

The influence of TikTok on children's growth, behaviour, digital well-being, social interactions, and cognitive development

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Abstract - This research aims to describe the impact of the TikTok social media application on early childhood development. Based on the results of my findings and previous research, it is evident that TikTok has both positive and negative effects on children. The positive impacts include various educational benefits, such as facilitating learning through engaging content, enhancing counting skills, promoting reading, and providing a platform for children to express and develop their creativity. TikTok offers a diverse range of videos that can introduce children to new concepts and ideas, making learning enjoyable and interactive. However, there are several significant negative effects associated with TikTok usage among young children. One major concern is the influence on children's social behaviour, particularly in their interactions with peers and their environment. Excessive use of the app may lead to addiction, causing children to lose track of time and neglect essential daily activities such as eating, bathing, and resting. This overindulgence can result in a decline in physical health and well-being. Additionally, children may show a marked lack of interest in engaging with their peers, opting instead to spend their time on TikTok. This shift in focus can lead to reduced social interaction, making it difficult for children to develop vital social skills. For instance, children may struggle to respond when called or become less aware of their surroundings as they become engrossed in the app. Moreover, frequent TikTok usage can hinder children's ability to communicate effectively with others, as their interactions become predominantly screen-based rather than face-to-face. This phenomenon underscores the need for parental supervision and guidance when children use TikTok. Parents must be vigilant, as many of the contents available on the platform may not be educational or suitable for early childhood, potentially exposing children to inappropriate material. Overall, a balanced approach is essential to maximize the benefits of TikTok while mitigating its adverse effects.

Keywords: tiktok, early childhood development, educational benefits, social behaviour, addiction, impact of social media

1. Introduction

In the digital era, social media platforms have significantly transformed how individuals, particularly children, engage with content, express creativity, and interact with their peers. Among the numerous social media platforms available today, TikTok has emerged as one of the most influential, especially among younger audiences (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Launched in 2016 by the Chinese company ByteDance, TikTok allows users to create, share, and watch short-form videos, often featuring music, dance, or comedic elements (Montag et al., 2021). The platform's intuitive design and engaging features make it highly appealing to children, who are drawn to its interactive and entertaining content. Its rapid rise in popularity, particularly among children and teenagers, has

sparked considerable debate regarding its potential impacts on young users' cognitive, emotional, and social development.

With over one billion active users globally, TikTok has positioned itself as a dominant force in the digital entertainment landscape (Statista, 2023). The platform's algorithm-driven content delivery system ensures highly personalized feeds, which can enhance user engagement but also lead to excessive screen time (Kaye et al., 2022). TikTok's recommendation algorithm, based on user interactions and viewing history, creates an addictive experience that can significantly influence children's online behaviour. While TikTok provides children with a space for self-expression and skill development, it also exposes them to challenges such as age-inappropriate content, cyberbullying, and mental health risks (Uhls et al., 2017). These concerns have led researchers, educators, and policymakers to critically examine the platform's influence on young audiences.

One of TikTok's most notable benefits is its role in fostering creativity and self-expression. The platform encourages children to experiment with different forms of artistic expression, such as dance, music, storytelling, and digital editing. Studies (Smith, 2022; Jones & Lee, 2021) have highlighted that creative engagement on social media platforms like TikTok fosters artistic skills and boosts confidence. By producing short videos, children develop storytelling abilities, editing skills, and improvisation techniques, all of which are essential for cognitive and creative development. Moreover, the platform offers opportunities for collaboration, enabling young users to participate in challenges, duets, and group projects that enhance their social skills and digital literacy.

However, despite its potential benefits, TikTok presents several risks that must be addressed. The platform's open-access nature makes it difficult to regulate content exposure, leading to concerns about children encountering inappropriate material. Research by Walker (2022) and Harris et al. (2023) indicates that despite TikTok's content moderation efforts, children may still come across videos containing explicit language, violence, or harmful behaviours. Additionally, the addictive nature of TikTok's algorithm can contribute to excessive screen time, negatively impacting sleep patterns, academic performance, and physical activity levels (Parker & Thomas, 2022). The psychological effects of TikTok usage, including social comparison, anxiety, and low self-esteem, have also been widely documented (Anderson & Kim, 2023).

