced incredible growth in popularity, including Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. This study focuses on the utilization of TikTok as a learning tool, which has become one of the most widely used social media apps globally.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, TikTok, a prominent social media platform, has seen an exceptional surge in global downloads (Piedra, 2020). In 2016, ByteDance, a Chinese technology company, introduced TikTok, which has experienced an unparalleled surge in popularity. With more than one billion active users globally, the app owes its success to its distinctive algorithm that recommends personalized content tailored to individual users' preferences. Additionally, its user-friendly interface and innovative editing features contribute to its widespread appeal. Guarda et al. (2021) stated that TikTok's success is credited to its ability to create a sense of community among its users, with many participants engaging in challenges and trends that have become viral sensations. TikTok's meteoric rise has not gone unnoticed by researchers, who have begun to investigate the app's impact on society and culture (Yang, 2022; Zhang, 2021; Zuo & Wang, 2019).

According to Wang and Lin (2021), TikTok's short-form videos can be utilized to deliver educational content in an interactive way, catering to the needs of today's learners. Teachers and educators have begun leveraging TikTok to create educational content, such as quick tutorials, fun facts, and interactive challenges, to engage students and promote learning. Moreover, leveraging TikTok in education allows educators to tap into culturally relevant content that captures students' attention and bridges the gap between their interests and academic content (Kaye et al, 2022; Huang et al, 2020). Furthermore, TikTok allows diverse users to share videos covering various topics, distinguishing itself by accommodating videos lasting from fifteen seconds to one minute. Self-recorded videos dominate this trend, often featuring music as a central component, contributing not only to music videos but also narrative content.

Despite its popularity, scholars recognize that TikTok's widespread use in education raises concerns and presents challenges that must be acknowledged and resolved. One of the main concerns regarding using TikTok in education is the potential for inappropriate content, as TikTok's algorithmic content recommendation system may expose students to material that is unsuitable for their age or educational level, potentially negatively impacting their mental health and well-being (Chen and Chen, 2021). Another issue related to using TikTok in education is the potential for cyberbullying. Kowalski et al. (2019) suggested that educators need to take measures to prevent cyberbullying and ensure that students feel safe and supported in the classroom. This can be achieved by monitoring their online activities to ensure alignment with the educational objectives and standards of the school or institution.

Furthermore, there is a concern about potential distractions caused by TikTok in the classroom, which can detract from valuable learning time. Educators are required to strike a balance between utilizing TikTok as a learning tool and minimizing distractions by establishing clear guidelines and expectations for students, as well as monitoring their use of the app (Clarissa & Lobo, 2022). It is crucial to emphasize the necessity of providing training for teachers on these tools, given the prevailing fact that many teachers face substantial digital constraints, compounded by the scarcity of technological resources within educational institutions (Arranz et al, 2023). Apart from its entertainment and educational

values, TikTok has faced regulatory challenges and legal issues in several countries, such as India, Indonesia, and Pakistan, due to privacy concerns, inappropriate content, and safety issues. This has become a source of concern for parents (Wang, 2020). Although TikTok offers various features aligned with learning, its application within the education field remains largely unexplored. Nevertheless, the educational potential of TikTok has been largely ignored, as the majority of the studies researching educational innovation generally focus on other social media networks such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Therefore, this paper attempts to investigate the usefulness of TikTok as an effective learning tool.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 TikTok Application in Education

TikTok was released in China, and after three months of its release, it had over 45 million downloads, making it the most downloaded app, surpassing Facebook and WhatsApp (Adnan, Ramli & Ismail, 2021). Hence, TikTok's emergence as a potential educational tool has garnered significant attention and sparked discussions among scholars and educators. According to Syah et al. (2020), TikTok can be used as a modern teaching tool. TikTok is now an audio-visual medium that has been transformed into engaging learning content that was previously abstract and challenging to visualize in reality. Because of its unique and intriguing features, which include offering users access to learning materials, it will also inspire pupils to learn. Also, students are primarily from generation Z, and TikTok is compatible with their level of maturity, mental health, and prior experience (Rach & Lounis, 2020). Escamilla-Fajardo et al. (2021) claimed that TikTok inspires pupils, produces an engaging teaching environment, and fosters qualities like creativity and curiosity. The authors suggested TikTok as a teaching or learning tool for sports studies because of its effective instructional capacity and compatibility for expressive and artistic content through music and movement (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2021). Meanwhile, a study was conducted using the TikTok platform, with researchers suggesting that it promotes the use of action verbs in an enjoyable learning environment and enhances information retention through the viewing of user-created videos (Hidayati, 2022). Thus, the TikTok app is a form of social media that has been found to boost students' enthusiasm and drive for learning, as the content is clear and comprehensible, particularly when it aligns with the interests of like-minded individuals (Cahyono, & Perdhani, 2023).

