

# Exploring the Impacts of TikTok on the Academic Performance of Chinese Secondary School Students

Qing Liu \*

Department of Education, University of Windsor, Windsor, Canada

\*Corresponding author: liu2e@uwindsor.ca

**Abstract.** Since TikTok was released in 2016, more and more people have found TikTok interesting and have tried to become users. TikTok contains many features, such as video, chat, learning, and working. People can relax and have fun in their spare time with TikTok. Nevertheless, as TikTok has become increasingly popular, more students are becoming the primary users of TikTok. At the same time, the variety of short videos available on TikTok can lead to inconsistent content quality due to their low cost of production. As instructors, schoolteachers must know how students are affected when watching TikTok. After literature review, this paper mainly found the four areas of influence from TikTok that students will experience during the emergence phase: psychological influence, physical influence, behavioral influence, and positive influence. These four areas of influence indicate how instructors should properly guide students in using TikTok, which will provide references for future instructors and students in the education area.

**Keywords:** TikTok; Influence; Education.

## 1. Introduction

Since the technology industry has proliferated in recent years, an increasing number of young people are using social networks and letting these emerging apps take over their leisure time in their daily lives. Young people form an essential part of the TikTok user group. Sloane and Rittenhouse found that TikTok's user base is 69% dominated by users aged 16 to 24 [1]. Apart from attending classes, these young people spend their days on TikTok with short videos. As a social networking software, TikTok contains complex content encompassing various information and knowledge fields. However, as young students develop physically and mentally, they may be tempted and influenced by TikTok if they browse it for a long time. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory claim that the most significant influence on student learning comes from social influences, the student's culture, and their peer group. Therefore, given the trend of TikTok being widely imitated by students, it is critical to investigate whether TikTok is beneficial. If the adverse effects are more significant, what can instructors do as educators to prevent students from being misled by the behaviors on TikTok? This question will be answered in the following section.

## 2. Influences on students

### 2.1 Psychological Influence

Changes in a person's behaviors can be influenced by their psychological state. With the development of China, more and more schools are adding psychology teachers to their posts and are beginning to pay attention to the psychological problems of their students. Therefore, when researching what aspects of TikTok can affect students, the author first focused on the psychological aspects. Nesi argues that the development and upkeep of psychopathology are significantly influenced by teenagers' peer experiences [2]. She discusses the possible effects online on adolescents' online victimization, suicide, and self-harm [2]. Moreover, the ease with which suicidal and self-harming information may be published online can raise teens' risk of suicide. In her study, more than 400 adolescents undergo psychiatric treatment for the risk of harming themselves or others. While receiving therapy, some people claimed to have viewed internet material that encouraged self-harm (16.6%) and suicide (14.8%).

Teenagers are particularly open to outside influences at this time of psychological development, and these TikTok hits are perfect for this age group of fashion-conscious pupils looking to express themselves. Wang stated that individuals' various psychological demands may be satisfied by leveraging social networks [3]. Internet use by teenagers might satisfy their demands on a psychological level. When their everyday needs are not met, people turn to social networks to seek psychological relief. In the long run, people will become more addicted to the Internet. Fardouly and Vartanian made a similar point and found through their research that adolescents' rates of depression were significantly correlated with their level of online social interaction [4]. Students with higher internet access rates were more likely to suffer from depression.

## 2.2 Physical Influence

At the same time, long-term use of TikTok may also affect the physical quality and induce social network addiction in young people. In terms of physical health, prolonged viewing of TikTok may lead to concerns about students' appearance, eating health issues, and sleep problems. Students browse TikTok as a pastime but can become overly addicted to it. Rideout and Robb surveyed teens on how often they use their phones and found that 40% of teens would use their phones within five minutes of going to bed, and a further 36% would check their phones at least once during the night. The high frequency of mobile phone use and social media browsing can significantly impact adolescents' sleep, causing sleep deprivation, dozing off in class during the day, and affecting their academic performance [5]. At the same time, adolescent students have heightened concerns about peer evaluation [6]. Students learn about current trends in aesthetics by watching popular videos on TikTok to make changes to their bodies, such as losing and gaining weight and plastic surgery. These have a more significant impact on students in the growing phase of their bodies, which can lead to them not developing even or adequately becoming ill.

## 2.3 Behavioral Influence

TikTok can influence a person's mental state and subtly affect their behaviors. By blending the divisions between micro-celebrities and celebrities in the media field, Yang proposed that TikTok has the potential to negatively impact Chinese culture and interactions [7]. For example, to gain attention and become a celebrity, these people will make things for live streaming that are unsuitable for children to watch. The way Chinese internet celebrities become famous nowadays is mainly gathered in singing, performing, and eating. Nevertheless, some internet celebrities have also become big-traffic bloggers on TikTok through their flamboyant behaviors and language to gain the public's attention. Liu found that celebrities on TikTok can have millions of followers and even seriously influence the lives of their fans [8]. These celebrities on TikTok lead their fans to support them financially and act like them through their performances and short videos. These actions strongly influence students who have not yet formed a complete worldview and cause them to imitate the actions of these celebrities and use them in their daily lives.