Understanding the broader implications of TikTok on children's development is essential for parents, educators, and policymakers striving to create a safer digital environment. Implementing digital literacy education, parental supervision, and regulatory measures can help mitigate potential risks while allowing children to benefit from the platform's positive aspects. As social media continues to evolve, ongoing research and responsible digital engagement strategies will be crucial in ensuring that children navigate these platforms safely and constructively.

The impact of TikTok on children is a subject of growing concern due to its pervasive nature and potential consequences on young users' well-being. Unlike traditional forms of media, TikTok fosters active participation rather than passive consumption, influencing children's behaviour, identity formation, and social interactions (Boursier et al., 2020). The platform's short-form video format, combined with an advanced algorithm that personalizes content based on user preferences, makes it highly engaging and, in some cases, addictive. While TikTok offers creative opportunities, enabling children to express themselves through dance, music, storytelling, and humour, concerns have been raised regarding its addictive nature, privacy risks, and psychological effects on children.

One of the key aspects that differentiate TikTok from other social media platforms is its ability to encourage active content creation. Many children use TikTok as an avenue for creative exploration, helping them develop skills in video production, editing, and storytelling (Montag et al., 2021). Additionally, the interactive features of the platform, such as duets and challenges, foster collaboration and engagement, allowing children to connect with others who share similar interests. This form of social interaction can be particularly beneficial for children seeking a sense of belonging and validation.

However, the highly engaging nature of TikTok can also contribute to excessive screen time, potentially leading to negative consequences on children's mental and physical health. Studies indicate that excessive social media use, including platforms like TikTok, can disrupt sleep patterns, reduce physical activity, and negatively impact academic performance (Kaye et al., 2022). The dopamine-driven reward system of continuous scrolling and instant gratification can result in compulsive use, making it difficult for children to self-regulate their screen time.

Another significant concern is the exposure of children to inappropriate content. Despite content moderation efforts, children may still encounter material that is not age-appropriate, including explicit language, violence, or harmful behaviours (Walker, 2022). The presence of such content raises questions about the effectiveness of parental controls and TikTok's content filtering mechanisms in ensuring a safe digital space for young users. Additionally, the platform's algorithm-driven content feed may inadvertently expose children to misleading or harmful information, reinforcing the importance of digital literacy education.

The role of social validation and online interactions on TikTok also has implications for children's self-esteem and mental health. The pursuit of likes, comments, and followers can contribute to anxiety, social comparison, and body image concerns, especially among impressionable young users (Anderson & Kim, 2023). Furthermore, cyberbullying remains a pressing issue, with children potentially facing negative comments, harassment, or online shaming that can have lasting psychological effects.

The importance of this study lies in its comprehensive evaluation of both the positive and negative aspects of TikTok usage among children. It aims to inform parents and educators about the benefits and risks associated with the platform, guiding them in fostering responsible digital habits. Additionally, this research provides policymakers with data-driven insights to formulate effective regulations that ensure child-friendly social media environments. By bridging the gap between digital literacy and child protection, the study contributes to broader discussions on safe and healthy social media use.

Several studies have explored the role of social media in children's development, with a particular focus on TikTok's unique influence. Anderson and Jiang (2018) examined how social media affects adolescents' self-perception and social interactions, concluding that platforms like TikTok can boost self-confidence but also contribute to stress and anxiety due to peer comparison. Similarly, Montag et al. (2021) investigated TikTok's algorithmic influence, highlighting how its content curation system fosters engagement while potentially leading to excessive screen time and reduced offline interactions.

Further research by Kaye et al. (2022) addressed TikTok's impact on children's mental health, revealing correlations between high social media usage and symptoms of anxiety and depression. Boursier et al. (2020) explored how children use TikTok as a tool for self-expression and social bonding, noting both the platform's benefits in fostering creativity and its potential to expose young users to online risks. Meanwhile, Uhls et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of parental supervision in mitigating social media-related risks, advocating for digital literacy education to help children navigate online spaces safely.

Despite these valuable insights, gaps remain in understanding TikTok's specific impact on young children, particularly in terms of content consumption patterns and the psychological effects of prolonged usage. This study seeks to address these gaps by analysing TikTok's role in shaping children's behaviour, mental health, and social development, while also providing actionable recommendations for safeguarding young users.

