Exploring the Effects of TikTok Craze among Bangladeshi Adolescents Studying Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This research paper investigates the effects of the TikTok craze on adolescent students at the secondary level in Bangladesh. It aims to identify both positive and negative effects on their personal and academic lives. Following a convergent parallel mixed-method design, the study encompasses 8 divisions of Bangladesh. Two secondary schools from each division have been selected, totalling sixteen schools following a convenience sampling. In this study, the participants include students, guardians, educationists, and ICT experts. The participants have been chosen through purposive sampling. The Pikel scale has been used to identify the target sample. A semi-structured questionnaire has been sent to 80 students. Additionally, 16 guardians, 5 educationalists, and 5 ICT experts have been interviewed. The findings highlight that TikTok has positive effects such as fostering creativity, enhancing learning, building friendships and support networks, and developing digital skills. Conversely, the platform also poses significant negative effects, including threats to physical and mental health, exposure to violence and sexual harassment, spread of fake news and deep fakes, engagement in self-generated images and sexting, cyberbullying, and the promotion of harmful information and behaviors. The study emphasizes the necessity for balanced digital literacy and robust safety measures for adolescents.

Keywords: TikTok craze, Adolescents, Secondary school students, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

TikTok was firstly introduced by a Chinese company namely Bytedance in 2016 for video-sharing, lip-syncing and so on (Li, 2024). As 41% of its users are between the ages of 10 and 24, TikTok has demonstrated its ability to draw in the adolescent population. 90% of these TikTok users claim to use the app daily (Weimann & Masri, 2020). In terms of App Store and Google Play installs, TikTok has recently exceeded the number of likes of Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, and Snapchat. Consequently, TikTok has emerged as one of the global social media networks with the highest rate of growth (Wu, 2021). At the moment, there are roughly 700 million active users on TikTok, and that figure is steadily rising. There is no exception in the context of Bangladesh (Sarker, 2024; Ahmed, 2025). But it is a matter of great

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concern that no research study yet to be conducted in the milieu of Bangladesh. This is why our focus on this topic for the very first time in Bangladesh.

The most alarming aspect of TikTok is that it is more commonly used negatively than positively across the Asian continent, especially in Bangladesh (Farabi, 2021). According to a Dhaka Tribune story, Opu Bhai, a famous TikToker of Bangladesh, beat another adolescent boy onto the ground after the boy tried to cross the street where Opu Bhai and his crew were filming a video by stopping the street ("TikTok sensation 'Opu Bhai' gets bail," 2025). On that particular day, Opu Bhai beat the youngster because he thought the boy was involved in the TikTok shooting. Surprisingly, this episode also got viral.

On top of that, adolescents are turning violent, joining gangs, and engaging in illegal activity as a result of their preoccupation with TikTok. The law enforcement forces of Bangladesh recently detained some offenders who had been using TikTok to lure girls and women into being trafficked to other nations. One trafficker, known as TikTok-Redoy, lured teenage girls through TikTok by offering the opportunity of making them models for the TikTok platform (Alam, 2021). Nonetheless, they used to sell adolescent girls in some neighbouring countries' brothels, forcing the victims to work as sex workers by approaching them via TikTok (ibid). Addiction to TikTok has undoubtedly been a societal malady in our country. So, it is the urge of the present time to conduct a research on this vital issue from the landscape of the secondary level education of Bangladesh. Hence, this research study was going to address this issue accordingly.

However, past research indicates that using the TikTok app might cause a number of mental health problems, including body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, and narcissistic personalities (Jaffar et al., 2019). The use of this application has led to child pornography, online bullying, and a lack of parental involvement (Rinnasto, 2023; Sury et al., 2024). This study has looked closely at the causes of TikTok's sudden, huge success among adolescents as well as both its positive and negative aspects.

1.1. Problem Statement

As a social media platform, TikTok with an exceptional growth has acquired significant attention globally, especially from adolescents. Due to the availability of smartphones and internet access, TikTok has become popular especially among secondary school going students in Bangladesh. Although the platform has its advantages, for instance opportunities for creativity, social networking, and learning, serious concerns regarding academic performance, mental health, and inappropriate content have been raised (Maulida et al., 2015). News reports on adolescents in Bangladesh engaging in violent acts, and excessive screen time related to TikTok underscore the demand to understand its impacts more deeply. Despite such concerns, very few scholars have looked into how TikTok is affecting the personal and academic life of Bangladeshi adolescents studying secondary schools.

