

A Systematic Review: The Influence of TikTok Contents and its Effects towards Mental Health among Youth in Malaysia

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Abstract

This systematic review synthesized evidence on the influence of TikTok contents and its effects towards mental health among youth in Malaysia. TikTok is a global sensation and has over 1 billion users and dominates youth culture. As TikTok gains more acceptance among youth, there is growing concern among parents, policymakers, and clinicians about the actual impact the platform is having on the mental health of youth. Growing research has found the more time a person spends on social media, the more likely they will experience mental health symptoms such as anxiety, isolation, and hopelessness [1]. This study employs Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), based on papers in the Google Scholar database. A search of the Google Scholar database reaped five eligible studies. This paper includes research papers from 2018 to 2022, including keywords 'mental health' and 'TikTok contents and Malaysia' and 'youth'. Findings included factors that affect youth's mental health in Malaysia. Due to methodological constraints in cross-sectional design, sampling, and measures, there are significant constraints in the findings. The interest shown by young adults towards TikTok content and mental health is often discussed. The topic should be measured more through qualitative enquiries, explored further in various age groups and variables related to the effect TikTok contents have towards mental health.

Keywords: Systematic review, Mental health, TikTok contents, Youth, and Malaysia.

1.0 Introduction

This systematic review aims to address a research gap regarding the impact of social media platforms like TikTok on the mental health of young people in Malaysia by reviewing the available scholarly articles on the issue. Social media users benefit significantly from this systematic review's results, particularly youth, their parents, policymakers, and aspirational academics. With this insight, they may implement more effective and precisely targeted actions for the appropriate demographic.

1.1 The Influence of TikTok

According to McCashin and Murphy, TikTok has become the most favored social media platform among young people worldwide. However, it has gotten surprisingly little attention in the areas of psychology and psychiatry [2]. Academics and the public continue to be concerned about the impact social media may have on the mental health of young people, despite contradictory findings in scientific literature. According to Anderson [3], TikTok has evolved into a platform where users can express their ideas, opinions, and perspectives through 15 to 60-second videos created with various filters, music, and lip-syncing templates.

The content that TikTok displays to viewers is determined by an algorithm that considers the types of videos users have previously watched. The content of TikTok has been shown to significantly impact today's youth. Typical individuals can utilize TikTok to increase their video views and likes. TikTok is more than just an application where users dance to the following popular music; it profoundly impacts its users [4].

Mekler [5] explains that young people, particularly college students transitioning to adulthood, are attracted to TikTok because it satisfies their desire to relax and have fun. They might earn popularity by posting videos of themselves dancing to chart-topping music. However, while it is crucial for youth such as students to enjoy themselves, they must also be able to concentrate on their homework, and distractions can make this task considerably more difficult. A person using TikTok may become so engrossed in the program that they feel compelled to stay on it indefinitely. It has been demonstrated that the more time a person spends each week on social media, the more addicted they become [6]. Mekler's observations support this idea that the more time users spend on TikTok daily, the more likely they lose track of time while using the application. I believe that TikTok is a fantastic application for entertainment, education, and awareness-raising application. However, spending an unhealthy amount of time on it can harm one's mental health.

1.2 Youth Perception towards TikTok

According to Liando et al. [7], perception is regarded as an interacting process, whereas Tatipang et al. [8] assert that the perception process comprises multiple stages. When people are exposed to environmental cues, the perception process begins. Social media use has both positive and negative consequences. As a result of the emergence of new channels of communication, the usage of social media platforms such as TikTok by young people as a source of news and other information has increased dramatically. Despite being one of the most downloaded applications among Malaysian youth, Yunus [9] asserts that only a few studies have examined how the TikTok application could be utilized in an educational environment in Malaysia.

TikTok's popularity has expanded beyond its original function as a video-sharing site; the application is now widely used as a search engine, particularly among younger users. According to Manggo et al.'s study [10], most young people believe that the TikTok app enables users to express their creativity. Knowledge, experience, and maturity contribute to how people perceive the youth today. Some individuals focus solely on the negative features of the TikTok app, while others examine both the positive and negative aspects. Researchers cannot rely merely on respondents' experience and concentration; respondents' knowledge is also influential. Therefore, researchers think that when discussing perception on TikTok, people can observe changes in their personality and attitude due to using this application. Users can experience a sense of freedom. As for the disadvantages, it must be said that TikTok users, especially young users should not let it be habitual.