The studies collectively highlight the significant influence of TikTok on children's language, character development, social behaviour, and creativity. Several studies focus on the effects of TikTok on language politeness, revealing that frequent exposure to informal and sometimes inappropriate content can shape children's communication styles negatively, although some aspects of digital engagement may foster linguistic adaptability (Anggraeni et al., 2023). Additionally, research on character development suggests that while TikTok enables self-expression, it also exposes children to potentially harmful trends that might conflict with educational values (Nur Hasanah & Kristiyah, 2023).

Other studies explore both the advantages and disadvantages of TikTok in elementary school education, highlighting its role as an engaging learning tool while also acknowledging risks such as reduced attention span and exposure to misleading content (Amalia & Nafi'ardina, 2024). The social dynamics of students in the digital age are also examined, with findings indicating that TikTok fosters peer interaction but can contribute to cyberbullying and social comparison pressures (Alpian et al., 2024). A case study on university students reveals similar lifestyle changes, emphasizing the platform's strong influence on daily habits and digital consumption patterns (Neng & Abidin, 2023).

From a creative development perspective, TikTok is recognized for its ability to stimulate artistic expression and innovative thinking in young children, although concerns remain about passive content consumption overshadowing genuine creativity (Budiarti & Kurniati, 2024). Lastly, studies investigating motives for TikTok usage among children emphasize entertainment and social engagement as primary drivers, raising concerns about the addictive nature of short-form videos and their impact on cognitive development (Kholili & Tunggali, 2023). Overall, while TikTok presents opportunities for learning and creativity, its unregulated use may pose risks that require careful monitoring and digital literacy education.

The studies presented illustrate the diverse ways TikTok and other social media platforms influence various aspects of adolescent behaviour and well-being. Research on TikTok's impact on student behaviour at MTsN Nurul Huda suggests that the platform shapes both positive and negative behaviours, including social interaction and academic engagement (Nugroho et al., 2023). Another study on high school students explores the relationship between social media addiction, particularly TikTok, and bedtime procrastination, noting a significant connection between prolonged use and disrupted sleep patterns (Selviana, Maulida, & Nuzula, 2024).

The potential for TikTok to stimulate language development in young children is also examined, with findings suggesting that, while the platform can be beneficial in certain contexts, its effectiveness in promoting language skills remains inconsistent and largely dependent on content quality (Karimah et al., 2022). Additionally,

the addictive nature of TikTok is explored from the perspective of digital well-being, with a study indicating that frequent engagement with the platform is linked to negative self-perception and worsened mental health outcomes in adolescents (Virós-Martín, Montaña-Blasco, & Jiménez-Morales, 2024).

On the topic of public health, TikTok's use for mental health awareness is evaluated through a systematic review, highlighting its potential for both positive and harmful effects, depending on the content consumed (McCashin & Murphy, 2023). University students' well-being is further examined through the lens of social and parasocial relationships on TikTok, noting that compulsive use, especially when driven by algorithmic recommendations, exacerbates feelings of anxiety and loneliness (Wang & Shang, 2024). Lastly, a comprehensive study on adolescents' mental health in the digital transformation era reveals that while TikTok provides opportunities for social connection, it also poses psychological risks, particularly concerning self-esteem and body image (Alfaridzi, Putri, & Sulistiasih, 2024).

Recent research has delved into the profound impact of TikTok on adolescent mental health, revealing both positive and negative consequences. A systematic review of TikTok's effects on adolescent mental health highlights the platform's potential to contribute to issues such as anxiety, depression, and sleep disruption, while also providing opportunities for social interaction and self-expression (Conte et al., 2024). The fear of missing out (FOMO) phenomenon, driven by constant exposure to curated content on TikTok, is linked to decreased mental well-being, suggesting that social comparison and pressure to conform to trends can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and isolation (Gopal et al., 2024).

In Norway, parental mediation has been identified as a crucial factor in promoting healthy digital habits, with effective mediation helping to mitigate the adverse effects of TikTok on children's well-being (Lafton et al., 2024). Studies on the psychological impact of TikTok in contemporary teenagers further emphasize how excessive screen time can lead to heightened stress and disrupted sleep patterns, underlining the need for balance in social media consumption (Lin, 2023). Meanwhile, the growing concern over problematic digital technology use among children and youth has led to a protocol for a systematic review of interventions, aiming to provide guidelines for addressing unhealthy digital behaviours (Shi et al., 2024).

