

Beyond The Scroll: The Role of TikTok in Shaping Social Opinions among Students

Alexis Ray R. Alisna¹, Bradly N. Bayet², Yurie June D. Lim³, Juris Rita M. Seclot⁴, Donna Mae R. Ricaborda⁵

^{1,2,3}Student of the Institute of Arts and Sciences, Tangub City Global College Maloro, Tangub City, Philippines

^{4,5}Faculty of the Institute of Arts and Sciences, Tangub City Global College Maloro, Tangub City, Philippines

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.1013COM0027>

Received: 31 May 2026; Accepted: 06 June 2026; Published: 23 June 2026

ABSTRACT

In an age where a single swipe can influence how young people think, feel, and respond to social realities, TikTok has emerged as a powerful platform shaping public awareness and opinion. This study examined how TikTok shapes the social opinions, awareness, and emotional engagement of AB Communication students at Tangub City Global College (TCGC). Employing a qualitative descriptive narrative research design, the study involved fifteen (15) purposively selected Communication students who were active TikTok users and regularly engaged with social-issue content. Data were gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews using a researcher-developed interview guide validated by experts to ensure clarity and alignment with the study objectives. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and shared experiences among participants. Findings revealed that TikTok significantly influenced students' understanding of social issues, transforming the platform from a source of entertainment into a medium for learning, awareness, and opinion formation. Emotionally engaging and credible content fostered empathy, encouraged critical thinking, and motivated students to participate in discussions, advocacy, and small acts of social responsibility. The study concludes that TikTok functions as a powerful digital platform that enhances media literacy, social awareness, and civic engagement among Communication students when used responsibly, underscoring the importance of critical digital engagement in academic and professional contexts.

Keywords: TikTok, Social Media Influence, Social Awareness, Communication Students, Qualitative Research

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE

Background of the Study

In the digital age, social media revolutionized how individuals communicated, accessed information, and formed opinions on a wide range of societal issues. Among the most prominent platforms, TikTok emerged as a cultural phenomenon, particularly among younger generations. Initially designed for short-form entertainment content, TikTok evolved into a dynamic space where users engaged with political discourse, social justice movements, lifestyle trends, and personal narratives. Driven by a powerful algorithm that curated personalized content, TikTok not only entertained but also contributed substantially to shaping public opinion and influencing societal perspectives.

For communication students such as those at TCGC, TikTok's relevance extended far beyond casual use. As future media professionals, journalists, and content creators, they were immersed in digital environments where they inevitably encountered content related to pressing social issues. The platform's algorithmic design presented users with content tailored to their interactions, shaping their perspectives by reinforcing themes aligned with their interests and behaviors. While this personalization enhanced user engagement, it also raised concerns about information authenticity, ideological echo chambers, and the spread of misinformation. According to Schellewald (2023), TikTok's rapid rise and widespread adoption among Generation Z cemented its dominance in the modern media ecosystem.

Recent studies showed that individuals developed self-perceptions and formed opinions based on observable behaviors and environments heavily influenced by social media. R  ther, Jahn, and Marksteiner (2023) found that social comparison and influencer activity significantly mediated users' self-esteem and identity, driving them to tailor their behavior and content to gain approval from others.

In this context, TikTok emerged as a platform that not only entertained but also contributed to identity construction, opinion formation, and communication behavior among its users. Despite TikTok's growing influence on digital discourse, limited research has been conducted on its specific impact on communication students' social opinions. Key questions regarding TikTok's impact include whether the platform fosters critical thinking and exposure to diverse viewpoints or primarily reinforces existing biases through algorithmic filtering. Additionally, there is a need to explore how this personalized content consumption affects students' awareness, attitudes, and understanding of social issues. These concerns underscored the need to examine how TikTok shaped the social perceptions of communication students. As digital literacy became increasingly vital in academic and professional environments, understanding these influences helped students navigate media landscapes more critically and responsibly.

This study aimed to examine how TikTok shaped the social opinions of communication students at TCGC. Specifically, it investigated how the platform's content affected their awareness, perspectives, and engagement with current social issues. The goal was to determine whether TikTok encouraged critical thinking or primarily reinforced preexisting beliefs. The findings from this research were intended to enhance students' media literacy and guide educators in developing curricula that promoted critical digital engagement among future media practitioners.

Conceptual Framework

This study adopts an emergent conceptual framework derived from the major themes and subthemes identified in the analysis of participants' responses. The framework explains how TikTok content influences Communication students' learning, social awareness, emotional responses, perspective formation, and civic engagement regarding social issues. It is based on the participants' lived experiences and reflects how contemporary short-form video platforms are used as informal learning and social engagement tools.

At the core of the framework is TikTok content exposure, which includes political, environmental, mental health, advocacy, and human-centered videos produced by credible and relatable creators. The first major theme, TikTok as a Digital Platform for Learning and Social Awareness, highlights how students use TikTok to access information efficiently and develop social consciousness. This theme defines TikTok's function as an accessible, informal learning environment where students acquired knowledge and awareness of societal issues. It includes two subthemes: TikTok as an Accessible Source for Learning, emphasizing quick knowledge acquisition, media literacy, verification, and critical evaluation; and TikTok as a Tool for Awareness of Social Issues, highlighting how engaging and relatable content fosters reflective thinking and social consciousness.