1.3 Mental Health among youth in Malaysia

The World Health Organization (WHO) describes mental health as the extent to which an individual can maintain or improve his or her psychological well-being to deal with the normal stresses of life, to realize their full personality potential, to meet the demands of their work and community, and to make a beneficial contribution to society in general [11]. Currently, mental health concerns are the second highest causality of death in Malaysia, after cardiovascular disease [12]. Nationwide research conducted by the Ministry of Health in 2020 revealed that one in three Malaysians aged 16 and older have a mental disorder. This is nearly three times the rate in 2006, which was 11%. The states with the highest rates of mental illness are WP Kuala Lumpur, Kelantan, Sabah, and Sarawak. 1 in 5 Malaysian youths suffers from depression, 2 in 5 from anxiety, and 1 in 10 from stress. There is 10% of youth who have attempted suicide, and an astonishing 75% of children and adolescents with mental health concerns do not receive the assistance they require, which is quite concerning [13].

According to Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Noor Azmi Ghazali, around 424,000 young people in Malaysia suffer from mental problems, yet many do not seek medical help [14]. Among youths, prevalent risk factors include inadequate mental health care, exposure to violence, peer victimization and bullying, loneliness, and social isolation. Teens and young adults in Malaysia experience several mental health difficulties but have limited treatment options. More situationally relevant research must be conducted on the factors influencing adolescents' desire to seek treatment for mental health disorders [15]. The researcher argues that the primary challenge here is the stigma towards mental health issues, which researcher believes that this issue is still debated in many Asian countries, especially Malaysia and youth are at risk.

1.4 The Effects of TikTok Towards Mental Health Issues

TikTok, unlike other social media platforms, has quickly become a safe space for constructive conversations on mental health. Crosby [16] claims that the platform has been taken over by information and comments relating to taboo matters, including depression, suicide, and other unpleasant mental health subjects. In large part, this is because of how TikTok is made; people enjoy using it because they can easily share content that is both concise and evocative. It is a fantastic medium for making a strong, concise, and widely disseminable statement. The nature of TikTok content influences the consequences on users. However, the application has the potential to inflict a lot of harm when used carelessly.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and endemic, TikTok has made efforts to censor potentially harmful content and to encourage mental health options for TikTok users. TikTok provides a compellingly hopeful glimpse at what responsible stewardship of social media platforms should look like, according to Barry et al. [17]. Despite having a long way to go, the platform has struggled with persistent concerns, such as the sexualization of youth. Considering that 25% of TikTok users are under 19, the application must do everything possible to shield young adults from the harm that other applications like Instagram have unwittingly inflicted [18]. Here is some good news: mental health practitioners are starting to use the widespread popularity of TikTok to spread awareness, disseminate uplifting messages, and promote self-care advice to a younger, broader audience [19]. Self-care and mental health awareness have become "cool" on TikTok, or at the absolute least, one of the most popular media has made these previously inaccessible concepts far more approachable. Therefore, the researcher believes that the youth's mental health can be negatively affected by their consistent use of this platform and its inappropriate content.

2.0 Current Study

This systematic review seeks to examine the evidence regarding the effects of TikTok content on the mental health of young people in Malaysia. The purpose of this present study is to determine whether TikTok and its contents have the potential to influence the mental health of its users, particularly youth. The goal would be to suggest an additional investigation on this topic.

3.0 Method

Protocol and Registration

This report follows the guidelines of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement [20].

Eligibility Criteria

For inclusion in this review, studies fulfilled the following eligibility criteria:

- Participants: aged 15 to 29

- Exposure: Consume TikTok on the daily basis and know how it operates
- Location: Selangor, Malaysia
- Outcome: To know whether TikTok contents towards mental health issues among youth in Malaysia

Search Strategy

The literature search was done from the year of 2018 to the year of 2022 through electronic databases, *Google Scholar*. The keywords or phrases used to identify related studies were: ‘mental health’ and ‘TikTok contents’ and ‘Malaysia’ and ‘youth’. References from the retrieved studies were also cross-checked for additional literature.

Data extraction

The PRISMA flow diagram, shown in Figure 1, was used to select the reviewed papers. Data were retrieved from the relevant articles once they were read. Finally, the researcher extracted the data to see if they met the goal and inclusion criteria as seen in TABLE 1.