The existing literature mostly focuses on a global perspective, leaving a contextual gap for the implications on the society in Bangladesh and its education. Parents, educators, and policymakers are left looking for answers on how to weigh the positive and negative effects

of excessive TikTok use without sufficient evidence-based insights. Therefore, a systematic investigation into the effects of TikTok craze is imperative to ascertain its use with secondary school going students in Bangladesh.

1.2. Significance of the Study

This study is quite important because it looks at a relevant issue: the craze for TikTok among secondary school students in Bangladesh. Through examining both the positive and negative effects, the study helps us understand how TikTok affects young adolescents' personal, social, and academic lives. The findings will facilitate educators by showing the hurdles of keeping students focused in a world full of digital distractions. It also points out ways to utilize TikTok as a tool for creativity in adolescents' academic journey.

For parents and guardians, the research offers insights into the hidden dangers adolescents face online while using TikTok. This information can help them monitor and guide their children more effectively. Policymakers and education authorities can also use the results to create digital literacy programs for school going children, containing guidelines for safe use of social media.

In addition, this study adds to the broader dialogue about the use of social media by the adolescent population in South Asia, addressing a genuine research gap in Bangladesh. Ultimately, the study aims to help secondary school going adolescents use TikTok responsibly, making the most of its benefits socially and academically while reducing threats.

1.3. Research Objectives

The broader objective of this study was to explore the actual scenario of using TikTok among the adolescent students of secondary level education (grades 6-10) in Bangladesh in a holistic approach.The specific objectives of this study have been stated below that were followed in this context -

RO 1: to identify the positive effects of TikTok on secondary students' personal life and academic life.

RO 2: to figure out the negative effects of TikTok on secondary students' personal life and academic life.

1.4. Limitation of the Study

Though this study offers noteworthy insights into how TikTok affects adolescent studying in secondary schools in Bangladesh, some limitations need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the study used convenience sampling while selecting two schools from each division, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, the findings cannot be applied to all secondary students in the country. Secondly, data were collected from only a few schools, which might not completely reflect the range of student experience from different socio-economic and geographic strata. Thirdly, self-reported data collected from students, guardians, and experts may have been biased by social desirability. There was a chance that the participants might not have been entirely open about their experiences, especially with sensitive topics such as

exposure or addiction to inappropriate content. Lastly, this study did not deeply scrutinize parents' and teachers' viewpoints. Future studies with larger, randomized samples and a longer time frame could yield more useful and widely applicable findings.

2. Theoretical Framework

Technological Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Fred Davis (Davis, 1989), was considered the theoretical framework in this very study. This model exceptionally explains how individuals accept and adopt new technology. This model talks about behavioural intension of individuals to adopt new technology and its actual use, mentioning "perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use" (Davis, 1989, p. 319).
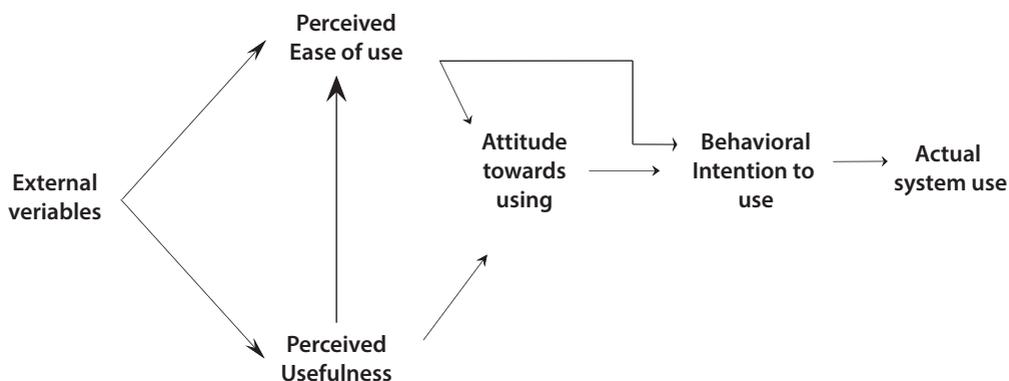

Figure 1: Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989)