In order to promote the public transmission of science with a systems thinking approach, Hayes et al. (2020) used TikTok to create 15 – 60 second extended chemistry outreach educational movies that were entertaining, intriguing, and engaging. The author discovered that TikTok may be utilised to increase both the public's desire to understand how chemistry is entertaining, it is a part of our daily lives, as well as to enhance the interest of students in chemistry and technology. Hence, #LearnOnTikTok and #DidYouKnow are two hashtag initiatives launched by TikTok to boost the movement of online learning; collaborated with more than 800 content creators, including experts, real-world skill creators, and educators (Taha, 2020). While TikTok is perceived to be more geared towards dancing and art material, numerous subjects began to emerge on the platform, encouraging creativity and memes in the videos, making TikTok learning videos more fascinating and appealing (Putri, 2021). The TikTok community's feedback showed that viewers liked the teaching videos and are engaging with them recognizably; indeed, TikTok proved able to attract people of different ages, interests, and levels of education (Taha, 2021).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Collection

The methodology employed in this study involves the purposeful sampling of KPTMAS students, with data collected through an online survey administered via Google Forms. The survey comprises three parts, with Part A gathering demographic information, Part B exploring students' experiences with TikTok, and Part C examining students' perceptions on the use of TikTok in education. The collected data was analysed using SPSS Statistics version 27 for closed-ended questions and thematic analysis for open-ended questions. The purposeful sampling technique allows researchers to deliberately select participants with specific characteristics, ensuring that the data collected is relevant to the research objective. The online survey is a convenient and efficient method of data collection, particularly in times when face-to-face interactions may be limited. The use of both SPSS and thematic analysis methods provides a comprehensive understanding of the data collected and enables the researchers to draw valid and reliable conclusions from their findings.

3.2 Pilot Study

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.871	9

A pilot test had been conducted among 23 students to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaires. The measures of Cronbach's alpha for all 9 items are 0.871, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the items. This suggests that the items are well-correlated and there is a strong internal consistency among them. It indicates that participants are likely to consistently respond to these items.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Students' experience of using TikTok

		LOCATION					
		Big city		Rural area		Small City or town	
		GENDER		GENDER		GENDER	
		Female Count	Male Count	Female Count	Male Count	Female Count	Male Count
TIKTOK_USER	No	2	1	1	2	4	0
	Yes	12	8	12	5	68	25

Table 1: Location, gender, and TikTok users.

The results showed that in Big Cities, there were 12 female TikTok users and 8 male TikTok users. This suggests that TikTok was relatively popular in Big Cities, with more female users than male users. However, in Rural Areas, the data indicated a lower number of TikTok users compared to Big Cities. There were only 1 female and 2 male TikTok users in this category. The data highlighted a significant difference in the number of TikTok users in Small Cities or Towns compared to Big Cities and Rural Areas. There were 68 females and 25 male TikTok users in this category, indicating that TikTok was highly popular in Small Cities or Towns. Overall, the data analysis revealed that TikTok was more popular in Small Cities or Towns, followed by Big Cities, and least popular in Rural Areas. The platform seemed to have a higher female user base across all locations. Moreover, the data suggested that in Small Cities or Towns, the adoption rate of TikTok was exceptionally high, leaving almost no non-TikTok users in that category.

		LOCATION					
		Big city		Rural area		Small City or town	
		GENDER		GENDER		GENDER	
		Female Count	Male Count	Female Count	Male Count	Female Count	Male Count
VIDEO_OWNERSHIP	No	6	2	5	5	25	11
	Yes	8	7	8	2	47	14

Table 2: Location, gender, and TikTok video ownership.

The data analysis highlighted interesting trends in video ownership across different locations and genders. The results showed that in Big Cities, there were 8 female video owners and 7 male video owners. This suggests that video ownership

was relatively common among both genders in Big Cities, with a slightly higher number of female video owners. In contrast, in Rural Areas, there were 8 female video owners and 2 male video owners. Meanwhile, in Small Cities or Towns, there were 25 females and 11 males who did not own videos. The data suggested that the number of non-video owners was relatively higher in Small Cities or Towns compared to video owners, especially for females.

For an open-ended "What difficulties did you encounter when using TikTok?".

Responses were categorised into several subthemes, namely social engagement, data consumption, and network. The issue of social engagement relates to the challenges of getting their videos to appear on the For You Page (FYP), which is crucial for gaining visibility and reaching a wider audience. Respondents often felt like TikTok is a competitive space, and the algorithm seemed unpredictable at times. Additionally, Respondents admitted that their poor editing skills to create visually appealing and engaging videos make it hard to adapt to the ever-changing trends and engagement periods on TikTok.