The second major theme, TikTok as a Catalyst for Awareness, Emotional Engagement, and Civic Participation, illustrates how the platform transforms knowledge into emotional and behavioral responses. This theme is defined as TikTok's ability to not only inform but also evoke empathy, emotional reflection, and motivation to act responsibly toward social issues. Its four subthemes include Influence on Social Awareness and Perspective-Shaping, showing how exposure broadens understanding of societal realities; Preference for Credible and Emotionally Relatable Content, highlighting the importance of authentic storytelling with trustworthy information; Emotional Impact of Social Issues in Short-Form Videos, demonstrating how narratives about real-life struggles foster empathy, compassion, and emotional awareness; and Civic Engagement, reflecting how students translate awareness and emotions into actions such as sharing information, volunteering, advocacy, and participation in online/offline discussions.

The framework positions these themes as a processual relationship, wherein exposure to TikTok content triggers cognitive responses such as learning, critical thinking, and perspective-shaping, as explained by Pan (2024). At the same time, this exposure elicits emotional responses, including empathy, compassion, and heightened social awareness, which Mirowska (2023) identified as crucial to audience engagement with social media content.

These cognitive and emotional responses collectively lead to behavioral and civic outcomes, including active participation in discussions, advocacy, volunteering, and responsible social behavior, as observed by Pramesthi and Priastuty (2024). Ultimately, the framework highlights how sustained engagement with TikTok enhances social awareness, informed perspectives, media literacy, and civic engagement, supporting Nor et al.'s (2025) argument that digital platforms increasingly function as spaces for learning, social reflection, and civic participation in contemporary digital society.

Statement of the Problem

The study aims to examine the influence of TikTok on the social opinions of communication students at Tangub City Global College (TCGC).

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the role of TikTok towards communication students?
2. How does TikTok influence their social views and opinions?

Significance of the Study

This study aimed to provide valuable insights into how TikTok influences the social opinions of communication students at TCGC. The findings would benefit various groups by helping them better understand the role of digital media in shaping perspectives and decision-making.

Institution. The results of this study may assist school in developing curricula and student programs that promote responsible social media use, critical media engagement, and awareness of digital influence in shaping societal views. This could help strengthen institutional efforts toward digital citizenship and ethical communication education.

Instructors. The study can serve as a guide for educators in designing media

literacy programs that teach students how to analyze, interpret, and verify information found on social media platforms, such as TikTok.

Communication Students. This study helps students understand how TikTok influences their perspectives on social issues. By understanding the platform's influence, they can develop critical thinking skills and engage with content more responsibly.

Policy Makers and Media Practitioners. Findings from this study can provide useful insights for policymakers and communication professionals in promoting digital literacy initiatives and responsible content creation. It highlights the need for strategies that address misinformation, online polarization, and the ethical use of algorithm-driven media platforms.

Future Researchers. This research contributes to existing studies on digital

media's role in shaping opinions. It can serve as a foundation for future studies on social media algorithms, echo chambers, and their effects on public perception.

Scope and Limitations

This study focused on examining the role of TikTok in shaping the social opinions of Communication students at Tangub City Global College. It concentrated solely on TikTok as the platform of analysis, excluding other social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The participants were limited to students enrolled in the Communication Program of Tangub City Global College. They were deliberately chosen because they were expected to be highly active social media users, particularly on TikTok, ensuring that they could provide relevant experiences and rich insights into how the platform influences social opinions. The selection

targeted students who actively engage with TikTok content. In terms of timeframe, the research was conducted during the academic year 2025–2026, which meant that the participants' involvement was bounded by their availability within class schedules, academic activities, and semester timelines.

The study, therefore, reflected data gathered only within this specific period. Regarding limitations, the study was affected by time constraints and the availability of student participants during the academic term. Since this was a qualitative study, the results were based on personal experiences and opinions, making them subjective and not necessarily generalized to all students. Furthermore, the study involved only fifteen (15) Communication students from a single higher education institution, which may limit the transferability of the findings to students from other academic disciplines, institutions, and demographic backgrounds. As such, the results should be interpreted within the context of the participants and setting of this study. Lastly, because TikTok trends and platform features change rapidly, the findings reflected only the situation during the period of data collection and may not represent future developments on the platform.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section explained the research methodology used in this study. It presents research design, research setting, research participants, research instrument, instrument validation, data gathering procedure and data analysis.

Research Design. This study employed a descriptive narrative research design to examine how TikTok influenced the social opinions of Communication students at Tangub City Global College (TCGC). According to Creswell (2024), descriptive research focused on understanding a phenomenon by systematically collecting and analyzing data without manipulating variables. It aimed to provide an accurate representation of the behaviors, opinions, or characteristics of a specific group. This design was suitable for the study because it enabled a clear examination of how TikTok shaped students' perspectives on social issues. By gathering data through surveys and interviews, the research provided valuable insights into the extent of TikTok's influence, promoting media literacy and critical engagement with digital content. In this study, the researchers conducted interviews with Communication students at Tangub City Global College during the academic year 2025–2026.

Research Setting. This study was conducted at Tangub City Global College (TCGC), where Communication students were actively engaged with digital media platforms such as TikTok. TCGC was chosen as the research setting because it offered a media-focused curriculum that prepared students for careers in journalism, broadcasting, and digital content creation. These students were frequently exposed to online discussions, making them ideal participants for examining TikTok's influence on social opinions. The institution provided a dynamic learning environment where students analyzed media trends and public discourse, allowing the study to capture real experiences and insights from individuals who interacted with TikTok daily.

