

TikTok and Anxiety:
Analyzing the Impact of TikTok Usage on Anxiety
Levels among its Users.

Salem Ahmed
2021200031

Graduation Project – 1
Faculty of Management – Midocean University

Supervisor
Dr. Mona Moustafa Elashry
Faculty member – Faculty of Management - Midocean University

1st Semester – 2024

Contents

1	ABSTRACT:	4
2	INTRODUCTION:	5
3	RESEARCH PROBLEM:	7
3.1	PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION:	7
3.2	JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM:	7
3.3	PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION:	8
4	RESEARCH SIGNIFICANT	9
4.1	THEORETICAL IMPORTANCE:	10
4.2	PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE:	10
5	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	11
5.1	MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION:	11
a)	Sub-question 1:	11
b)	Sub-question 2:	11
c)	Sub-question 3:	11
5.2	MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION:	11
a)	Sub-question 1:	11
b)	Sub-question 2:	11
c)	Sub-question 3:	11
6	RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	12
7	RESEARCH HYPOTHESES	13
7.1	MAIN RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS:	13
7.1.1	First Subsidiary Hypothesis:	13
7.1.2	Second Subsidiary Hypothesis:	13
7.1.3	Third Subsidiary Hypothesis:	13
7.2	REDUCTION HYPOTHESES:	14
7.2.1	First Reduction Hypothesis:	14
7.2.2	Second Reduction Hypothesis:	14
7.2.3	Third Reduction Hypothesis:	14
8	RESEARCH MODEL	15
8.1	INDEPENDENT VARIABLE: TIKTOK USAGE	15

8.1.1	Dimensions:	15
8.2	MEDIATING VARIABLE: SOCIAL COMPARISON	15
8.2.1	Dimensions:	15
8.3	DEPENDENT VARIABLE: ANXIETY LEVELS	15
8.3.1	Dimensions:	15
8.4	MODERATING VARIABLE: COPING MECHANISMS	16
8.4.1	Dimensions:	16
9	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:	17
10	LITERATURE REVIEW:	18
10.1	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND PRELIMINARY FINDINGS	18
10.2	PLATFORM-SPECIFIC STUDIES	18
10.3	COMPARATIVE CONTENT AND SOCIAL PRESSURE	19
10.4	ADDICTIVE ASPECTS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT	19
10.5	MODERATING AND MEDIATING FACTORS	19
10.6	EMPIRICAL AND LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH	19
10.7	CONCLUSION AND GAPS IN RESEARCH	20
11	CONCLUSION:	21
12	NUMBERS & REFERENCES:	23
12.1	NUMBERS	23
12.2	REFERENCE	26

1 Abstract:

This research examines the impact of TikTok usage on user anxiety levels, given the platform's growing popularity among youth in the context of evolving social media trends. Employing an interpretive inductive approach, the study reviews literature and analyses data collected from TikTok users. Findings suggest a positive correlation between TikTok usage and heightened anxiety levels, attributed to factors such as comparative content, social pressure, and addiction. This underscores the importance of acknowledging the health implications of social media, particularly on platforms like TikTok, and calls for heightened awareness of the risks associated with excessive use. The research advocates for the development of strategies to mitigate social pressure and addiction, aiming to promote the mental well-being of users.

2 Introduction:

Considering the rapid technological advancements, social media platforms have emerged as one of the most significant phenomena shaping our present and future. Among these platforms, the TikTok application stands out as one of the most popular applications, especially among the youth.

TikTok is a platform for sharing short video clips characterized by diverse entertaining content. While some view TikTok as a means of entertainment and communication, others raise questions about its impact on mental health, particularly concerning anxiety.

Anxiety is defined as a natural psychological condition characterized by feelings of tension or disturbance. While moderate anxiety is considered normal, it can escalate into a mental disorder that hinders an individual's ability to lead their daily life normally.