Another issue was the amount of data TikTok consumed, which sometimes put a strain on their mobile data plan. Respondents struggled with an unstable network connection, leading to laggy video playback and difficulty in uploading content smoothly. Furthermore, the amount of data TikTok consumes can vary depending on several factors, including the duration and quality of videos watched or uploaded, as well as the frequency of app usage.

4.2 Students' perceptions on the use of TikTok

		LOCATION					
		Big city		Rural area		Small City or town	
		GENDER		GENDER		GENDER	
		Female Count	Male Count	Female Count	Male Count	Female Count	Male Count
LEARNING_PURPOSE	No	2	2	1	1	4	5
	YES	12	7	12	6	68	20

Table 3: Location, gender, and the use of TikTok for learning purposes.

The data analysis for all three locations - Big Cities, Rural Areas, and Small Cities or Towns - provided valuable insights into the prevalence of using TikTok for learning purposes among different genders. The data revealed that in Big Cities, there were 12 females and 7 males who used TikTok for learning purposes. This indicates that a significant number of individuals in Big Cities have a desire for learning and are actively engaging in educational pursuits. Moreover, in Rural Areas, there were 12 females and 6 males who utilized TikTok for learning purposes. The data indicates that there is a notable interest in learning among individuals in Rural Areas, although the count of males with learning purposes is slightly lower than females. The data also revealed a significant interest in TikTok usage for learning in Small Cities or Towns, with 68 females and 20 males actively engaged in educational pursuits. This substantial count of individuals with learning purposes highlights a strong culture of education and personal growth in these areas

		LOCATION					
		Big city		Rural area		Small City or town	
		GENDER		GENDER		GENDER	
		Female Count	Male Count	Female Count	Male Count	Female Count	Male Count
ADDITIONAL_MATERIAL	No	2	2	3	1	15	4
	YES	12	7	10	6	57	21

Table 4: Location, gender, and the use of TikTok as additional learning material

This data survey highlighted the use of TikTok videos as additional learning materials in different locations and among different genders. In Small Cities or Towns, 57 females and 21 males utilized TikTok videos as supplementary resources to support their learning pursuits. This suggests that individuals in Small Cities or Towns have a positive acceptance of TikTok as a valuable tool for enhancing their learning experiences. In Rural Areas, 10 females and 6 males used TikTok as their additional learning materials, indicating that individuals in Rural Areas rely on TikTok to support their learning endeavours. Moreover, in Big Cities, 12 females and 7 males had access to additional learning materials through TikTok. Overall, it is encouraging to see that the majority of individuals in all locations have utilized TikTok as their additional learning material, which contributes to their educational growth and development

		LOCATION					
		Big city		Rural area		Small City or town	
		GENDER		GENDER		GENDER	
		Female Count	Male Count	Female Count	Male Count	Female Count	Male Count
ADVANTAGE_EDUCATION	No	1	1	0	0	4	2
	YES	13	8	13	7	68	23

Table 5: Location, gender and perception of TikTok advantage in education

The data analysis highlighted the perception of educational advantages toward TikTok in different locations and among different genders. Small Cities or Towns seem to have the highest number of individuals perceiving educational advantages, followed by Big Cities and then Rural Areas. In Small Cities or Towns, 68 females and 23 males perceive educational advantages. In Big Cities, there are 13 females and 8 males who perceive educational advantages. Meanwhile, in Rural Areas, there are 13 females and 7 males who perceive educational advantages. This positive perception indicates that individuals in these locations believe they have access to valuable educational opportunities.

For an open-ended question "What are the benefits of TikTok for learning?".

Firstly, the diverse content on TikTok can contribute to increasing understanding, knowledge, and even English proficiency. Users can find educational videos, tutorials, and informative content on various subjects, allowing them to learn in a bite-sized and visually engaging format.

Additionally, TikTok's fun and attractive video format makes learning entertaining, capturing attention and making it easier to remember the content. The platform's short-form videos are often concise and packed with valuable information, which can be more digestible and appealing to learners.

Furthermore, TikTok has the potential to inspire and motivate users towards their studies and future careers. Engaging with educational content on TikTok can spark curiosity and enthusiasm, encouraging individuals to explore further and pursue their academic or professional aspirations.

4.3 The Relationship Between Respondent's Location and Their TikTok Usage, Purpose for Learning, Additional Material Use, Or Perceived Educational Advantage.

LOCATION * TIKTOK_USER

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.402[a]	2	.111
Likelihood Ratio	3.989	2	.136
N of Valid Cases	140		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.43.

