



Exploring the Effect of the Social Media on Academic Performance of the University Students

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Abstract: This study examines how TikTok usage affects university students' academic performance. Data were gathered through a questionnaire, with a sample of 400 students from public and private universities in Faisalabad, Pakistan. The study's primary goals were to assess the level of TikTok use and students' academic performance at the university level. SPSS version 21 was used for analysis, employing descriptive statistics, independent sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and regression analysis. The findings showed that TikTok usage is widespread among students, who generally have a good academic standing. There was a direct correlation between TikTok usage and academic performance, with regression findings showing that a one-unit increase in TikTok use leads to a 0.50 unit rise in academic performance.

Keywords: Social media, Academic performance, University students

1. Introduction

Education plays a vital role in an individual's life, and technology has profoundly transformed the educational landscape (Yélamos, 2022). Today, around 2.71 billion people worldwide use smartphones. According to Tetteng (2024) In the past two decades, social media platforms have quickly spread worldwide. A survey revealed that nearly 4 billion individuals use at least one social media platform on a regular basis, and university students are increasingly drawn to TikTok (Wang, 2024). The platform's appeal lies in its ability to present relatable creators and simplify complex information into short, engaging videos (Adawiyah, 2020). It is a social media app for creating and sharing short videos, allowing users to express themselves and connect with a broader community (Southern, 2021). TikTok's popularity extends even to rural areas in Pakistan, as its visually captivating content requires minimal language proficiency. Despite being banned four times, TikTok had over 15 million active users in Pakistan by 2023 (Abdul-Basit, 2023). Short videos on TikTok media platform transform the learning process for acquiring creative skills by providing visually engaging content and interactive features that connect users with others who share similar interests (Scherr, 2021). The TikTok app offers both benefits and drawbacks for students. While some students create educational accounts, the platform can also become a source of distraction, diverting attention from their academic responsibilities (Sara, 2020). However, it is important to emphasize the app's positive impact on students' academics (Rahel, 2024).

This research aims to explore the effect of TikTok usage on students' academic performance at university level. This study will help students to understand TikTok's academic value, guiding them to use it wisely for

creative purposes, while also aiding institutions and policymakers in developing guidelines and monitoring content to uphold effective and creative standards at the university level.

1.1 Research Questions

Here are some research questions regarding the impact of TikTok on the academic performance of university level students:

- 1) What is the level of use of Tiktok among students of university level?
- 2) What is the academic level of students of university level?
- 3) What is the impact of use of Tiktok on the academic performance of students at university level?

2. Literature Review

The majority of adults engage with various social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and TikTok, with TikTok rapidly becoming one of the most popular (Al-Marroof, 2021). Globally, the platform is predominantly used by young adults and preteens (Qureshi, 2022). Academically, TikTok has drawn significant interest from scholars, leading to a wealth of research from different perspectives (Nema, 2023). Launched in September 2016 by the Chinese company ByteDance, the lip-syncing video app was initially called Douyin, but was later rebranded as TikTok for international markets. According to Nath (2021) Young adults make up the majority of TikTok's global user base (Amin, 2023). Since its introduction, TikTok's growth has surged, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic (Montag, 2019). Its use has had various effects on students, particularly in terms of time management (Mhalla, 2020). TikTok has become a popular platform for both entertainment and learning among students (Azman, 2021). However, the wide variety of short videos can result in varying content quality, which may influence students' behaviors and time management skills (Merga, 2021).

According to Martoredjo (2023) TikTok's addictive nature can cause students to spend extended periods on the platform, which may negatively impact their time management skills. Similar effects have been observed where students lose track of time and become easily distracted while trying to focus on academic tasks or complete assignments (Kaplan, 2016). Scherr and Wang (2021) found that TikTok usage could impair college students' concentration in class and hinder their ability to complete assignments. It potentially leads to a decline in academic performance with frequent use (Liu & Osburg, 2021). its addictive nature may affect their time management skills if overused (Baquee, 2021). Excessive use of social media, particularly TikTok, can hinder students' ability to focus on completing assignments independently, and children addicted to their phones often struggle to seek proper guidance (Kwon & Han, 2016). Research has revealed a negative relationship between TikTok usage and academic performance, with students who spent more time on the platform tending to have lower GPAs (Khlaif & Salha, 2021). The study also indicated that increased time spent on TikTok was linked to procrastination, ultimately resulting in poorer academic outcomes (Gao, 2023).