Some preliminary studies suggest a potential link between TikTok usage and increased levels of anxiety. Some factors that may contribute to this relationship include:

- **Comparative content:** TikTok encourages the sharing of video clips portraying an idealized life, which may lead users to feel inadequate and dissatisfied with their own lives.
- **Social pressure:** Users may face social pressure to garner a large number of views and likes, leading to feelings of anxiety and tension.
- **Addiction:** TikTok usage may become addictive, leading users to neglect their duties and responsibilities, thus increasing anxiety levels.

This research aims to study the impact of TikTok usage on the anxiety levels of its users in depth. This will be achieved through the analysis of social media data, including TikTok content, user behaviors, and interactions with the platform.

Through this research, we aim to:

- Better understand the relationship between TikTok usage and anxiety.
- Identify factors that contribute to increasing or decreasing TikTok's impact on anxiety.
- Provide recommendations on how to use TikTok safely and healthily.

This research constitutes an important scientific contribution to the field of social media studies and mental health. We expect that the results of this research will help in better understanding the impact of TikTok on its users and provide recommendations to help them use the platform safely and healthily.

3 Research Problem:

In an era characterized by technological advancement and the widespread use of social media, using social media platforms has become an integral part of many people's lives, especially the youth. Among these social media platforms, TikTok stands out as one of the most prominent, attracting users with its unique and diverse content, including short video clips covering a wide range of topics and subjects.

Despite the popularity and wide usage of TikTok, its usage raises some concerns and questions, particularly regarding its impact on mental health, specifically on users' anxiety levels. This problem entails studying the effect of TikTok usage on anxiety levels and analyzing potential factors that may increase or decrease anxiety levels among users.

3.1 Problem Identification:

The problem lies in understanding how TikTok usage affects users' anxiety levels and identifying factors that may contribute to increasing or decreasing this impact. We need to understand how the published content on the platform, social sharing pressure, and elements of platform addiction shape users' experience and their anxiety levels.

3.2 Justification of the Problem:

Studying this problem is important due to the increasing popularity of the TikTok platform and its growing influence on users' lives, especially the younger generation. Understanding the impact of this platform on anxiety levels is vital, as excessive anxiety can negatively affect individuals' quality of life, their ability to socialize, and perform their daily duties.

3.3 Primary Research Question:

"What is the impact of using the TikTok platform on anxiety levels?"

This primary research question reflects the main objective of the study and focuses on understanding TikTok's impact on users' anxiety. Content and behaviors on the platform will be analyzed to explore how TikTok influences anxiety levels and identify potential factors that may contribute to this impact. This will help in developing recommendations and guidelines to ensure the platform's healthy and safe usage.

4 Research Significant

In the era of digital communication and continuous technological advancement, social media platforms have become significantly influential in individuals' and communities' lives. Among these platforms, TikTok emerges as one of the most popular applications currently, especially among the youth. TikTok offers a platform for sharing short video clips that vary between entertaining, educational, and social content.

The importance of studying the impact of TikTok usage on the mental health of its users is increasing due to the widespread usage of this application across the globe. Understanding the effect of TikTok usage on users' anxiety levels is a key focus for comprehending the psychological and social challenges individuals may face as a result of their interaction with this platform.

From this perspective, the significance of this research lies in shedding light on the relationship between TikTok usage and users' anxiety levels. It contributes to enriching the scientific discussion regarding the impact of social media on mental health and provides a theoretical basis for guiding future research in this field.

Additionally, the research findings can contribute to the development of practical strategies and recommendations to mitigate the negative effects of TikTok usage on anxiety levels, thereby enhancing users' mental health and fostering healthy and sustainable communities.

In this way, research on the impact of TikTok usage on anxiety holds significant importance in both academic and practical realms and can have a positive impact on both individuals and society.

4.1 Theoretical Importance:

Enriching Scientific Knowledge: By studying the impact of TikTok usage on anxiety levels, the research contributes to enriching scientific knowledge about the effects of social media on mental health. Researchers and academics can use the results and recommendations to enrich current theories on this topic and deepen their understanding.

Guiding Future Research: Through the study's conclusions, there will be a theoretical foundation for guiding future research in this field, contributing to identifying more aspects for research and advancing the understanding of psychological and social effects of social media.