TABLE 1: Prisma Checklist Data Extraction

<i>No</i>	<i>Study</i>	<i>Aim</i>	<i>Research Design</i>	<i>Sample Size</i>	<i>Sample Characteristics</i>
1	Impact of TikTok Usage into Micro-Fame and Mental Health Among Teenagers in Malaysia.	To investigate the impact of TikTok usage into micro-fame and mental health among teenagers.	Qualitative Research	Not Specified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parents who children are age 18 - 29. ● TikTok users aged 18 - 29. ● Malaysian ● Youth who use TikTok on a regular basis.
2	The Influence of Sensation Seeking Behaviour and Social Media Addiction on Happiness among Young Adults in Malaysia.	To determine the relationship of sensation seeking, social media addiction and mental health among young adults in Malaysia.	Quantitative Research (Survey)	312 Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Age 18 -29 ● Malaysian ● Students who have social media accounts and are well-versed in understanding the influence of social media.
3	Cyberbullying on TikTok under the influence of COVID-19 among Youth in Malaysia.	To understand how the COVID-19 pandemic, which affects TikTok usage, increases the incidence of cyberbullying and mental health.	Quantitative Research (Survey)	200 Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Age 18 - 25 ● Malaysian ● Youth who use social media like TikTok on a regular basis.
4	Adolescent Screen Time Associated with Risk Factor of Fear of Missing Out on TikTok During Pandemic COVID-19 in Malaysia.	To explore the youth’s screen time and its contribution to fear of missing out on TikTok and its effect towards mental health.	Qualitative Research (Semi-Structured Interview)	30 Informants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Age 17 - 19 ● Malaysian ● Owned personal social media like TikTok and Instagram.

5	The Impact of TikTok on Depression among University Students in Malaysia.	To investigate the impact of social media usage towards depression among university students which is to evaluate if TikTok usage is a force that can make a difference in the depression level of a person.	Quantitative Research (Survey)	160 Respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 18 - 25 • University students • Malaysian • Different backgrounds of society and races.
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Assessment of quality

The quality of eligible studies was assessed using comparison and synthesis of the studies, key information relevant to the study issue was methodically gathered and summarized. It covers the advantages and disadvantages of the study. An overall rating of 'good', 'fair' or 'poor' was given for each study. All the studies were independently rated by the researcher.

TABLE 2: Quality Assessment

No	Advantages	Disadvantages	Review Results
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study has a precise aim • The study has results, findings, and conclusions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No sample size calculation. • No sample size justification. • The study does not have sample characteristics justification • The results include parent perceptions that may be biased against youth and may be improper. 	Fair
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study has a precise aim • The study has sample characteristics justification • The study has a sample size calculation. • The study has sample size justification. • The study has results, findings, and conclusions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	Good
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study has a precise aim • The study has sample characteristics justification • The study has results, findings, and conclusions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No sample size calculation. • No sample size justification. • No statistical evidence was found to support the hypothesis. 	Good
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study has a precise aim • The study has sample characteristics justification • The study has results, findings, and conclusions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No sample size calculation. • No sample size justification. • Small sample size less than 50, high risk of bias. • The sample size is quite narrow and focuses on modest age differences. • A participation rate below 50% limits the generalizability of the collected data. 	Poor
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study has a precise aim • The study has sample characteristics justification • The study has results, findings, and conclusions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No sample size calculation. • No sample size justification. • The research hypothesis is very basic and overly broad. 	Good

Data analysis

The data gathered from the selected articles were examined using the PRISMA checklist. Using the PRISMA systematic literature review, each study was outlined before being compared and synthesized.

4.0 Results

From 2018 to 2022, 121 studies relating to the keywords 'TikTok' and 'youth' and 'Malaysia' and 'mental health' and 'students' and 'Selangor' were identified from the Google Scholar electronic database and displayed in Table 3. Comparing zero studies conducted in 2018 to only one conducted in 2019, the findings rose dramatically from 2018 to 2022. This number climbed by 90% in 2020, with ten studies, and by 74% in 2021, with 39 studies. As of this year, 2022, there have been 71 studies conducted on this issue, a 45% increase from the previous year. Even though the search results for the other keywords (No.1 - No.5) were inconsistent, the number of studies that pertain to this topic is still relevant, and new research is continually being published, indicating that this topic is still being discussed and debated.