Research Participants. This study employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants who were most relevant to the research objectives. Specifically, the participants consisted of fifteen (15) AB Communication students from TCGC who were active TikTok users and regularly engaged with content related to social issues, trends, and current events. These participants were chosen because their academic background emphasized media literacy, digital communication, and critical analysis skills that enabled them to reflect meaningfully on how TikTok shaped their social opinions and perspectives. The participants represented different year levels and gender identities to ensure a diverse range of insights and experiences. Their inclusion was based on their willingness to share personal stories, reflections, and opinions about their TikTok usage, aligning with the narrative approach of this qualitative study. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to express their experiences freely while enabling the researchers to probe deeper into themes of identity formation, opinion development, and digital engagement. This focused selection ensured that the narratives gathered provided rich, authentic, and contextually relevant data about TikTok's influence on students' social perceptions.

Research Instrument. This study utilized a semi-structured interview guide question as the primary research instrument to collect qualitative data on how TikTok influenced the social opinions of Communication students at TCGC. The interview guide was specifically developed by the researchers to align with the study's objectives, focusing on participants' perceptions, content engagement, and opinion formation related to TikTok. It was

organized into three sections: opening questions that built rapport and gathered basic usage information, core questions that explored the platform's influence on awareness of social issues and opinion shaping and closing questions that summarized insights and encouraged reflection. This flexible format allowed for in-depth discussions while ensuring consistency across interviews.

Instrument Validity. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research instrument, the researcher-made interview guide was reviewed by three experts in media studies, communication, and research methodology. Their feedback was used to refine the questions for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives. A pilot test was also conducted with a small group of Communication students from TCGC who were not part of the main study to assess question clarity and interview flow. This validation process helped confirm that the instrument was effective in collecting meaningful and reliable data on TikTok's influence on students' social opinions.

Data Gathering Procedure. Prior to the actual data collection, approval was sought from the institution, and informed consent was obtained from the participants. A letter of permission was distributed to the selected Communication students to inform them about the study's objectives, procedures, and confidentiality measures. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants who were active TikTok users and could provide meaningful narratives about the platform's influence on their social opinions. With the permission of the participants, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy in capturing their narratives. Data collection continued until data saturation reached the point at which no new themes, perspectives, or insights emerged from the participants' accounts.

Data Analysis. The researchers analyzed the data using thematic analysis, employing an inductive and narrative-oriented approach suitable for qualitative research. First, the interview transcripts were read repeatedly to ensure familiarity and immersion in the stories shared by participants. Significant statements reflecting personal experiences, beliefs, values, and social interactions were coded and grouped into meaningful categories. From these categories, themes were generated to capture common narrative patterns across participants, such as recurring motives, challenges, transformations, or social influences. The process involved reviewing, defining, and naming the themes to ensure that they accurately represented both individual stories and collective meanings.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed strict ethical guidelines to protect the rights and well-being of all participants and to maintain the integrity of the research. Before participating, individuals were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and possible risks, and their voluntary consent was obtained through a signed form. Participation was completely voluntary, and they were allowed to withdraw at any time without penalty. To protect privacy, all personal information was kept confidential, and pseudonyms were used when necessary. All data was securely stored and accessible only to the research team. The study was carefully designed to avoid causing harm or discomfort and to consider participants' emotional and psychological safety. All information collected was used solely for academic purposes and properly disposed of after the study concluded. The researchers reported results honestly and clearly, without altering or hiding data, and strived to remain fair and unbiased throughout the process. To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed rigorous methods such as detailed interviews, participant validation of findings, clear documentation, and strategies to minimize researcher bias. These practices ensured that the research was reliable, respectful of participants, and provided a credible understanding of how TikTok influenced communication students' views on social issues.

Definition of Terms

For clarity and consistency, the following terms defined both theoretically and operationally in this study:

Algorithm. This refers to a set of computational processes used by digital platforms to automatically organize, rank, and recommend content based on user's data such as engagement, viewing behavior, and interaction history (Kitchin, 2021). In this study, the algorithm refers to TikTok's recommendation system that tracks Communication students' interactions, such as likes, comments, shares, and watch time, to personalize and display video content that may influence their opinions and perceptions.

Digital Literacy. This refers to a set of competencies that enable individuals to access, evaluate, analyze, create, and responsibly use digital information across platforms (Tinmaz et al., 2022). In this study, digital literacy refers to the ability of Communication students at Tangub City Global College (TCGC) to critically assess the credibility, accuracy, and intent of TikTok content, particularly when encountering misleading, biased, or persuasive posts.

Social Opinions. These refer to the attitudes and beliefs which are formed through continuous interaction between individuals, social groups, and media systems, particularly within digitally mediated environments (Xu et al., 2022). In this study, social opinions refer to the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of Communication students at TCGC regarding social issues or trends that are shaped or influenced by the TikTok content they consume.

TikTok. TikTok refers to a short-form video social media platform characterized by algorithmic personalization, participatory culture, and rapid content circulation, which significantly shapes digital engagement and public discourse (Zhang, 2025). In this study, TikTok refers to the primary social media platform examined to determine how its features, such as short videos, trends, and algorithmic recommendations influence the opinions and perceptions of Communication students at TCGC.

TikTok Content. This refers to user-generated digital media distributed on the TikTok platform that gains visibility and influence through engagement-based metrics and algorithmic amplification (Zhang, 2023). In this study, TikTok content refers to videos viewed by Communication students at Tangub City Global College (TCGC) that gain significant engagement and visibility and that potentially influence students' perspectives, opinions, or discussions.

Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

This chapter discusses the findings and interpretations derived from the data collected by the researchers. It presents an analysis of the results, highlighting key patterns and insights that emerged during the interview.

Problem 1: What is the role of tiktok towards communication students?