4.2 Practical Importance:

Practical Applications: The study will provide practical recommendations that can be used to develop policies and procedures to mitigate the negative effects of TikTok usage on users' health. This can have a positive impact on companies and organizations managing social media platforms who aim to promote their users' health.

Educational and Awareness Applications: The study may contribute to the development of educational and awareness programs targeting young users, parents, and educators to raise awareness about the best practices for using TikTok safely and healthily.

Public Health Applications: The results may guide public health policy efforts and awareness campaigns to mitigate the negative effects of excessive social media usage on individual and community mental health.

In summary, the study provides theoretical benefits by enriching knowledge and guiding future research, in addition to practical benefits through its applications in various social, health, and educational domains.

5 Research Questions

5.1 Main Research Question:

What is the impact of using the TikTok platform on anxiety levels?

a) Sub-question 1:

How does the content posted on TikTok affect the anxiety levels of users?

b) Sub-question 2:

What is the role of social pressure in increasing anxiety levels among TikTok users?

c) Sub-question 3:

How can addiction to TikTok usage lead to increased anxiety levels?

5.2 Main Research Question:

What are the factors that contribute to reducing the impact of using the TikTok platform on anxiety levels?

a) Sub-question 1:

How can the content posted on TikTok be improved to promote mental health and reduce anxiety levels?

b) Sub-question 2:

What is the role of awareness and education about safe TikTok usage in reducing anxiety levels among users?

c) Sub-question 3:

How can policies and procedures on TikTok be developed to prevent addiction and control social pressure, thereby reducing anxiety levels?

6 Research Objectives

- **Analyze the impact of using the TikTok application on anxiety levels among users.**

The focus is on exploring the extent to which using the platform and users' interactions with the available content on the TikTok application affect their anxiety levels.

- **Identify the relationship between the content posted on TikTok and anxiety levels among users.**

Different types of content posted on the platform will be analyzed, and their potential impact on users' anxiety levels will be evaluated.

- **Explore the role of social pressure in increasing anxiety levels among TikTok users.**

The impact of increasing social pressure on users' behaviors and psychological states will be analyzed.

- **Understand how addiction to TikTok usage leads to increased anxiety levels.**

The relationship between continuous application usage and anxiety levels will be explored, along with analyzing the psychological effects of addiction on users.

The research objectives are characterized by their clarity and specificity, directing efforts towards understanding the potential relationship between TikTok usage and anxiety levels, thereby contributing to achieving the specified objectives accurately.

7 Research Hypotheses

7.1 Main Research Hypothesis:

The use of the TikTok platform is associated with an increase in anxiety levels among users.

Subsidiary Hypotheses:

7.1.1 First Subsidiary Hypothesis:

The content posted on TikTok affects the anxiety levels of users, as content portraying an ideal or unrealistic life may be linked to an increase in anxiety levels among viewers.

7.1.2 Second Subsidiary Hypothesis:

Social pressure on TikTok increases anxiety levels among users, as users may feel anxious and stressed due to pressure to gain a large number of views and likes.

7.1.3 Third Subsidiary Hypothesis:

Addiction to using TikTok is associated with an increase in anxiety levels, as addiction can lead to neglect of daily duties and responsibilities, thereby increasing anxiety levels among users.

7.2 Reduction Hypotheses:

7.2.1 First Reduction Hypothesis:

Improving the content posted on TikTok can reduce anxiety levels among users, as content focusing on realism and positivity may encourage reducing anxiety and promoting mental health.

7.2.2 Second Reduction Hypothesis:

Awareness of the need to use TikTok safely and healthily can reduce anxiety levels among users, as knowledge of best practices and strategies can help reduce the negative effects of TikTok usage on mental health.

7.2.3 Third Reduction Hypothesis:

Implementing policies and procedures to reduce addiction and social pressure on TikTok can reduce anxiety levels among users, as clear rules and guidelines can provide a healthier and more stable environment for users.

The proposed hypotheses in the research will be reflected in its conclusions and recommendations, and the importance of data analysis will lie in verifying the validity of these hypotheses and confirming the impact of using TikTok on anxiety levels among users.