Referring to the PRISMA flowchart (Figure 1), 121 records were identified through the Google Scholar database; 116 papers were excluded, leaving only five records to be evaluated for eligibility; the most common reason for exclusion was the country in which the research was conducted and the nationality of the sample. The PRISMA flowchart gives further information on exclusion causes. Following the application of the inclusion criteria and PRISMA guidelines, a total of five studies were included in the review.

TABLE 3: Keywords General Search

No.	Keywords	Results					Total
		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
1.	Social media and youth and mental health.	123,000	118,000	126,000	120,000	93,900	580,900
2.	Social media and youth and mental health and Malaysia.	16,500	17,800	18,600	20,100	15,800	88,800
3.	Social Media and youth and mental health and Malaysia and university students.	13,700	15,500	17,100	18,300	12,100	76,700
4.	TikTok and youth and mental health and Malaysia.	8	42	230	710	906	1,896
5.	TikTok and youth and mental health and Malaysia and university students.	6	38	194	617	770	1,625
This review follows the keywords general research as shown below:							
6.	TikTok and youth and mental health and Malaysia and students and Selangor.	0	1	10	39	71	121

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for new systematic reviews which included searches of databases, registers and other sources

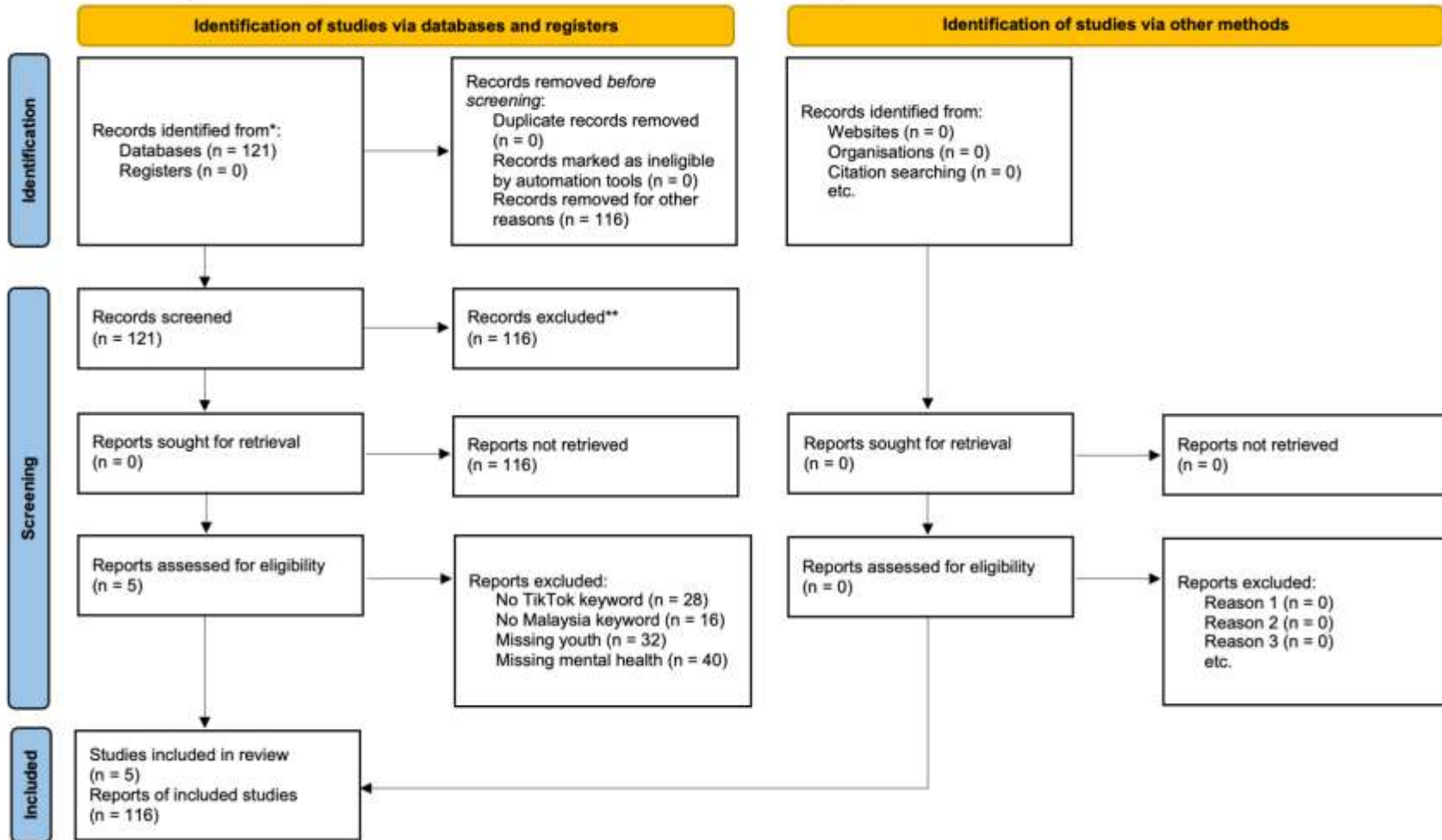


Figure 1: PRISMA 2021 Flow Diagram

From: Page MJ, McKenzie JE, Bossuyt PM, Boutron I, Hoffmann TC, Mulrow CD, et al. The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ* 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71. For more information, visit: <http://www.prisma-statement.org/>

TABLE 4: Description of Studies

Article No	Title	Study Objective	Method Used	Results	Discussion	Recommendation
1.	Impact of TikTok Usage into Micro-Fame and Mental Health Among Teenagers in Malaysia.	To investigate the impact of TikTok usage into micro-fame and mental health among teenagers.	Qualitative Research (Content Analysis)	TikTok significantly impacts today's teenagers, leading to depression and poor mental health. When TikTok users perceive their material to be less authentically satisfying, they experience social isolation. It is believed that when adolescents connect face-to-face with their peers, they adapt to a different set of social norms than when they work with their peers on TikTok. They are perceived to be more outspoken on social media because of their anonymity and ability to avoid reacting to hateful comments on TikTok.	