Analysis of the participants' responses revealed a major theme describing the role of TikTok among Communication students: TikTok as a Digital Platform for Learning and Social Awareness. This theme encompasses two subthemes that explain how the platform functions in students' academic and social engagement. The first subtheme, TikTok as an Accessible Source for Learning, indicates that Communication students utilize short-form videos from credible content creators to quickly acquire information and insights about social issues. The second subtheme, TikTok as a Tool for Awareness of Social Issues, demonstrates that engaging and relatable content enhances students' social consciousness and encourages reflective and critical thinking. Overall, these findings suggest that TikTok plays a significant role beyond entertainment, serving as an informal learning environment that supports media literacy, critical evaluation of information, and responsible engagement with contemporary social realities among Communication students.

Theme: TikTok as a Digital Platform for Learning and Social Awareness

Participants' narratives revealed that TikTok functions as a multifaceted digital platform that supports both learning and awareness of social issues among Communication students. Beyond entertainment, the platform serves as an accessible space where students encounter educational content and socially relevant information through short-form videos created by credible content creators, professionals, and institutions. Algorithm-driven exposure enables students to stay informed about current events while encouraging media literacy practices such as source evaluation, verification, and comparison with credible references. Consequently, TikTok contributes to students' understanding of complex societal concerns and strengthens their social consciousness. This major theme underscores TikTok's evolving role as an informal learning environment that fosters critical thinking, awareness, and responsible engagement with social realities among Communication students.

Subtheme 1: TikTok as Accessible Source for Learning

Participants described TikTok as a useful platform for learning and staying informed about current social issues. Through short-form videos and credible content creators, students gained quick yet meaningful insights that enhanced their awareness and understanding of real-world events. This experience shows how TikTok functions not only as a source of entertainment but also as an alternative learning medium that supports media literacy and critical thinking among Communication students.

“TikTok is one way to learn things. It’s quite informative, but it’s important to find credible sources and avoid fake information.” (P1)

“TikTok has become an educational space for me. I learn about what awareness events are happening in the country.” (P2)

“I use TikTok to gain awareness of social issues but I always verify the information. I check primary and secondary sources and compare TikTok videos with credible sites to ensure accuracy.” (P3)

“Many creators share short videos about topics like racism, climate change, and mental health. These help me understand complex problems in a simple way.” (P14)

Four (4) out of fifteen (15) participants shared that they use TikTok as a platform for they explained that through short-form videos and credible content creators, they gain quick yet meaningful insights that deepen their understanding of real-world events. This demonstrates that TikTok serves not only as a source of entertainment but also as an effective learning tool that media literacy, and critical thinking among Communication students.

Rheinheimer and König (2024) explained that short-form video platforms, such as TikTok, expose young users to both credible and misleading information. They emphasize the need for users to develop critical evaluation skills and to verify the reliability of online sources. In addition, Pan (2024) highlighted that short-form video platforms, such as TikTok, play a significant role in enhancing media literacy among young users by encouraging them to critically evaluate information, verify content credibility, and develop discernment when engaging with digital media. Collectively, these studies highlight that TikTok has evolved beyond entertainment, serving as an emerging digital learning space that fosters awareness, critical thinking, and engagement among Communication students.

Based on the data, TikTok emerges as an accessible and effective platform for learning among Communication students. The short-form videos and content from credible creators allow students to quickly grasp complex social issues, supporting both awareness and understanding of real-world events. The participants’ emphasis on verifying information demonstrates the development of media literacy and critical thinking skills, suggesting that students are actively engaging with content rather than passively consuming it. Although only a portion of the participants explicitly identified TikTok as a learning tool, the findings indicate that the platform has the potential to supplement traditional educational resources, positioning it as an alternative medium that fosters informed engagement and responsible information consumption.

Subtheme 2: TikTok as a Tool for Awareness of Social Issues

A common experience shared by the participants was that TikTok served as an effective avenue for raising awareness about social issues. Many students discovered relevant information about political, cultural, and societal matters through short, engaging videos created by credible content creators. This exposure allowed them to better understand ongoing issues and develop a deeper sense of social consciousness. The accessibility and relatability of TikTok content made it easier for students to stay informed and aware of real-world concerns, highlighting its role as a modern tool for promoting social awareness among Communication students.

“TikTok made me more aware during the issue about flood control. Many people shared their suggestions and opinions, which helped me see the issue from different viewpoints.” (P4)

“Even attorneys, politicians, and news outlets post about social issues on TikTok, which helps spread awareness.” (P5)

“I watched a TikTok video about the impeachment of Sara Duterte featuring an attorney. It didn’t change my stance, but it helped me gain awareness and support my perspective.” (P13)

“A TikTok video about Awareness on mental health made me realize that it’s okay to ask for help and that many people struggle with the same challenges. Some videos about climate change also showed me that small actions like recycling and saving energy can make a big difference.” (P14)

Four (4) out of fifteen (15) participants revealed that TikTok serves as an effective platform for increasing their awareness of various social issues. They shared that through short, informative videos created by credible journalists and content creators, they learn about political, cultural, and societal matters that shape current events. This constant exposure to real-world discussions helps them become more socially conscious and aware of pressing national and global concerns.

Moffett (2024) found that TikTok fosters civic participation among young adults by providing a space for discourse, activism, and information-sharing. Oden (2023) also noted that youth social media engagement contributes to civic interest and awareness, while McCashin and Murphy (2023) highlighted the platform’s potential for promoting public awareness and emotional engagement in social causes. Collectively, these studies suggest that TikTok functions as a modern avenue for promoting social awareness, empowering Communication students to stay informed, reflective, and engaged with contemporary social realities.