Table 6: The relationship between TikTok users and Location

The results of the Pearson Chi-Square test, with a value of 4.402 and a p-value of 0.111, indicate that there is no statistically significant association between the location of a respondent and whether they use TikTok. Since the p-value is greater than the standard significance level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that, within the dataset analysed, respondents' location does not have a meaningful influence on their likelihood of using TikTok. Consequently, geographical location appears not to be a determining factor in TikTok usage based on these findings

LOCATION * LEARNING_PURPOSE

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.292[a]	2	.524
Likelihood Ratio	1.150	2	.563
N of Valid Cases	140		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.14.

Table 7: The relationship between location and learning purpose

The Pearson Chi-Square test yielded a value of 1.292 with a p-value of 0.524, which is significantly higher than the conventional significance level of 0.05. As a result, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that there is no statistically significant association between respondents' location and their use of TikTok for learning purposes. This suggests that, based on the analyzed data, geographical location does not appear to influence whether individuals use TikTok as an educational tool. Therefore, location is not a meaningful factor in determining TikTok's role in learning among respondents in this sample.

LOCATION * ADDITIONAL_MATERIAL

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.065[a]	2	.968
Likelihood Ratio	.067	2	.967
N of Valid Cases	140		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.86.

Table 8: The relationship between location and additional material

The Pearson Chi-Square test produced a value of 0.065 with a p-value of 0.968, which is far greater than the standard significance level of 0.05. Given this high p-value, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating no statistically significant association between respondents' location and their use of additional materials on TikTok. The results suggest that location does not influence whether individuals use TikTok for supplementary resources, as there is no evidence to support a relationship between these variables in the dataset.

LOCATION * ADVANTAGE_EDUCATION

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.632[a]	2	.442
Likelihood Ratio	2.723	2	.256
N of Valid Cases	140		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.14.

Table 9: The relationship between location and advantage education

The Pearson Chi-Square test yielded a value of 1.632 with a p-value of 0.442, which is greater than the standard significance level of 0.05. As a result, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that there is no statistically significant association between respondents' location and their perception of TikTok as advantageous for education. This suggests that, based on the data, geographical location does not play a meaningful role in influencing whether individuals view TikTok as beneficial for educational purposes. Therefore, location does not appear to be a relevant factor in shaping these perceptions.

The data analysis using Pearson's Chi-Square tests consistently revealed no statistically significant associations between respondents' location and their use of TikTok for various educational purposes. Across all variables analyzed—whether it was general TikTok usage, use for learning purposes, engagement with additional materials, or the perception of TikTok as advantageous for education—all p-values were greater than the standard significance level of 0.05. Consequently, in each case, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

These findings suggest that geographical location does not have a meaningful impact on respondents' use of TikTok, either as a social media platform or as an educational tool. Whether individuals use TikTok, how they engage with it for learning, and their perception of its educational value appear to be independent of where they are located. This indicates that TikTok's potential as an educational tool transcends geographical boundaries, and location is not a determining factor in shaping how individuals view or use the platform for educational purposes.

5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, TikTok has become increasingly popular in recent years, with many users worldwide. Its success is due to its ability to engage with its audience through engaging and creative content. However, the app has proven to be more than a mindless entertainment source. It also has the potential to be used as a learning tool (Clarissa& Lobo, 2022; Adnan, Ramli & Ismail, 2021; Hayes et al, 2020). Content creators use the platform to create short videos that educate others on a wide range of topics, from science, math, etc, cooking, and even self-help tips. This content can be informative, interesting, and even fun to watch.

One of how TikTok represents a learning potential is its ability to distil vast amounts of information into easily digestible chunks. Users can create videos that are just 15 seconds in length, perfect for short attention spans. Due to its nature, the platform lends itself well to concise and straightforward explanations, making it an excellent platform for sharing knowledge in a way that resonates with younger people.

Another way in which TikTok remains a potential for learning is through its engagement levels. The platform not only allows users to express their creativity through creative discussions, collaborations, and feedback. Users can comment on videos, tag influences, and share their thoughts, which opens up opportunities for dialogue and sharing knowledge.

That said, TikTok's potential as a learning tool should not be overemphasized. Educational content on the platform is still relatively sparse, and most content is still entertainment oriented. This lack of structured learning resources implies that the effectiveness of such content in the facilitation of learning or academic pursuit is still unclear. TikTok may focus on simplified information, and such information may get mis-circulated, leading to misinterpretation or a lack of sufficient knowledge on a topic. However, the lack of a centralized educational structure implies that its potential, especially in academic learning or research, should still be appropriately monitored. Ultimately, TikTok remains a versatile social media tool that has much to offer in the realm of creative communication and education.

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