The app's brief 30-second videos offer a refreshing break from daily routines, providing students with quick access to a vast range of content (Fan & Beh, 2023). These short clips keep them engaged and broaden their perspectives by exposing them to global events and diverse topics (Escamilla, 2021). A recent study from the University of Denmark highlighted TikTok's ability to capture attention on various subjects quickly, serving as a temporary distraction from homework or schoolwork while adding variety to students' lives (Chen, 2017). The app's personalized algorithm makes it an entertaining and engaging platform for students (Erdoğan, 2024). Research also shows that while keeping phones away can enhance academic performance, using TikTok in moderation can offer unique educational advantages (Liu, 2024). The platform's short, interactive videos make learning enjoyable, aligning with micro-learning and nano-learning approaches (Darmawan, 2019). This format boosts student motivation, creativity, and curiosity in an engaging environment (Bhandari & Bimo, 2020). TikTok features a wide range of content, including educational videos on subjects like science, technology, and art (Chen, 2017). These concise videos deliver focused information bursts that can enhance the learning process (Anggi, 2021). While TikTok has become a popular platform among students for both leisure and learning. TikTok also functions as a powerful tool for learning and growth (Bhandari, 2022). Through social learning dynamics, it promotes interaction among learners, allowing them to engage with peers, experts, and role models, which fosters knowledge acquisition and skill development. (Barry, 2024). Users can explore a wide range of topics, including marketing, finance, leadership, career development, music, dance, literature, and history (Bataka, 2024).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research employs a quantitative approach, utilizing systematic methods to collect numerical or mathematical data. A descriptive research design is used, with data gathered through a questionnaire and a descriptive survey method.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The research targets BS, MPhil, and PhD students from social sciences, physical sciences, and management sciences departments at public and private universities in Faisalabad. A sample of 400 students was chosen from two public and two private universities.

Table 1: Sample Distribution Depending on Background Variables.

Background	Variables	N=400
Gender	Male	181 (45.3%)
	Female	219 (54.8%)
Age	18-22	174 (43.5%)
	22-26	107 (26.8%)
	26-30	73 (18.3%)
	30+	46 (11.5%)
Faculty	Social Sciences	132 (33.0%)
	Physical Sciences	102 (25.5%)
	Others	166 (41.5%)
Degree Level	BS	259 (64.8%)
	M.Phil.	85 (21.3%)
	Ph.D.	56 (14.0%)
University	GCUF	125 (31.3%)
	UAF	96 (24.0%)
	TUF	77 (19.3%)
Sector	RIUF	102 (25.5%)
	Public	223 (55.8%)
	Private	177 44.3%)

3.3 Sampling Technique

The researcher collected data from 400 students attending both public and private universities in Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. The study included both male and female participants, categorized into three faculties: Social Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Others. The participants ranged in age from 18 to over 30 and were either BS, MPhil, or PhD students. A non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenient sampling, was employed for this research.

3.4 Instrument

The TikTok questionnaire was developed by integrating items from three standardized questionnaires, totaling 35 items across categories like usefulness, time, enjoyment, addiction, content type, and engagement. Items were sourced from Carpenter & Toma-Harrold (2024), Qin et al. (2022), and Tuck & Thompson (2024). The researcher conducted confirmatory factor analysis on the Use of TikTok questionnaire using LISREL 8.8, setting the threshold at 0.3. No items had loadings below this value, so none were removed from the questionnaire. Researcher adopted the items and responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1__Strongly Disagree to 5__Strongly Agree).

Table 2: Use of TikTok Questionnaire: Overview, Scope, Item and Example Items.

Subscale	Scope	Serial# (Final scale)	Item	Example item	Reliability
Usefulness	The beneficial aspects of TikTok app.	of 1-7	7	I become more creative by watching educational Tiktok videos.	0.82

Time	The amount of time spent on 8-13 app.	6	Time goes by very quickly when watching TikTok videos.	0.83
Enjoyment	Level of enjoyment using TikTok app.	3	I think that using TikTok is enjoyable.	0.80
Addiction	Level of addiction by TikTok app.	8	After frequently using the Tiktok application, I will become a lazy person.	0.81
Content Type	Variety of content on Tiktok app.	4	I watch content that is related to social justice.	0.86
Level of Engagement	Student's engagement level on TikTok app.	7	I comment supportively or like/"react" supportively on other's post(s).	0.77

3.5 Data Gathering

Data were collected manually with the consent of university heads. The researcher visited two public and two private universities and also shared a Google Form link with students via WhatsApp after receiving approval from the relevant authorities.