The data indicated that TikTok functions as an effective tool for raising awareness of social issues among Communication students. Participants’ experiences show that the platform provides accessible, engaging, and relatable content that informs students about political, cultural, and societal matters. Exposure to videos created by credible content creators, journalists, and professionals allowed students to view issues from multiple perspectives, contributing to the development of social consciousness. The participants’ ability to reflect on and apply this information demonstrates that TikTok supports informed engagement rather than passive consumption. Although only a subset of participants explicitly identified TikTok as a primary source for awareness, the findings suggest that the platform plays a meaningful role in promoting civic understanding and fostering responsibility toward social issues, highlighting its potential as a modern avenue for digital social learning.

Problem 2: How does it influence social views/opinions?

The participants’ responses indicated that TikTok significantly influences Communication students’ social views and opinions by shaping their awareness, emotional responses, and evaluative perspectives toward contemporary social issues. A theme emerged, TikTok as a Catalyst for Awareness, Emotional Engagement, and Perspective Formation, which is reflected in four subthemes: (1) influence on social awareness and perspective-shaping, (2) preference for credible and emotionally relatable content, (3) emotional impact of social issues in short-form videos, and (4) civic engagement.

Participants explained that exposure to political, cultural, advocacy, and human-centered TikTok videos broadened their understanding of societal realities, encouraged empathy and emotional reflection, and influenced how they form, reassess, and express their opinions on social issues. Overall, TikTok functions as a platform where information and emotion intersect, shaping students’ social perspectives and contributing to the development of informed and reflective social viewpoints.

Theme: TikTok as a Catalyst for Awareness, Emotional Engagement, and Civic Participation

The participants’ experiences reveal that TikTok functions as more than an entertainment platform; it serves as a dynamic digital space that informs, influences, and motivates Communication students regarding social issues. Across the four subthemes influence on social awareness and perspective-shaping, preference for credible and emotionally relatable content, emotional impact of social issues in short-form videos, and civic engagement

students reported gaining knowledge, developing empathy, and translating awareness into action. Informative content broadened their understanding of societal issues, emotionally resonant storytelling strengthened empathy, and relatable, credible creators encouraged reflection and responsible participation. Collectively, these findings suggest that TikTok acts as a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral catalyst, shaping students' social perspectives, promoting critical thinking, and inspiring active engagement with their communities.

Subtheme 1: Influence of TikTok Content on Social Awareness and Perspective-Shaping

Participants expressed that TikTok plays a significant role in shaping their awareness and perspectives on social issues. Through diverse content from political debates to environmental discussions, users gain new insights and become more socially conscious. Informative and reflective videos allow students to see various sides of societal matters, which help them form their own opinions and enhance their critical thinking skills.

"TikTok helps me become aware of different social issues. It's not only for entertainment, but also for learning about what's happening in our society." (P2)

"During the recent flood issue in our city, I watched many TikTok videos showing different experiences of affected residents. It made me more empathetic and aware of the struggles people face." (P5)

"The documentary videos I watch make me more aware of issues, though I don't easily get influenced. I make sure to balance what I watch with what I believe." (P12)

"The TikTok content that has influenced my opinions the most are videos from influencers and known debaters who share their perspectives on different issues." (P13)

"The TikTok content that influences me the most includes videos about politics, climate change, and mental health. Educational and storybased videos are especially impactful." (P14)

Five (5) out of fifteen (15) participants revealed that exposure to political, environmental, and advocacy-based content has influenced how they perceive current social realities. These short yet powerful videos encourage them to think critically about ongoing issues and recognize the importance of civic participation. Participants expressed that TikTok contributes greatly to shaping their awareness and perspectives on social issues. Through diverse content from political debates to environmental discussions, users gain new insights and become more socially conscious.

Pan (2024) highlighted that short-form video platforms, such as TikTok, play a significant role in enhancing media literacy among young users by encouraging them to critically evaluate information, verify content credibility, and develop discernment when engaging with digital media. Likewise, Mirowska (2023) found that short-form social media videos facilitate both cognitive and emotional engagement viewers not only understand social issues better but also develop greater empathy, fostering a deeper connection with public concerns. Together, these studies show that TikTok serves as an interactive medium that informs, educates, and inspires critical reflection among young audiences, empowering Communication students to become more aware, opinionated, and socially engaged.

The findings indicated that TikTok plays a significant role in shaping Communication students' awareness and perspectives on social issues. Participants reported that exposure to diverse content, including political debates and environmental discussions, provided new insights that enhanced their understanding of societal matters. This engagement not only informed students but also encouraged critical reflection, as they considered multiple viewpoints before forming opinions. These experiences suggest that TikTok functions as more than an entertainment platform; it serves as an interactive medium that fosters cognitive engagement, broadens social awareness, and supports the development of informed perspectives. Furthermore, participants' ability to discern credible content and integrate it with their own beliefs underscores TikTok's potential to cultivate media literacy and socially conscious thinking among future communicators.

Subtheme 2: Preference for Credible and Emotionally Relatable Content

Another recurring pattern in participants' responses highlighted that emotionally charged and credible content has the strongest influence on their social views. Students stated that they are more likely to be influenced by videos that combine authenticity, emotional storytelling, and credible information especially those addressing politics, mental health, and environmental issues. This blend of emotion and truth helps them internalize the message and relate it to their personal values and beliefs.