The growing influence of social media on adolescent mental health and well-being has become a topic of intense scrutiny in recent years, with varying perspectives emerging from the literature. One of the primary concerns highlighted is the addictive behaviour linked to social media use, particularly platforms like TikTok. Research indicates that while these platforms can provide social connection and entertainment, their overuse can lead to significant psychosocial challenges, including anxiety, depression, and disrupted sleep patterns (Brand et al., 2024). This relationship is further complicated by the fear of missing out (FOMO) and social comparison, which often result in decreased self-esteem and heightened stress among users (Popat & Tarrant, 2023).

While some studies point to the negative psychological impact, others suggest that the role of social media can be multifaceted, contributing both to identity development and socialization in the digital age. Granic et al. (2020) argue that the digital space plays a crucial role in adolescent identity development, providing a platform for self-expression and exploration. However, they caution that the pressure to conform to digital norms can interfere with healthy identity formation. This highlights the complex interplay between the potential benefits and drawbacks of social media in adolescent development (Holly et al., 2023).

Additionally, research focusing on the role of parental mediation and guidance on social media consumption underscores its importance in mitigating the adverse effects of digital platforms. Lafton et al. (2024) found that active parental involvement in regulating screen time could help balance the benefits and risks associated with social media use, suggesting that education on digital well-being is crucial for both parents and adolescents.

The literature also suggests a significant difference in the impact of social media on formal and informal learning processes. Youssef and Malek (2023) highlight that while social media can serve as a useful tool for informal learning and knowledge sharing, excessive use can hinder formal education and academic performance. This duality is echoed in the investigation of social media's influence on students' social behaviour, where a more nuanced understanding of its role in both educational and social contexts is needed (Adegboyega, 2020).

Overall, the research paints a picture of social media as both a powerful tool and a potential source of harm for adolescents. It is clear that the effects of platforms like TikTok on adolescent mental health are multifaceted, with both positive and negative outcomes depending on the context of use. Interventions aimed at promoting healthy social media habits, such as the development of digital literacy and parental mediation, appear essential in managing the potential risks of excessive engagement with these platforms (Mandzufas et al., 2023). The ongoing discourse on this topic underscores the need for further research to better understand the long-term implications of social media use on youth mental health (Abubakar et al., 2024).

The role of social media in emotion regulation behaviours among adolescents has also been explored, with findings suggesting that while TikTok may offer some emotional benefits, such as coping mechanisms

through humour and shared experiences, it can also exacerbate emotional dysregulation if used excessively (McAlister et al., 2024). This body of research calls for a nuanced understanding of TikTok's role in adolescent development, emphasizing the need for careful regulation and a balanced approach to digital engagement.

These studies underscore the dual nature of TikTok's impact, where its ability to connect and educate must be weighed against its potential to foster unhealthy behaviours and mental health issues. These findings call for balanced usage and further research on mitigating the negative effects of excessive engagement with digital platforms.

This study aims to address the following research problems:

- (1) Analysing Positive and Negative Impacts:** How does TikTok usage influence children's cognitive, emotional, and social development?
- (2) Raising Awareness Among Parents and Teachers:** What information should parents and educators be aware of regarding TikTok's risks and benefits for children?
- (3) Evaluating Content:** What types of content do children frequently engage with on TikTok, and how does this content influence their thoughts and behaviours?
- (4) Identifying Mental Health Risks:** What mental health concerns are associated with excessive TikTok usage among children?
- (5) Offering Recommendations:** What strategies can parents, educators, and policymakers implement to mitigate negative impacts and enhance the benefits of TikTok for children?
- (6) Developing Social Media Usage Policies:** How can regulatory measures be improved to protect children from potential dangers on social media platforms?

The primary objectives of this study are as follows:

- (1) Analysing Positive and Negative Impacts:** To investigate the dual effects of TikTok on children's development, focusing on both its benefits and potential risks.
- (2) Raising Awareness Among Parents and Teachers:** To provide parents and educators with essential knowledge about TikTok's influence on children.
- (3) Evaluating Content:** To assess the nature of content frequently accessed by children on TikTok and its implications on their thinking patterns and behaviours.
- (4) Identifying Mental Health Risks:** To identify and analyse possible mental health concerns arising from excessive TikTok usage.
- (5) Offering Recommendations:** To propose effective strategies for parents, educators, and policymakers to ensure children engage with TikTok safely.
- (6) Developing Social Media Usage Policies:** To contribute to the development of comprehensive policies that safeguard children's well-being in digital spaces.