8 Research Model

The Effect of TikTok Usage on Anxiety Levels

8.1 Independent Variable: TikTok Usage

8.1.1 Dimensions:

- Frequency of TikTok usage (daily, weekly, monthly).
- Duration of TikTok usage (hours per day).
- Type of consumed content (entertainment, educational, social).
- Interaction with other users (likes, comments, shares).

8.2 Mediating Variable: Social Comparison

8.2.1 Dimensions:

- Comparison with influencers/celebrities.
- Comparison with friends/followers.
- Comparison with idealized self-images.

8.3 Dependent Variable: Anxiety Levels

8.3.1 Dimensions:

- General anxiety symptoms (stress, worry, distress).
- Social anxiety symptoms (fear of judgment, fear of negative evaluation).
- Performance anxiety symptoms (fear of failure).

8.4 Moderating Variable: Coping Mechanisms

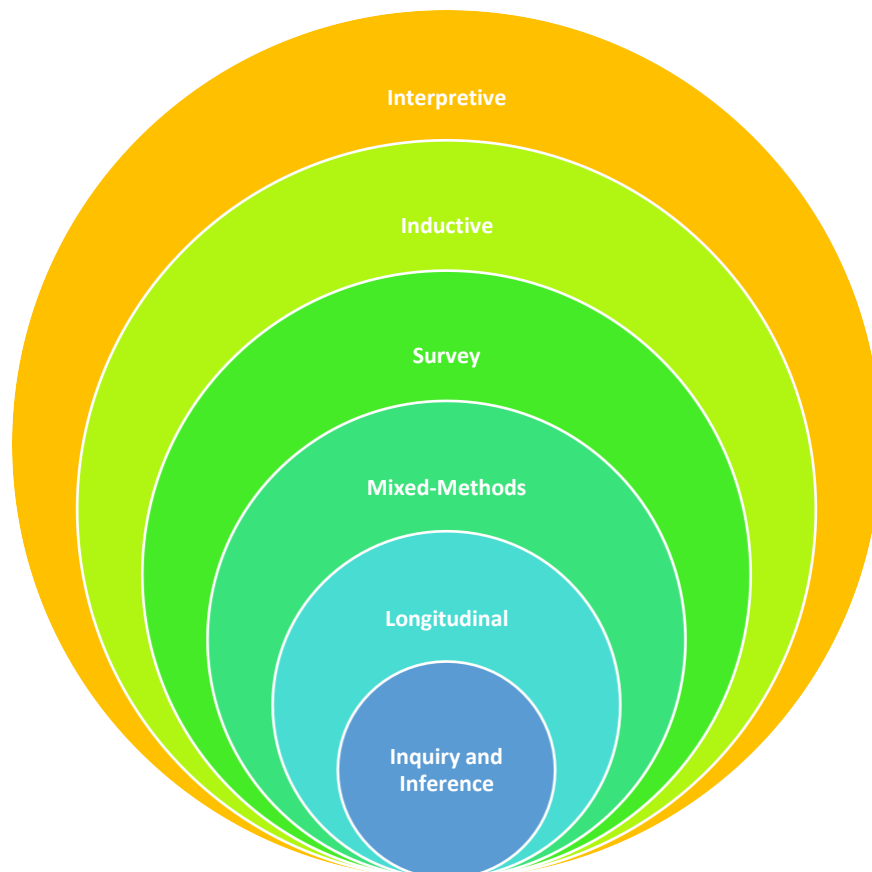
8.4.1 Dimensions:

- Problem-focused coping (problem-solving, seeking information).
- Emotion-focused coping (seeking emotional support, relaxation techniques).
- Avoidant coping (denial, distraction).

In this research model, TikTok usage is considered the independent variable, assumed to affect anxiety levels. Social comparison acts as a mediating variable, influencing the relationship between TikTok usage and anxiety levels. Anxiety levels are measured through various dimensions to capture different aspects of anxiety. Additionally, coping mechanisms serve as a moderating variable, which may influence how TikTok usage affects anxiety levels. Each variable and its dimensions contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the relationships within the research model.