3.Conceptual Framework

In order to connect all aspects of an investigation, such as problem definitions, purpose, literati review, technique, and data collecting, a conceptual framework is employed in research (Ara et al., 2016). A conceptual framework is established to direct the conceptualization of this study on the basis of the literature review, theoretical review, research objectives, and important factors. The framework is displayed below in a tabular and graphic manner along with these:
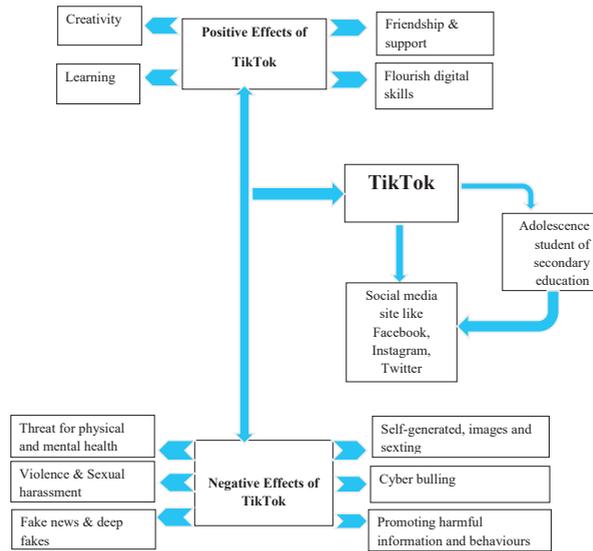
Creativity

Positive Effects of TikTok

Friendship & support

Learning

Flourish digital skills

TikTok

Adolescence student of secondary education

Social media site like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter

Threat for physical and mental health

Violence & Sexual harassment

Fake news & deep fakes

Negative Effects of TikTok

Self-generated, images and sexting

Cyber bulling

Promoting harmful information and behaviours

Figure 2: Conceptual framework of the research study (Source: Adapted from Shaha et al., 2024)

4. Methodology

This study has employed the convergent parallel mixed method design, as qualitative and quantitative data for this research project were collected in parallel. In this research, how both kinds of data were dealt with is shown in the following figure:
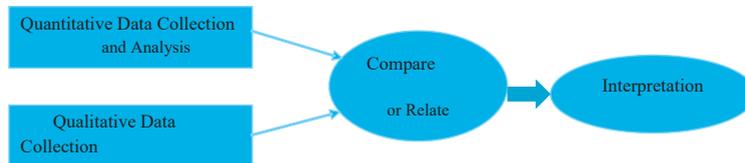
Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative Data Collection

Compare or Relate

Interpretation

Figure 3: Convergent parallel mixed-method design followed by the study (Source: Adapted from Creswell, 2012)

All Eight (08) divisions of Bangladesh were the respected area of the study. Following a convenience sampling, two schools from each division were selected, for a total of sixteen secondary mainstream schools. A nationwide research conducted in Bangladesh involves severe challenges, such as geographical vastness, limited research funding, and time constraints. Considering this obstacle, convenience sampling allowed the researchers to secure cooperation from schools that were easily accessible. Since the individual schools were conveniently selected, the strategy of choosing two schools from each division ensured that the study captured wide variety of perspectives to a great extent from different regional, cultural, and socio-economic contexts within Bangladesh. Students, guardians, educationalists and ICT experts were selected using a technique called purposive sampling. As the research questions were specifically focused on the effects of TikTok on adolescent users,

it was therefore methodologically sound to deliberately select participants who had relevant experience and exposure to TikTok. The qualitative component of the study demanded an in-depth understanding from relevant stakeholders. The guardians were selected to provide perspectives on behavioral changes, screen time, and parental concerns whereas critical views on the academic impacts and observed behaviors were captured from educationists. In addition, ICT experts were selected for their technical and societal-level understanding of digital trends, threats, and potentials. Pikel scale (a customized psychological measure) was used to identify target samples (who have usually used TikTok apps). Using this scale, targeted students were identified, and a semi-structured questionnaire was distributed to them in order to collect the data required for the study. Besides, sixteen guardians, five educationalists and ICT experts were also interviewed for this research. The whole sample design of the study is depicted below:
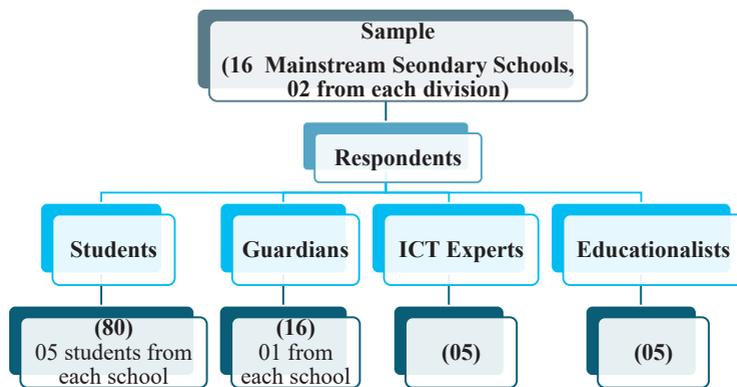

Figure 4: Sample design of the study (Source: Adapted from Shaha et al., 2024)

5. Results and Discussion

The research revealed some positive effects of TikTok on adolescent students which are: 67% of students utilize TikTok for listening to music whether 63% of students use TikTok for entertainment purposes, Knowing New Trends and Formation (68%), Making New Friends and Community (80%), Source of Entertainment and Amusement (58%), Learning Islamic Hadith and Morality (57%). In the similar vein, the research findings of Tang et al. (2020), Oktarini et al. (2022) found the positive aspects of TikTok, for example, a platform of creativity, self-expression and edutainment etc.