This study aids parents in understanding the negative impact image-focused applications have on children and encourages youths to exercise greater caution when using the programme. The collected data determined that there were similarities between the issues expressed by parents and the criticism provided by users. Therefore, parents and younger TikTok users are aware of a micro-fame guarantee that the application contains profanity and inappropriate comments. TikTok users claim that young women are bound to receive modest and stereotypical comments.	<p>> First, the study's sample consisted of parents with children between the ages of 18 and 29, therefore its findings cannot be extended to the viewpoints of youngsters themselves. Therefore, the study should focus on youth only as they could be the better sample for this study.</p> <p>> This study suggests that it is conceivable that similar synthetic content exists on social media, allowing millions of individuals to engage in the same activity or use content consistent with their everyday lives.</p>
2.	The Influence of Sensation Seeking Behaviour and Social Media Addiction on Happiness among Young Adults in Malaysia.	To determine the relationship of sensation seeking, social media addiction and mental health among young adults in Malaysia.	Quantitative Research (Survey)	The results reveal that the degree of happiness among young adults in Malaysia is low, indicating that the more addicted a person is, the more likely they are to be unhappy. Using "Google Trends" for research, they observed detrimental effects on well-being and mental health, which is consistent with the results of this study. As TikTok harms the well-being of young adults, the pursuit of depression, anxiety, and	Only a limited handful of studies have been conducted on the three variables of sensation-seeking behavior, social media addiction, and happiness. Researchers in Malaysia can discover practical strategies to increase the happiness level of young adults in Malaysia based on the findings of this study.	<p>> This study should be conducted longer to capture participation throughout the research process, allowing us to recruit more potential participants. Then, future researchers can perform identical research in a different context, locale, and culture. This is to determine whether our findings can be contradicted. Additionally, they can concentrate on new theories or other contemporary models relevant to the research subject.</p>