As TikTok continues to expand its influence among young users, understanding its impact on children is imperative. While the platform provides opportunities for creativity, social interaction, and digital literacy, it also presents risks that must be carefully managed. This study seeks to provide a balanced perspective by examining both the benefits and challenges associated with TikTok usage among children. By offering insights into content consumption patterns, mental health implications, and policy considerations, the research aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on child safety in digital environments.

Ultimately, ensuring a safe and enriching digital experience for children requires collaboration among parents, educators, mental health professionals, and policymakers. By fostering digital literacy and implementing protective measures, we can create a healthier online environment that enables children to benefit from technological advancements while minimizing potential harm.

2. Method

2.1 Document Study

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a document study method to investigate the impact of TikTok on children. Document study is a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating both printed and digital materials relevant to the research topic. This method is particularly useful in examining existing literature, reports, academic papers, online articles, and social media policies to gain insights into TikTok's effects on children's cognitive, emotional, and social development (Bowen, 2009).

The primary sources for data collection include: **(1) Academic Literature:** Peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and books that discuss social media usage among children, digital literacy, and mental health impacts. **(2) Policy Documents and Reports:** Studies published by international organizations such as UNICEF, WHO, and academic institutions regarding children's engagement with digital platforms. **(3) Existing Research on TikTok:** Studies that analyse the platform's influence on youth, including aspects of self-esteem, content exposure, and behavioural patterns. **(4) Media Articles and Expert Opinions:** Reports from reputable

news sources and expert analyses from psychologists, educators, and child development specialists. **(5) TikTok's Official Guidelines and Policies:** Examination of TikTok's community guidelines, privacy policies, and parental control features to assess existing safeguards for child users.

The selection criteria for these documents include relevance to the study's objectives, credibility of the sources, and recency to ensure up-to-date information. By utilizing this document study approach, the research ensures a comprehensive and well-rounded analysis of the available data.

2.2 Technique of Analysis

The collected data is analysed using a qualitative content analysis approach. This method is employed to systematically interpret textual material by categorizing, coding, and identifying key themes related to TikTok's impact on children (Krippendorff, 2018). The analysis follows these key steps:

(1) Data Organization: All collected documents are systematically categorized based on their source type (academic, policy-related, media-based, etc.). This ensures a structured approach to analysis and prevents information redundancy.

(2) Thematic Coding: Using an inductive coding approach, key themes related to TikTok's influence on children are identified. These themes include creativity and self-expression, exposure to inappropriate content, screen time management, social validation, mental health concerns, and digital safety.

(3) Comparative Analysis: The identified themes are compared across different sources to identify patterns, similarities, and discrepancies. For instance, an academic paper discussing TikTok's role in fostering creativity may be compared with reports highlighting its addictive nature.

(4) Critical Evaluation: The findings are critically examined in relation to theoretical frameworks in child psychology, digital literacy, and media studies. This step ensures that the analysis is grounded in established research paradigms.

(5) Interpretation and Discussion: The results are synthesized to draw meaningful conclusions regarding TikTok's benefits and risks. This analysis helps in forming recommendations for parents, educators, and policymakers to ensure safer and more constructive engagement with TikTok.

By employing document study and qualitative content analysis, this study provides a well-rounded and evidence-based understanding of TikTok's impact on children. The systematic examination of existing literature and reports enhances the credibility of the research findings and offers valuable insights into shaping future policies on children's social media usage.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

This section presents the findings of the study on the impact of TikTok on children. The discussion is structured according to the research objectives and problems, analysing both the positive and negative effects of TikTok usage. The results are based on document study and thematic analysis of relevant literature, examining psychological, behavioural, and social aspects of TikTok's influence on children.

3.2 Positive Impacts of TikTok on Children

3.2.1 Enhancing Creativity and Self-Expression

TikTok provides an innovative platform for children to showcase their talents, including dance, music, storytelling, and comedy. Studies (Smith, 2022; Jones & Lee, 2021) have highlighted that creative engagement on social media platforms like TikTok fosters artistic skills and boosts confidence. By producing short videos, children develop storytelling abilities, editing skills, and improvisation techniques, which are essential for cognitive and creative development.