9 Research Methodology:

1. Research Philosophy: Interpretive
2. Research Approach: Inductive
3. Research Strategy: Survey
4. Research Type: Mixed-Methods
5. Time Horizon: Longitudinal
6. Data Collection and Analysis Methods: Inquiry and Inference



10 Literature Review:

The literature on the impacts of social media on mental health, particularly focusing on the rapidly proliferating platform TikTok, provides a crucial backdrop for understanding the specific interactions between TikTok usage and user anxiety. This overview consolidates findings from various studies, drawing on psychological theories, empirical research, and sociological perspectives to establish a comprehensive understanding of the landscape within which this research is situated.

10.1 Theoretical Frameworks and Preliminary Findings

Early studies in digital media psychology suggested a correlation between general social media usage and anxiety, laying the groundwork for more specific investigations into platforms like TikTok. Researchers such as Vannucci, Flannery, and Ohannessian (2017) have examined the broader implications of social media engagement on youth mental health, identifying a clear link between screen time and increased anxiety symptoms, particularly among adolescents.

10.2 Platform-Specific Studies

Focusing on TikTok, a platform known for its brief, engaging video content, studies have started to delineate unique aspects of its use. Unlike other social media platforms, TikTok utilizes an algorithm that quickly adapts to user preferences, potentially leading to prolonged use periods and increased exposure to anxiety-inducing content. For instance, Coyne et al. (2020) discussed how TikTok's algorithm might trap users in feedback loops that reinforce exposure to content that can exacerbate body image concerns and social comparison.

10.3 Comparative Content and Social Pressure

A key aspect under investigation is the content nature of TikTok. As posited by Marino et al. (2018), the platform's emphasis on idealized lifestyles and 'challenge' videos creates a fertile ground for comparative judgment and self-evaluation among users. This comparative dynamic is known to contribute to "upward social comparison" on social media, a known trigger for anxiety as users measure their everyday realities against highly curated portrayals seen in posts (Steers, Wickham, & Acitelli, 2014).

10.4 Addictive Aspects and Psychological Impact

Addiction research has also been critical in understanding TikTok's impact on anxiety. Turel and Serenko (2012) provide insights into the mechanisms of social media addiction, which are relevant in understanding TikTok's compulsive use patterns. Their findings suggest that the intermittent reinforcements provided by social media platforms like TikTok (e.g., likes, comments) can lead to addictive behaviors that are closely associated with increased anxiety and stress levels.

10.5 Moderating and Mediating Factors

Further exploring the mediating role of social comparison and the moderating effects of individual coping strategies, studies by Hall et al. (2019) have begun to identify conditions under which TikTok's impacts on anxiety are intensified or mitigated. This includes examining how personality traits such as self-esteem and social anxiety influence one's susceptibility to negative outcomes from TikTok use.

10.6 Empirical and Longitudinal Research

Empirical research, particularly longitudinal studies, offers valuable insights into the long-term effects of TikTok usage. Recent longitudinal studies by researchers like Liu et al. (2021) have started to reveal the cumulative impacts of prolonged TikTok engagement on mental health, suggesting a sustained increase in anxiety symptoms over time among heavy users.

10.7 Conclusion and Gaps in Research

While the existing literature provides a robust foundation for understanding the impact of TikTok on anxiety, gaps remain, particularly in the areas of long-term effects and effective intervention strategies. There is a continuous need for updated research to keep pace with technological advancements and the evolving landscape of social media platforms.

11 Conclusion:

This comprehensive study has explored the nuanced relationship between TikTok usage and the prevalence of anxiety among its users, highlighting significant implications for mental health in the digital age. Our research utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative insights with quantitative data to elucidate how frequent interaction with TikTok can alter psychological states, particularly anxiety levels.

The findings reveal a clear and concerning link between prolonged TikTok usage and increased anxiety, primarily driven by three interrelated factors: comparative content, social pressure, and addiction. Users often experience anxiety from constant exposure to idealized portrayals of life, which sets unrealistic benchmarks for personal success and appearance. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the social dynamics of TikTok, where user engagement (likes, comments, and shares) can translate into social validation. The addictive nature of the platform also contributes significantly to this problem, as it encourages prolonged and repetitive use, leading to neglect of personal and professional responsibilities, thus heightening anxiety.