				isolation has increased dramatically.		> Other suggestions for future researchers are when collecting demographic details, it is essential to include all identities. This is a potential step toward achieving exceptional equality for LGBTQ+ individuals.
3.	Cyberbullying on TikTok under the influence of COVID-19 among Youth in Malaysia.	To understand how the COVID-19 pandemic, which affects TikTok usage, increases the incidence of cyberbullying and mental health.	Quantitative Research (Survey)	Based on the result, the rapid growth of Instagram "reels" posts and contents on TikTok's sudden rise to prominence as social media use rose may be the cause of an increase in cyberbullying occurrences and have a negative effect on the victims' mental health.	Based on the observation, the sudden growth of Instagram "reels" posts and TikTok's fast rise to prominence as social media use rose may cause an increase in cyberbullying occurrences and harm the victims' mental health. Therefore, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of combating cyberbullying, as it is an increasing problem among Malaysians, particularly young people with severe mental health consequences.	<p>> Firstly, this study adopted a single method of data collection. Due to the limits imposed by the pandemic, which limited the capacity to test multiple approaches, an online survey was designed.</p> <p>> Second, the sample size for the data collection and analysis was restricted to 200 respondents.</p> <p>> Third, this study concentrated on young individuals, particularly university students in Malaysia. Therefore, extending the sample size to include diverse nationalities and age groups will provide considerable improvements.</p>
4.	Adolescent Screen Time Associated with Risk Factor of Fear of Missing Out on TikTok During Pandemic COVID-19 in Malaysia.	To explore the youth's screen time and its contribution to fear of missing out on TikTok and its effect towards mental health.	Qualitative Research (Semi-Structured Interview)	Youth is critical for developing and maintaining social and emotional habits important to mental health. The results show that teens spent more time with their peers before the pandemic than with their families to develop meaningful experiences and self-identity.	Essential for mental health is the formation and maintenance of social and emotional habits during youth. For example, before the epidemic, adolescents spent more time with their friends than with their families to acquire meaningful experiences and a sense of self. The survey results also indicate that respondents	Future research should investigate what these adolescents, parents, and educators should do differently and how technologists should design products that consider psychological factors.

					believe that social media platforms like TikTok are well-established platforms for self-expression that harm mental health.	
5.	The Impact of TikTok on Depression among University Students in Malaysia.	To investigate the impact of TikTok usage towards depression among university students which is to evaluate if social media usage is a force that can make a difference in the depression level of a person.	Quantitative Research (Survey)	This study confirmed and revealed a positive correlation; however, the analysis revealed a moderate correlation between social media usage and depression among university students. This finding was supported by research on the association between online social networking and depression in college students, which determined that college students who use TikTok are at a greater risk for depression.	Generally, university students who use social media more frequently have a greater risk of depression. Conversely, individuals with reduced social media usage have a lower incidence of depression.	Future researchers are encouraged to conduct a face-to-face interview-based survey to obtain more accurate results and conclusions. In addition, future research should employ progressively specialized evaluations to determine how age, gender, ethnicity, educational level, and time spent on social media influence university student depression.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

This study on the influence of TikTok content plays a significant role towards mental health among youth in Malaysia. Longstanding concerns about the effects of social media like TikTok use on mental health have intensified in recent years [21]. In 2021, for instance, Frances Haugen made Instagram's internal research on the mental health effects of the photo app on youth users public, which revealed an increase in eating disorders among teenage girls and sparked widespread calls for stricter regulation [22]. However, TikTok hosts similarly harmful content, and experts warn that the platform's innovative features raise unique concerns. Experts concede, stating that while these TikTok contents can offer support and a creative way to cope with grief, they can also result and cause an effect in additional trauma for users, particularly youth. Disclosure of abuse or mental health issues can be traumatic and harmful for many individuals.

In addition, there are a few limitations in the reviewed articles. Most of the studies in this systematic review that used quantitative research methodology during the pandemic were using online surveys. The issue encountered during the online survey is that participants are less likely to remain fully engaged for an 8 to 10 minutes survey. Some respondents may have abandoned the study because they perceived it as too lengthy. Then, participants may find repeated requests to complete the survey to be annoying. Without an identification tool or personal identification concerns, it is impossible to determine if the correct individual is completing the sample and responding to the research questions [23]. Meanwhile, some qualitative studies in this systematic review employ content analysis and interviews and rely solely on online interviews and online data collection. Informants require a dependable internet connection; otherwise, researchers may experience call interruptions, lag, or frozen images. Unfortunately, there is not much that researchers can do to address this issue from an interviewer's perspective, and the interview session may need to be rescheduled [24]. For instance, one of the studies included in this systematic review required informants to record their daily use of TikTok, which could affect productivity and result in informants lying about their consumption.

In conclusion, based on the results of this systematic review, quantitative methodologies are the most appropriate for investigating the mental health issue among youth associated with TikTok content. This is because all three qualitative studies included in this systematic review were remarkably impressive. The respondents were more plentiful than in the other studies presented in this systematic review, making the results more prominent and reliable. Future researchers that intend to study mental health issues among social media users may consider employing face-to-face surveys to eliminate ambiguity and improve the quality of data collection. In a face-to-face survey, the researcher is physically present to ask survey questions and assist the respondent in answering them which could smoothen the data collection. Finally, future studies should consider expanding their focus beyond young adults to other age groups.

6.0 References

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