The detailed analysis of the data explored following positive effects of TikTok availed by the adolescent students of the secondary level education in Bangladesh (See Figure 5 for more details).

Positive effects of TikTok on secondary students of Bangladesh

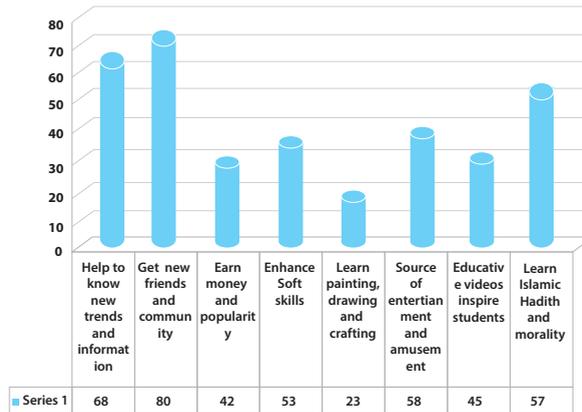|	Help to know new trends and information	Get new friends and community	Earn money and popularity	Enhance Soft skills	Learn painting, drawing and crafting	Source of entertainment and amusement	Educative videos inspire students	Learn Islamic Hadith and morality
Series 1	68	80	42	53	23	58	45	57

Figure 5: Positive effects of TikTok on secondary students of Bangladesh

Figure 5 provides a visual representation of the various benefits that TikTok brings to secondary students in the country. These positive effects include the followings:

Knowing New Trends and Formation (68%): TikTok offers a platform for students to stay updated with the latest trends and formations in various fields, including fashion, music, and pop culture. This exposure fosters cultural awareness and relevance among the youth. ICT Expert mentioned-

"Various digital platforms open avenues for the students and digital kids to explore the new trends and latest information about educational technology which make students more advanced than the other aged people."

Making New Friends and Community (80%): TikTok serves as a social networking tool, allowing students to connect with peers who share similar interests and values. The platform facilitates the formation of supportive communities, fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie among students.

Earning Money and Community (42%): A significant percentage of students report using TikTok as a means of generating income, either through sponsored content, affiliate marketing, or participation in creator programs. This aspect not only provides financial benefits but also promotes entrepreneurial skills and community engagement.

Enhancing Soft Skills (53%): TikTok encourages the development of soft skills such as communication, creativity, and problem-solving. Through content creation and interaction with others, students hone these skills, which are essential for personal and professional growth.

Earning through Painting, Drawing, and Crafting (23%): TikTok offers a platform for students to showcase their artistic talents and it also potentially monetizes their creations. This aspect empowers students to pursue their passions and turn their hobbies into sources of income.

Source of Entertainment and Amusement (58%): TikTok provides endless opportunities for entertainment and amusement through short-form videos, challenges, and interactive features. It serves as a source of relaxation and enjoyment for students, helping to alleviate stress and boredom.

Educative Videos Inspire Students (45%): Educational content on TikTok inspires students to learn and explore new topics, ranging from academic subjects to personal development. These videos spark curiosity and motivation, encouraging students to engage in self-directed learning. Educationalist supported this by saying:

"In this digital age students get the opportunity to enjoy the inspirational quotes from different renowned speakers like Jack Ma, Bill gates etc. to motivate them. Short videos from the TikTok usher this scope very often with enjoyment."

Learning Islamic Hadith and Morality (57%): TikTok serves as a platform for Islamic education, with many students utilizing it to learn about Islamic Hadith and morality. This aspect reflects the diverse interests and religious affiliations within the student community. In this regard one of the respondents said that;

"I can learn the rules of namaz by listening to Islamic waj from TikTok. I prefer to listen to Mizanur Rahman Azhari waj."