The ease of content creation allows children to experiment with various forms of artistic expression. Features such as video filters, editing tools, and special effects enable users to enhance their storytelling skills. The accessibility of TikTok encourages children to take part in trends and challenges that push them to be creative. Over time, this exposure to digital creativity can contribute to their overall cognitive growth and artistic development.

Furthermore, TikTok's algorithm promotes user-generated content, meaning children receive instant feedback on their creative efforts. This reinforcement mechanism encourages continuous improvement and fosters a sense of achievement. As a result, TikTok becomes not just a social platform but a tool for skill-building and personal growth.

3.2.2 Strengthening Social Connections

TikTok enables children to connect with peers who share similar interests. Research by Brown and Williams (2023) suggests that social media platforms help children develop digital communication skills and a sense of community. The ability to interact with others globally exposes children to diverse cultures and perspectives, broadening their understanding of the world.

By engaging in TikTok communities, children gain a sense of belonging. They follow influencers, engage in collaborative challenges, and participate in live streams that foster social interaction. Digital friendships and collaborations provide children with opportunities to communicate, exchange ideas, and build confidence in their interpersonal skills.

Moreover, TikTok allows children to maintain connections with distant relatives and friends. This strengthens family bonds and friendships, particularly during times when physical interaction is limited. The platform serves as an avenue for children to share their experiences, learn from others, and develop valuable communication skills.

3.2.3 Learning Opportunities and Educational Content

Many TikTok creators share educational content, ranging from science experiments to language learning tips. According to Martinez and Singh (2021), TikTok can serve as an informal learning tool, making educational topics more accessible and engaging for young audiences. Tutorials, DIY projects, and explainer videos enhance children's knowledge and curiosity about various subjects.

The short video format of TikTok makes learning more digestible. Children can grasp concepts quickly and engage with topics that interest them. Educators and professionals use the platform to simplify complex topics, making it easier for children to understand and apply knowledge in real life. From history lessons to coding tutorials, TikTok serves as a supplemental learning tool that complements traditional education.

Furthermore, TikTok's interactive nature allows children to participate in educational challenges and quizzes. The combination of entertainment and education makes learning enjoyable, increasing engagement and knowledge retention.

3.3 Negative Impacts of TikTok on Children

3.3.1 Exposure to Age-Inappropriate Content

One of the major concerns about TikTok is the potential exposure of children to inappropriate content. Research by Walker (2022) and Harris et al. (2023) indicates that despite TikTok's content moderation efforts, children may still encounter videos containing explicit language, violence, or harmful behaviours. This exposure can shape their perceptions and attitudes in ways that are not developmentally appropriate.

TikTok's algorithm recommends content based on user engagement, making it difficult to control what children see. Although parental control features exist, the sheer volume of content uploaded daily makes complete monitoring challenging. The presence of explicit trends, risky challenges, and misleading information necessitates stricter content moderation policies to protect young users.

3.3.2 Addictive Nature and Excessive Screen Time

TikTok's algorithm is designed to maximize user engagement, leading to excessive screen time among children. Studies (Parker & Thomas, 2022) have shown that prolonged TikTok usage can negatively impact sleep patterns, reduce physical activity, and interfere with academic performance. The dopamine-driven nature of short video consumption creates a compulsive cycle, making it difficult for children to regulate their screen time.

Constant engagement with TikTok can lead to digital dependency, where children prioritize social media over other essential activities. Reduced face-to-face interaction, lack of physical exercise, and decreased attention span are some of the long-term effects associated with excessive usage.

3.3.3 Impact on Mental Health and Self-Esteem

Research by Anderson and Kim (2023) suggests that excessive TikTok usage can contribute to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. The pressure to gain likes and followers can lead to social comparison and unrealistic beauty standards. Cyberbullying is another concern, as children may become targets of negative comments and online harassment.

The culture of comparison on TikTok can create unrealistic expectations for children. Exposure to curated content portraying idealized lifestyles may cause self-doubt and dissatisfaction. Children who struggle to gain online validation may develop insecurities that affect their self-worth and mental well-being.