"Even if a video is informative, I prefer it when it tells a personal story or shows real experiences. Emotional content sticks with me more than just facts." (P4)

"I watch videos from journalists, politicians, or advocates because I know their information is reliable. However, I also like it when they make the content relatable through stories or examples." (P6)

"When I see someone sharing their personal experience about mental health or social issues, I feel more connected and motivated to learn or act." (P8)

"Some TikTok creators use humor or storytelling to explain serious topics. I find this combination of emotion and credibility makes me trust and remember the content better." (P11)

"I always cross-check videos I watch on TikTok. Credible information reassures me, and emotionally touching stories make me think or even change my behavior." (P13)

"The TikTok content that influences me the most includes videos about politics, climate change, and mental health. Educational and storybased videos are especially relatable." (P14)

Sixth (6) out of fifteen (15) participants shared that they tend to trust and engage more with content from credible creators who present information in a relatable way. Emotional storytelling also enhances message retention, making the information more memorable and personally relevant.

According to Chen (2023) found that emotionally charged content on social media significantly increases engagement and fosters deeper connection with public issues. Similarly, Ronald and Wong (2022) demonstrated that younger users' perception of platform credibility significantly correlates with their political engagement, underscoring that authenticity and trustworthiness are key to digital influence. These insights affirm that TikTok's effectiveness in shaping social views relies not only on the information itself but also on how that information is emotionally and credibly presented.

The findings suggested that Communication students are most influenced by TikTok content that combines credibility with emotional relatability. Participants reported that videos integrating authentic storytelling and reliable information, particularly on topics such as politics, mental health, and environmental issues, were more likely to shape their perspectives. Emotional engagement, through personal narratives or humor, helped students internalize messages and relate them to their own values, enhancing comprehension and retention. Additionally, participants demonstrated discernment by cross-checking information and prioritizing content from trustworthy creators, reflecting the development of media literacy skills. These results indicate that TikTok's effectiveness in shaping social views relies not only on the informational content but also on its emotional and credible presentation, highlighting the platform's potential as a tool for both education and social influence among Communication students.

Subtheme 3: Motional Impact of Social Issues in Short-Form Videos

Participants shared that TikTok has a strong emotional impact on them, especially when the content depicts real-life struggles such as poverty, corruption, injustice, and mental health challenges. Through emotionally charged videos, students experience feelings of sadness, anger, and compassion, which heighten their awareness of social realities. TikTok's storytelling format allows them to empathize with others' experiences, turning passive consumption into active emotional engagement.

“When I see how much money is lost due to corruption through videos, it makes me feel angry and pushes me to seek justice as a concerned citizen.” (P1)

“I often watch TikToks about mental health. Hearing someone share their personal struggles made me realize I’m not alone and that I should be more understanding toward others.” (P3)

“TikTok made me more emotional about social problems. I realized how powerful short videos can be in showing real-life struggles.” (P4)

“There are videos showing acts of kindness and support during difficult times. They inspire me and make me want to be kinder too.” (P5)

“Seeing videos of marginalized groups and their daily challenges opened my eyes. I felt empathy and a sense of responsibility to understand their perspective.” (P7)

“Watching videos about poverty and injustice makes me sad but also motivated to use communication for social awareness.” (P9)

“I cried watching TikToks about families affected by accidents or illnesses. It made me appreciate what I have and consider how I can help others.” (P10)

“Sometimes a TikTok video can touch my heart more than a news article. The personal stories and visuals make empathy immediate and real.” P12

Eight (8) out of fifteen (15) participants revealed that emotional content influences their perspective on societal issues and inspires empathy toward people facing hardship. This emotional connection fosters a deeper understanding of social inequality and motivates students to use their voices for advocacy and change.

According to Pramesthi and Priastuty (2024) found that organic viral content which combines authentic storytelling and brand-empathy cues significantly strengthens audience perception of credibility and deepens emotional engagement, thereby driving more meaningful user responses and behavioural action. Thus, TikTok functions not only as a learning platform but also as an emotional bridge that deepens understanding and human connection.

The findings indicated that TikTok’s short-form videos evoke strong emotional responses among Communication students, particularly when addressing real-life struggles such as poverty, corruption, injustice, and mental health challenges. Participants reported experiencing emotions such as sadness, anger, and compassion, which heightened their awareness of societal issues and fostered empathy for affected individuals. The storytelling format of TikTok enabled students to connect personally with the experiences presented, transforming passive viewing into active emotional engagement. Eight out of fifteen participants emphasized that emotionally charged content influenced their perspectives and motivated them to consider social inequalities and their own roles in advocacy.

Subtheme 4: TikTok on Student’s Civic Engagement

Beyond emotional awareness, participants noted that the feelings triggered by TikTok content often inspire them to act or speak up about important causes. Students expressed that videos portraying injustice, corruption, and social struggles encourage them to share informative content, engage in online discussions, and advocate for change. TikTok thus becomes a channel for emotional activation, transforming empathy into motivation and social participation.

“After watching videos about plastic pollution, I started reducing my use of single-use plastics and encouraged my friends to do the same.” (P2)

“Videos about community projects or charity drives motivated me to volunteer in local activities. It makes you feel that your small actions matter.” (P4)

“I follow creators who talk about mental health advocacy. Their posts motivated me to join campaigns and spread awareness among my peers.” (P6)

“Seeing TikToks about marginalized communities and social justice made me more vocal online and offline. I realized I could contribute to change in small ways.” (P8)

“Some TikTok challenges or campaigns are meaningful and educational. I participated in ones about tree planting and cleanliness drives because they inspired me.” (P11)

“When I watch political videos, I get emotionally affected. TikTok really changes how I feel about government issues.” (P15)

Sixth (6) out of fifteen (15) participants reported that TikTok content inspires them to act more responsibly and express their opinions on social platforms. Exposure to relatable, human-centered narratives helps them internalize societal issues and translate emotions into action, particularly in advocacy and awareness campaigns.