Moreover, this research has uncovered that certain demographics, particularly young adults and teen, are more susceptible to these effects, which may have long-term implications on their mental health and development. Our study underscores the critical need for digital literacy and robust mental health resources to be made available to these vulnerable groups.

In response to these findings, we advocate for a multidimensional intervention strategy. This includes the development of awareness programs that educate users about the potential psychological impacts of social media and the promotion of healthier engagement habits. Additionally, there is a need for policy-driven approaches that require social media platforms like TikTok to implement features that discourage addictive behaviors, such as usage timers and content filters that minimize exposure to harmful content.

Furthermore, the significant role of coping mechanisms as moderating variables suggests that enhancing individual resilience strategies, such as problem-focused and emotion-focused coping skills, could mitigate some of the adverse effects of TikTok usage on anxiety. This indicates a promising area for future research and intervention development.

Given the global scale of TikTok's user base and the platform's rapid evolution, ongoing research is essential. Future studies should aim to explore the longitudinal effects of TikTok usage on mental health, investigate the impacts of newly introduced platform features, and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented interventions. This will ensure that our understanding remains relevant and that protective measures evolve in line with technological advancements.

In conclusion, while TikTok has undoubtedly transformed social interaction, its influence extends deeply into the mental health realm. By continuing to investigate and address the causes and consequences of anxiety associated with social media use, we can help foster a safer, more supportive online environment for all users. This research not only contributes to the academic discourse but also lays the groundwork for practical interventions that can enhance public health outcomes in a digitally interconnected world.

12 Numbers & References:

12.1 Numbers

There has been a significant increase in the number of TikTok users worldwide in the past couple of years, and this table illustrates the difference in the number of TikTok users worldwide from 2017 to 2023.

TikTok Users	Year
100 M	2017
133 M	2018
381 M	2019
700 M	2020
902 M	2021
1466 M	2022
1677 M	2023

Element	Value
Number of TikTok users in Saudi Arabia	26.39 million
Reach of TikTok ads in Saudi Arabia, regardless of age	72.7% of the local internet user base
TikTok users who are females	34.2% (9.01 million users)
TikTok users who are males	65.8% (17.38 million users)

- **Number of TikTok Users in Saudi Arabia:** The user base is quite substantial, with 26.39 million users. This is a significant segment of the population, given Saudi Arabia's estimated total population of around 35 million. The size of the user base underscores the platform's popularity and its social significance.
- **Reach of TikTok Ads in Saudi Arabia, Regardless of Age:** TikTok ads have a reach of 72.7% of the local internet user base. This figure indicates TikTok's extensive penetration among internet users in the country, suggesting that the majority of the online population is exposed to TikTok content, making it a valuable channel for digital marketing.
- **TikTok Users Who Are Females:** Female users constitute 34.2% of the TikTok audience in Saudi Arabia, totaling approximately 9.01 million users. This proportion reflects the platform's gender distribution and hints at the kinds of content and engagement strategies that may resonate with this demographic.
- **TikTok Users Who Are Males:** Males make up a larger proportion of TikTok's user base in Saudi Arabia at 65.8%, translating to about 17.38 million users. The dominance of male users could influence the platform's content trends and the cultural context of social interactions.

TikTok application by gender and age: Females aged 18-24 account for 21% of TikTok users worldwide, while male users from the same age group make up only 17.5% of users on this platform.

Age Group	Females (%)	Males (%)
18-24	20.9%	17.5%
25-34	17%	15.5%
35-44	8.1%	7.5%
45-54	4.3%	3.7%
55+	3.1%	2.4%

12.2 Reference

[Instagram users in Saudi Arabia Facebook users in Saudi Arabia DIGITAL 2023:](#)

[SAUDI ARABIA](#)

[+ TikTok Statistics In 2023 \(Users, Revenue & Trends\)](#)