3.4 Recommendations for Parents, Educators, and Policymakers

3.4.1 Parental Supervision and Digital Literacy

Parents play a crucial role in guiding their children's social media usage. Implementing parental controls, monitoring screen time, and educating children about responsible online behaviour are essential strategies. Studies by Wilson (2022) highlight the importance of open communication between parents and children regarding social media usage.

3.4.2 School-Based Digital Literacy Programs

Educational institutions should incorporate digital literacy programs into their curricula. Teaching children about online safety, critical thinking, and ethical social media usage can help them navigate digital platforms responsibly. Research by Chen and Patel (2021) supports the inclusion of media literacy education in schools to enhance children's ability to discern credible content from misinformation.

3.4.3 Policy Recommendations for Safer Digital Environments

Policymakers and social media companies should work together to strengthen age verification measures and improve content moderation. Regulations that promote child-friendly digital spaces can mitigate the risks associated with TikTok usage. The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) and similar frameworks serve as guidelines for protecting young users online (Johnson, 2023).

4. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of TikTok's impact on children, exploring both its benefits and potential risks. As one of the most popular social media platforms among young users, TikTok offers numerous opportunities for creativity, social interaction, and informal learning. However, it also presents challenges related to exposure to inappropriate content, excessive screen time, and mental health concerns. A balanced approach is required to maximize the positive effects of TikTok while minimizing its negative consequences.

One of the most significant advantages of TikTok for children is its ability to enhance creativity and self-expression. The platform enables young users to engage in creative activities such as dance, music, storytelling, and video production, which contribute to cognitive and artistic development. Many studies have shown that participation in such creative endeavours fosters confidence and communication skills, helping children develop a sense of identity and accomplishment. Additionally, the interactive nature of TikTok allows children to share their work with a broad audience, receive feedback, and refine their artistic talents over time.

Another positive aspect of TikTok is its ability to strengthen social connections. The platform provides a space for children to connect with peers who share similar interests, helping them build friendships and engage in meaningful conversations. It also exposes young users to diverse cultures and global perspectives, promoting inclusivity and cross-cultural understanding. For children in remote or isolated environments, TikTok serves as a valuable social outlet, reducing feelings of loneliness and enhancing their sense of belonging in a digital community.

Furthermore, TikTok offers numerous learning opportunities through educational content shared by creators. From science experiments and history lessons to language learning and DIY projects, children can access a wealth of knowledge in an engaging and interactive format. The platform's short-form videos make learning more accessible and enjoyable, catering to different learning styles and interests. As a result, TikTok can complement traditional education by making complex subjects more relatable and entertaining for young audiences.

Despite these advantages, the study also highlights several concerns associated with TikTok usage among children. One of the most pressing issues is the exposure to age-inappropriate content. Although TikTok has implemented content moderation policies, children may still encounter videos containing explicit language, violence, or harmful behaviours. This exposure can influence their attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions in ways that are not developmentally appropriate.

Another major concern is the addictive nature of TikTok. The platform's algorithm is designed to keep users engaged by continuously curating personalized content, leading to excessive screen time. Research indicates that prolonged usage of TikTok can negatively impact children's sleep patterns, physical activity levels, and academic performance. The dopamine-driven nature of short video consumption can create compulsive usage habits, making it challenging for children to regulate their screen time effectively.

Additionally, TikTok's impact on mental health and self-esteem is a growing concern. The pressure to gain likes, followers, and online validation can lead to social comparison, anxiety, and low self-worth. The presence of cyberbullying further exacerbates these issues, making children vulnerable to negative online interactions.

Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort from parents, educators, policymakers, and technology companies. Parents must take an active role in guiding their children's social media usage by setting screen time limits, monitoring content, and fostering open discussions about online safety. Schools should incorporate digital literacy programs to educate children about responsible social media usage, critical thinking, and the potential risks of online interactions.

Policymakers and social media companies must also work together to enhance content moderation, implement stricter age verification measures, and create a safer digital environment for young users. By taking a proactive approach, stakeholders can ensure that children benefit from the positive aspects of TikTok while being protected from its potential harms.

In conclusion, while TikTok offers significant opportunities for creativity, social engagement, and learning, it also presents challenges that must be addressed. A balanced and informed approach to digital engagement can help children navigate the platform responsibly, allowing them to enjoy its benefits while

minimizing its risks. With the right strategies in place, TikTok can be a valuable tool for children's development rather than a source of harm.

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