Nor et al. (2025) explained that TikTok’s interactive nature transforms passive consumption into civic participation by encouraging young audiences to engage in political and social discussions. Together, these findings suggest that TikTok not only influences how students feel but also inspires them to become more reflective, engaged, and socially active communicators.

The findings suggested that TikTok not only raises awareness and evokes emotions but also motivates Communication students to engage in civic and social activities. Participants reported that content addressing issues such as social injustice, environmental concerns, and mental health advocacy encouraged them to act, share information, and participate in community initiatives. Six out of fifteen participants indicated that exposure to relatable, human-centered narratives inspired them to translate empathy into action, including volunteering, advocating for change, and engaging in online discussions.

Beyond The Scroll: The Role of Tiktok in Shaping Social Opinions Among Tcgc Communication Students

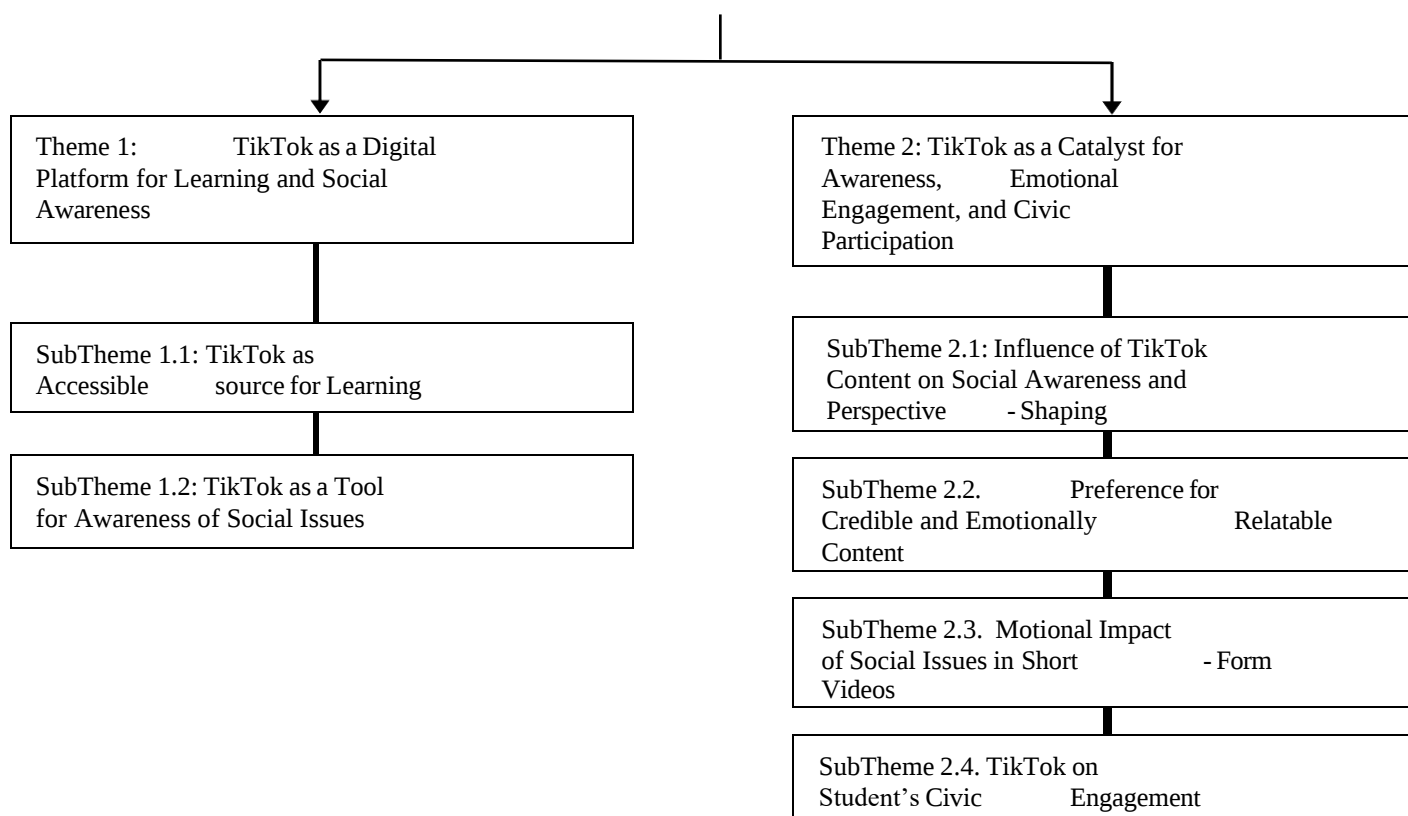


Figure 1. Structural Representation of the Prevailing Themes on the Role of Tiktok in Shaping Social Opinions among TCGC Communication Students

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusion, and recommendations of the study.

Summary of Findings

The main goal of this study was to explore the role of TikTok in shaping social opinions among TCGC Communication students. A qualitative narrative approach was employed to describe and analyze how TikTok influenced students' awareness, emotions, and perspectives. Fifteen (15) participants from the Bachelor of Arts in Communication program were selected to share their experiences through one-on-one interviews guided by a semi-structured interview questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which identified recurring patterns and themes regarding TikTok's impact on students' social opinions, emotional engagement, and critical thinking. Findings revealed that TikTok significantly influenced how students learned and engaged with social issues. Initially used for entertainment, TikTok evolved into a platform where students could access educational content and learn about current events and real-world issues. The short, relatable videos helped students become more socially aware and encourage critical thinking.