Research data shows the diverse positive effects of TikTok on secondary students in Bangladesh encompassing social, educational, and economic dimensions. It underscores the platform's role as a catalyst for personal growth, creativity, and community building among the youth. On the contrary, TikTok also has negative effects.
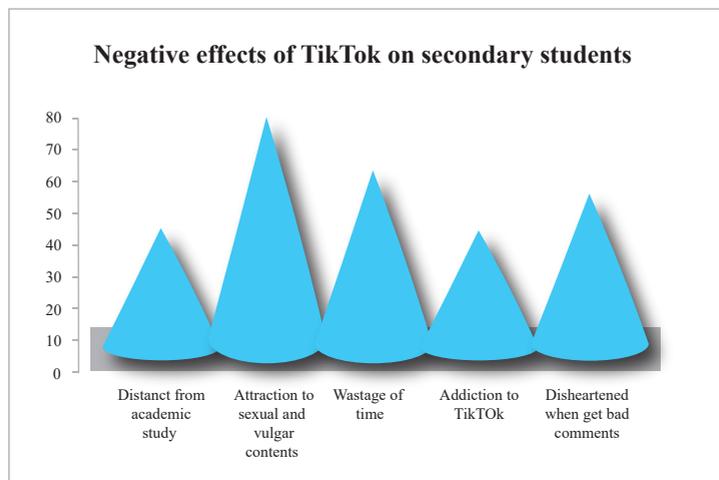

Figure 6: Negative effects of TikTok on secondary students

Figure 6 deals with the 'Negative Effects of TikTok on Secondary Students' which presents data on various detrimental impacts that TikTok usage can have on secondary school students. Each segment of the chart represents a specific negative effect, along with the percentage of students who experience or are affected by it.

Firstly, 37% of secondary students report being distracted from their academic studies due to TikTok usage. This suggests that the platform serves as a significant source of distraction, potentially leading to decreased focus and productivity in school-related tasks. One of the guardians reported that-

"Their children use TikTok indiscriminately without being concerned about their studies."

Secondly, a striking 72% of students admit to being attracted to sexual and vulgar content on TikTok. This finding raises concerns about the exposure of young users to inappropriate or explicit material, which can have negative effects on their attitudes, behaviors, and overall well-being. One of the students confessed,

"Yes, I was scrolling and suddenly some adult/negative videos came."

The educationalist also opined, *"TikTok is often addictive and sometimes there are vulgar contents available in the feed."*

Furthermore, 54% of students perceive TikTok as waste of time. This indicates a widespread perception among users that excessive time spent on the platform detracts from more productive or meaningful activities, such as studying, socializing, or pursuing hobbies.

Additionally, 34% of secondary students report experiencing addiction to TikTok. This suggests that the platform can contribute to addictive behaviors and patterns of excessive usage, potentially leading to negative consequences such as neglect of responsibilities, social isolation, and mental health issues.

Lastly, 49% of students express feeling disheartened when receiving negative comments on TikTok. This highlights the impact of cyber bullying and online criticism on the mental and emotional well-being of young users, potentially leading to feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, and low self-esteem.

This research figured out that TikTok usage has negative effects on secondary school students, ranging from academic distraction and exposure to inappropriate content to addictive behaviors and emotional distress. Studies like Sha and Dhong (2021), Oktarini et al. (2022), Li et al. (2023), Sy et al. (2024) also reported negative effects of TikTok on adolscents, such as depression, violation of privacy, establishment of an inappropriate beauty standard, lack of association with people, sexual harassment etc.

The findings highlight the importance of promoting responsible and healthy digital habits among young users, as well as the need for parents, educators, and policymakers to address and mitigate the negative impacts of social media on adolescent development.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the research findings and the discussion on emerging factors resulting from the evidence of gathered data, the researcher has formulated recommendations for future actions to achieve greater impact. Concerned stakeholders are advocated to contemplate the following recommendations-

- Guardians should control and monitor the usage of Tiktok;

- If students will use TikTok it should be focused on promoting positivity, creativity and creating good video content;

- TikTok may be as one of the entertaining medium but it should not be the only source of entertainment;

- Students should be avoided vulgar and faceless videos;

- Encourage students to balance their online activities with offline pursuits, such as sports, hobbies, and face-to-face interactions;

- Collaborate with TikTok and other social media platforms to promote digital well-being initiatives and implement features that prioritize user safety and mental health.

The research on the TikTok craze among adolescent students of secondary level education in Bangladesh sheds light on the multifaceted nature of their engagement with this popular social media platform. The research highlights the diverse effects of TikTok on adolescent students which have both positive and negative effects.

As a whole, the research underscores the urgent need for further investigation and action to address the complex challenges posed by the TikTok craze among adolescent students in Bangladesh. By building on these findings and implementing evidence-based strategies, we can empower adolescents to navigate the digital landscape more effectively and promote their overall well-being in the digital age.

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