3.6 Data Analysis

The researcher applied both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics measured frequencies, means, and standard deviations, while inferential statistics included t-tests, one-way ANOVA, correlation, and regression, all conducted using SPSS software.

4. Findings and Discussions

Table 3: Use of Tiktok Factors: A Descriptive Analysis of Usefulness.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
4. I catch up on news or current events by using Tiktok	400	1.00	5.00	3.10	1.31
3. I use TikTok to understand youth culture.	400	1.00	5.00	3.09	1.26
6. I become more creative by watching educational Tiktok videos	400	1.00	5.00	3.00	1.32
2. I become more creative in digital field by making Tiktok videos	400	1.00	5.00	2.92	1.29
5. By watching Tiktok videos I become more innovative	400	1.00	5.00	2.88	1.27
2. TikTok use enhances my knowledge of instructional practices	400	1.00	5.00	2.62	1.21
1. TikTok helps me learn and understand course content	400	1.00	5.00	2.39	1.23
Usefulness	400	1.00	5.00	2.86	0.89

Table 4.1 presents the item-by-item means regarding participants' perceived usefulness of TikTok. The highest mean score ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.35$) corresponds to item 4, "Time goes by very quickly when watching TikTok videos." In contrast, the lowest mean score ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.23$) is for item 1, "When it is available, I plan to use TikTok frequently for my studies." This suggests that TikTok is more associated with time passing quickly than with regular use for academic purposes.

Table 4: Use of Tiktok Factors: A Descriptive Analysis of Time.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
4. Time goes by very quickly when watching TikTok videos.	400	1.00	5.00	3.69	1.35
5. I tend to lose track of time when watching TikTok videos.	400	1.00	5.00	3.54	1.32
6. I tend to experience an insentient sense to time when watching TikTok videos.	400	1.00	5.00	3.45	1.11
3. If I had access to TikTok now, I assume I would use it.	400	1.00	5.00	2.99	1.29
2. When it is available, I plan to use TikTok frequently during the semester.	400	1.00	5.00	2.72	1.27
1. When it is available, I plan to use TikTok frequently for my studies.	400	1.00	5.00	2.30	1.23
Time	400	1.00	5.00	3.12	0.83

Table 4 shows that the highest mean score ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.35$) is for "Time goes by quickly when watching TikTok videos," while the lowest ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.23$) is for using TikTok regularly for studies. This indicates TikTok is more associated with passing time than academic use.

Table 5: Use of Tiktok Factors: A Descriptive Analysis of Enjoyment.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
3. I think that watching videos on TikTok is interesting.	400	1.00	5.00	3.47	1.19
1. I think that using TikTok is enjoyable.	400	1.00	5.00	3.46	1.32
2. Videos on TikTok provide me endless surprising experiences.	400	1.00	5.00	3.40	1.17
Enjoyment	400	1.00	5.00	3.44	1.04

Table 5 shows the highest mean score ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.19$) for finding TikTok videos interesting, while the lowest ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.17$) is for experiencing surprises. This suggests TikTok is seen as more interesting than surprising.

Table 4.4

Use of Tiktok Factors: A Descriptive Analysis of Addiction.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
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1. After frequently using the tiktok application, I will become a lazy person.	400	1.00	5.00	3.33	1.37
8. I scrolled aimlessly through my feeds.	400	1.00	5.00	3.31	1.32
2. I realize that not everyone likes the tiktok application, but you still use it.	400	1.00	5.00	3.22	1.28
7. I try to spend less time on TikTok but the efforts were in vain.	400	1.00	5.00	3.09	1.35
6. I find that I have been hooking on longer and longer.	400	1.00	5.00	3.07	1.26
5. I can't help turning on even when I'm not planning on using it.	400	1.00	5.00	2.88	1.28
4. I feel missing something after stopping watching videos on TikTok for a certain period.	400	1.00	5.00	2.83	1.26
3. The idea of using TikTok app comes as the first thought on mind when wake up each morning.	400	1.00	5.00	2.54	1.26
Addiction	400	1.00	5.00	3.03	0.86

Table 4.4 shows the highest mean score ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.37$) is for TikTok contributing to laziness, while the lowest ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.27$) is for TikTok being the first thought upon waking. This suggests TikTok is more associated with laziness than being a primary focus in the morning.