Additionally, TikTok content often elicited strong emotional responses. Videos about poverty, injustice, environmental concerns, or mental health resonated deeply, fostering empathy and motivating students to take small actions, such as sharing awareness posts, participating in campaigns, or initiating discussions on social issues. Overall, TikTok emerged as an effective learning space, promoting knowledge, emotional connection, and social responsibility among TCGC Communication students.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that TikTok is an influential platform that extends beyond entertainment for TCGC Communication students. It functions as a channel for learning, awareness, and emotional engagement, shaping how students perceive and respond to social issues. The platform enables students to stay informed, think critically, and develop media literacy skills necessary to navigate digital content responsibly.

Moreover, TikTok content with emotional and social relevance fosters empathy, compassion, and social responsibility, inspiring students to act and share their perspectives. For TCGC Communication students, TikTok represents a space where education, emotion, and awareness intersect, reflecting how the younger generation engages with learning, communication, and advocacy. By using TikTok responsibly, students can transform daily scrolling into purposeful engagement, strengthening their identity as socially aware, empathetic, and proactive communicators.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the researchers would like to make the following recommendations:

For Content Creators. TikTok influencers and creators may continue producing informative, credible, and socially relevant content. Such content may inspire viewers to become responsible, informed, and engaged digital citizens. Creators may also collaborate with educators and institutions to produce content that complements learning objectives, promotes media literacy, and encourages civic participation.

For Communication Students. Students may maximize TikTok's educational potential by following credible sources, engaging in meaningful discussions, and creating content that raises awareness about social issues. They should always remain cautious of misinformation and practice responsible media consumption.

For Future Researchers. Future studies may expand the research to conduct comparative studies involving multiple social media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter) to provide a broader understanding of how digital media shapes students' social awareness, opinion formation, and

civic engagement. Expanding the scope to include participants from different academic disciplines, institutions, and demographic backgrounds may also enhance the transferability of findings. Furthermore, future studies should investigate both the positive and negative effects of social media use, including exposure to misinformation, ideological polarization, echo chambers, and emotional fatigue. Examining these factors may provide a more balanced and comprehensive analysis of the role of social media in influencing students' perspectives, behaviors, and participation in social issues.

REFERENCES

1. Chen, M. (2023). Emotional framing in the spreading of false and true claims. *Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media*, 3, 331. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/3/2022331>
2. Creswell, J. W. (2024). The selection of a research approach. In *Research design: ualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed., p. 2). SAGEPublications.https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upmbinaries/55588_Chapter_1_Sample_Creswell_Research_Design_4e.pdf
3. Kitchin, R. (2021). *Data lives: How data are made and shape our world*. Bristol University Press.
4. McCashin, D., & Murphy, C. M. (2023). Using TikTok for public and youth mental health: A systematic review and content analysis. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 28(1), 279–306. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13591045221106608>
5. Mirowska, A. (2023). Sweet escape: The role of empathy in social media. *Media Psychology*, 26(4), 567–589. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.media.2023.01.005>
6. Moffett, K. W. (2024). TikTok and civic activity among young adults. *Social Science Computer Review*, 42(2), 357–372. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08944393231188470>
7. Nor, A. T., Fird, S. S. S., Ridhwan, N. M., Jamri, M. H., & Azmi, M. F. (2025). Analyzing TikTok's influence on youth political activism and social participation in Malaysia. *Jurnal Wacana Politik*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.24198/jwp.v10i1.56598>
8. Oden, A. (2023). The kids are online: Teen social media use, civic interest, and political behavior. *Social Media + Society*, 9(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051231186364>
9. Pan, Y. (2024). The impact of short video platforms on the media literacy of young people. *International Journal of Educational Innovation and Science*, 5(1), 53-57. <https://doi.org/10.38007/IJEIS.2024.050106>
10. Pramesthi, J. A., & Priastuty, C. W. (2024). How brand empathy is created: Study on organic viral content. *Jurnal Ilmiah Dinamika Sosial*, 8(1), Article 5039. <https://doi.org/10.38043/jids.v8i1.5039>
11. Rheinheimer, D., & König, J. (2024). TikTok as a Source of Health Information and Misinformation for Adolescents and Young Adults. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 21(15), 9678. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph21159678>
12. Ronald Alfred, J. J., & Wong, S. P. (2022). The relationship between the perception of social media credibility and political engagement in social media among Generation Z. *Journal of Communication, Language and Culture*, 2(2), 17-32. <https://doi.org/10.33093/jclc.2022.2.2.2>
13. Rütter, L., Jahn, J., & Marksteiner, T. (2023). The impact of social media influencing on self-esteem and the role of social comparison and resilience. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1216195. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1216195>
14. Schellewald, A. (2023). TikTok and the evolution of digital attention: Cultural and communicative perspectives. *Social Media + Society*, 9 (1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051231100235>
15. Stah l, C. C., & Literat, I. (2023). #GenZ on TikTok: The collective online self-portrait of the social media generation. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 26(7), 925–946. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2022.2053671>
16. Tinmaz, H., Lee, Y. T., Fanea-Ivanovici, M., & Baber, H. (2022). A systematic review on digital literacy. *Smart Learning Environments*, 9, Article 21. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-022-00204-y>
17. Xu, Q., Hao, B., & Wang, Y. (2022). Conceptualizing social media public opinion: Expression, dynamics, and measurement on networked platforms. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 27(4), 279–297. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmab021>

18. Zhang, Y. (2025). Short-form video platforms and participatory culture: A literature review of TikTok's impact on digital engagement. *Communications in Humanities Research*, 98, 110–115. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7064/2025.NS29699>