Students' manners could be affected by TikTok, such as becoming rude and lacking politeness. Paramitha and Wardana studied the effect of TikTok on student politeness. They found that among students who use social media, excessive use of TikTok may harm students' personalities [9]. Their research revealed that social software users frequently engaged in actions including insulting parents and instructors, cursing, and interjecting during class. These adolescents indicated that they were used to it and did not realize that they were swearing or acting disrespectfully toward their seniors at the time of the survey. They had integrated these social networking habits into their daily life. Teachers must take the problem seriously even if there will still be some pupils who do not exhibit this behavior.

## 2.4 Positive Influence

The popularity of TikTok and the straightforwardness of its content make it more accessible to students. Although the three adverse effects of TikTok on students are presented above, there are also positive effects of TikTok. Bernard found that using TikTok videos in the classroom engaged

students' attention, increased their interest in learning, and improved their understanding [10]. Furthermore, TikTok is more familiar to students, so using TikTok in the classroom can increase their learning efficiency. Ilham also suggested that during Covid-19, using TikTok for learning was effective; students would be more motivated and would not get bored [11]. Students are drawn to familiar software and are curious about how teachers will use it to teach. At the same time, TikTok's extensive social approach can be utilized to move away from the traditional Chinese approach to education (teacher-centered) and allow more students to participate in the classroom.

However, Nichita suggests the opposite approach: TikTok is not applicable as an educational tool [12]. False information and offensive videos on the Internet can have a negative impact on pupils' development, and TikTok's content review is still not stringent enough. It's possible that other videos on TikTok will keep students from paying close attention to the lecture. It would be regarded irresponsible for instructors to expose their children to a TikTok atmosphere that may harm their mental health. TikTok has to introduce additional programs that are appropriate for learning if instructors wish to utilize it for teaching.

### 3. Recommendations for Teachers

TikTok can satisfy the psychological needs of people and subtly change their minds. The impact of TikTok on students is more profound than people can see. However, TikTok has not only adverse effects but also positive ones. TikTok has much interesting knowledge that people can learn from by viewing short videos. In China, many people learned how to cook and exercise through TikTok during COVID-19. TikTok brought a suitable pastime to the Chinese population during COVID-19 and added a fresh approach to learning for students.

As a teacher, it is vital to understand and consider these TikTok's impact on students. Teachers must add restrictions on using TikTok in schools and educate students on how to use TikTok properly. Below are some recommendations for teachers:

Firstly, teachers should offer courses related to cyber security in schools. As mentioned previously in Influence, TikTok can affect students and cause them all sorts of problems, but students do not notice that they are being affected. As a mentor, a teacher should be aware of their students' behaviors, psychology, and health and include lessons on internet safety in classes to guide students properly online.

Secondly, teachers should correct students' behaviors promptly. As the person who has spent the longest time in school with high school students, teachers know their students better. When TikTok influences a student's behaviors or language, the teacher should take it seriously and become the first to recognize the influence and guide the student to correct it. This creates a harmonious learning environment by eliminating such behaviors before students learn from and imitate each other.

Students in upper secondary school have difficulty communicating, and the only way to do this effectively is to find a way to do so. TikTok is a good entry point. Teachers can use TikTok to find out what their students are watching daily, be aware of what they are talking about, and guide them when needed. Using TikTok in the classroom also motivates and engages students. Finally, teachers should understand TikTok, be able to teach appropriately using it, and be role models.

### 4. Limitations

This paper summarizes the aspects of TikTok that students are influenced by from just four perspectives; in fact, the influence of these popular social networks goes far beyond these four aspects. The paper has not conducted any research to determine whether the findings are correct, and more research is needed to add to and correct the findings.

Secondly, the positive impact of TikTok on students seems to be less investigated and sketchier in this paper. This is probably because most researchers on the Internet focus on the threat of social networking software for young people and less on the advantages of TikTok. The use of TikTok in

education is likely to increase in the future, but the software still has many shortcomings that need to be corrected. When new software emerges, we should not only look at the disadvantages of the software but also take note of its advantages and use them.

## 5. Conclusion

Previous studies on TikTok mainly focus on students' online mental health and some of their behaviors. However, no study has focused on students using TikTok in the context of school curriculum. The trend is for social media to become an integral part of people's lives, and how well instructors use this new software is a new area that should be studied in the future. How teachers should apply the positive and negative effects of TikTok in their teaching is also a future direction that should be looked at in the future. Therefore, this paper can provide a literature review for the following study on how to address the impact of TikTok in education.

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