Table 6: Use of Tiktok Factors: A Descriptive Analysis of Content Type.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
4. I watch content about different perspectives of people.	400	1.00	5.00	3.49	1.21
3. I watch content that is humorous.	400	1.00	5.00	3.43	1.13
2. I watch content that is related to social justice.	400	1.00	5.00	3.13	1.19
1. I watch content on trending education-related topic.	400	1.00	5.00	2.85	1.33
Content Type	400	1.00	5.00	3.22	0.93

Table 6 shows the highest mean score ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.22$) is for watching content with diverse perspectives, while the lowest ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.34$) is for watching trending education-related content. This indicates content with diverse perspectives is more popular than educational content.

Table 7: Use of Tiktok Factors: A Descriptive Analysis of Level of Engagement.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
7. While posting, I keep some of my own videos private on TikTok.	400	1.00	5.00	3.46	1.45
6. I keep my TikTok account personal.	400	1.00	5.00	3.41	1.41
4. I look how many people share my posted content on TikTok.	400	1.00	5.00	3.01	1.36
3. I look how many people follow me on TikTok app.	400	1.00	5.00	2.97	1.36
2. I look how many people comment me on my post of TikTok.	400	1.00	5.00	2.87	1.40
1. I comment supportively or like/"react" supportively on other's posts.	400	1.00	5.00	2.78	1.38
5. I make/share a post about something negative that is personally about me.	400	1.00	5.00	2.56	1.32
Level of Engagement	400	1.00	5.00	3.01	0.90

In Table 7 the highest mean score ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.46$) is for keeping personal videos private, while the lowest ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.32$) is for sharing negative personal posts. This suggests users prefer to keep their content private rather than share negative experiences.

Table 8: Descriptive Analysis of the factors of Use of TikTok

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Enjoyment	400	1.00	5.00	3.44	1.04
Content Type	400	1.00	5.00	3.22	0.93
Time	400	1.00	5.00	3.12	0.83
Addiction	400	1.00	5.00	3.03	0.86
Level of Engagement	400	1.00	5.00	3.01	0.90
Usefulness	400	1.00	5.00	2.86	0.89
Use of TikTok	400	1.00	5.00	3.11	0.62

Table 8 shows the highest mean score ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.04$) for enjoyment, while the lowest ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 0.89$) is for usefulness. This indicates students enjoy TikTok more than using it for practical purposes. Overall, the average use of TikTok ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.62$) suggests most students use the app at a moderate level.

Table 9: A descriptive analysis of academic performance of students.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
CGPA	400	2.70	3.92	3.48	0.25

Table 9 indicates that the students' academic level ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.25$) is relatively high.

Table 10: Impact of Use of TikTok on Academic Performance.

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² <i>adjusted</i>
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	0.50 ^a	0.25	0.25		
	<i>Unstandardized</i>		<i>Standardized</i>		
Coefficient	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(Constant)	3.32	0.06		55.33	0.00
Use of TikTok	0.35	0.02	0.50	17.50	0.00
ANOVA	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>df</i>		
Regression	2.75	2.75	1		0.00 ^b
Residual	8.25	0.02	398		
Total	11.00		399		

Table 10 shows the impact of TikTok use on academic performance, with an R-squared value of 0.25, indicating that TikTok use accounts for 25% of the variation in students' academic performance at the university level. ANOVA results ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$) confirm a significant relationship between TikTok use and academic performance. The coefficient ($B = 0.50$) suggests that each additional unit of TikTok use leads to a 0.50 unit increase in academic performance, and the positive beta value reflects a positive relationship between the two variables.

5. Conclusion

The academic performance of university students is generally strong, with many students frequently using the TikTok app. Their TikTok usage is notably high. A direct relationship exists between TikTok usage and academic performance at the higher education level. TikTok usage accounts for a 25% change in academic performance. An increase in TikTok use by one unit is associated with an improvement in academic performance. This suggests that higher usage positively impacts students' academic success.

5.1 Recommendations

- Create and distribute guidelines for students on how to use TikTok effectively and responsibly to enhance academic benefits.
- Universities should establish courses or workshops that utilize TikTok for educational purposes, motivating students to produce informative and educational content.

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