**The Role of TikTok in Shaping Social Values: Insights from University Students**

**ABSTRACT**

Social values are essential for the development of societies, with individuals playing a crucial role in adhering to and promoting these values. The advancement of technology and the rise of social media platforms, especially TikTok, have significantly impacted the social values of users, particularly among younger people. This study aims to explore the extent in which TikTok Is used by youth and its influence on their social values. Additionally, the study examines the relationship between the platform's use and shaping these values. This research investigates the level of engagement in which young people have with TikTok and its impact on their social values, aiming to understand the relation between TikTok usage and the development of youth’s social values. The study's findings reveal that 69.7% of the participants use TikTok, with the majority of users aged between (16-20) years old. Additionally, the research indicates that TikTok usage is linked to the increased selfish behavior and a decline in social respect among users. Consequently, the study suggests that TikTok negatively affects social values among young individuals.

***Keywords****: Digital Culture; Youth Culture, Social Media Platforms, Social Value.*

1. **INTRODUCTION**

**PROBLEM OF THE STUDY**

Each platform having both positive and negative impacts on its users and communities. According to a study Oktarini et al. 2022, TikTok can have several negative effects. These include the use of hurtful language, sexual harassment, and other inappropriate behaviors, which contribute to a toxic environment on the platform. Such negative behaviors can harm users' well-being and hinder meaningful social connections. Furthermore, these harmful interactions can prevent users from developing strong, supportive relationships within their communities, both online and offline. As a result, while TikTok offers opportunities for creativity and connection, it also poses risks to the quality of social relationships and mental health in the digital space. The problem of this study is that there is lack of understanding the role in which TikTok could have on youth’s social behavior.

Due to its content focusing on entertainment, beauty, fandom, and attractiveness, TikTok significantly influences the culture and behaviors of the youth. A segment of the platform's user base has expressed that excessive time spent on TikTok has led to feelings of guilt and disappointment. Consequently, these individuals find themselves lacking strong connections with their family, friends, and community. As a result, TikTok has played a role in shaping the understanding of social values among the youth (Fathi, 2021; Bakhtyar et al., 2021).

Luthen & Soelaiman (2022), believe that there has been a positive correlation between TikTok and business, which means those who use TikTok for business, get more benefits, asthey use TikTok to promote for their products and thus they gain more incomes.

TikTok has another benefit, TikTok gives pleasure to users during of having depression, and watching entertainment video has an effect on Feeling happy, also this application is a good place for those who has a talent and wants to be famous. Having access to accounts of influential figures who share insights on various topics allows us to learn valuable skills from knowledgeable individuals. TikTok also serves as a great platform to discover volunteer opportunities in NGOs, internships, and scholarships, positively impacting the development of young people’s skills.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study explores the extent to which young people use TikTok, with a focus on understanding its impacts on social values. A key goal is to raise awareness about how TikTok influences social values, particularly among youth. An important aspect of this study is its emphasis on social values, as there is a lack of research on the intersection of social values and TikTok use among young people in Kurdistan, particularly in Halabja city.

**AIMS OF THE STUDY**

The main aims of this study are as following:

1. Illustrating the changes in social values brought about by TikTok.

2. Determining the proportion of individuals utilizing the TikTok platform.

3. Investigating the correlation between TikTok usage and social values among the youth.

4. Identifying the predominant demographic group (age, gender, and economic level) with the highest TikTok usage percentage.

**2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

**2.1. TikTok Platform**

Social media platforms have offered the users an interactive virtual world in which they can to be in contact with friends and various groups and communities. They share and deliver contents and information in different fields of society (Qadir and Fatah, 2023; Muhamad & Ahmed, 2021). Today, TikTok, is one of the most popular social media platforms in the world. Users can post videos ranging from 15 to 60 seconds within the online community (Wang, 2022; Zuo & Wang, 2019). It has has grown and spread rapidly, leading to significant changes in the policies of the digital world (Guinaudeau et al., 2022; Nasih & Aziz, 2024). The platform's origins trace back to ByteDance, a company based in Beijing, which founded in 2016. Initially, the platform was named Douyin, but later the company launched it internationally and named it TikTok (Miltsov, 2022).

Like other social media platform, TikTok also has both positive and negative effects on users. For instance, it has been associated with selfish and narcissistic behaviors, that often visible in the content shared on the platform, which can negatively affect self-acceptance (Zuo & Wang, 2019; Hamasilih et al., 2025). According to the previous study (TikTok usage has been linked to harmful behaviors such as the use of hurtful language and sexual harassment. These negative elements contribute to a digital community where users may struggle to form strong, supportive social relationships. However, the study also pointed out that TikTok can be beneficial if used in a proper way. For example, Rahmawati (2022) highlighted that TikTok is a valuable platform for learning new skills, such as learning English. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries implemented strict lockdowns and movement restrictions to curb the spread of the virus, which affected educational institutions and schools. In response, the Ministry of Education in several countries adopted online education systems to engage students more effectively, sharing lessons through short videos. TikTok was one of these platforms that helped in this regard as it offers an important environment for accessing useful information across various fields, including medicine, cooking, education, and business, helping viewers to enhance their skills (Mohamed et al., 2023).

While TikTok influences social values positively, it also hosts inappropriate content posted by users. Social values are shaped by the thoughts, beliefs, and moral principles accepted by society. These values consist of a set of beliefs and principles deemed right by the community (Türkkahraman, 2014). Youth development occurs through social education, besides various institutions play significant roles in this process. Social development is a creative and transformative process, facilitating interaction between individuals and society as they work towards achieving a mature position in society. According to (Abdullah, 2020), several key institutions contribute to shaping social values, including:

1. The Family: The first and most crucial social unit, plays an essential role in educating young people, teaching them values, behaviors, and other social standards.
2. Friends: Friends influence the social development of young people, with interactions between friends in various groups contributing to the exchange of information and mutual influence.
3. Educational Institutions such as schools, universities, and colleges): These formal institutions provide educational and cultural functions, supporting the intellectual, psychological, and social development of young people.
4. Religious Places: These spaces play a significant role in shaping beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to religion (such as God-worship) and influence youth in psychological, social, and educational aspects.
5. Workplaces: After graduation, young people often seek employment, where they engage more with society and the market, further shaping their social development.
6. Civil Society Organizations: These organizations, especially those with youth programs (courses, workshops, training, seminars), contribute to social development.
7. Media and Social Media: Social networks, such as TikTok, influence social development, particularly among young people, who are the most active group in using these platforms. Social media has a profound impact on their social interactions and values (Abdullah, 2020).

Given the influence TikTok has on young people, with many spending a considerable amount of time on the platform, there have been some studies conducted in Kurdistan region regarding TikTok usage. However, these studies primarily focus on usage patterns, and there has not yet been a study specifically examining the effect of TikTok on social values among the youth in Kurdistan.

**2.2. SOCIAL VALUES**

Scholars have differed in their definitions of values, with some attributing their origin to religion and others linking them to society. This divergence has led to various definitions aimed at clarifying the concept, prompting researchers to establish specific definitions for their studies. Measuring values in practice remains one of the most challenging aspects of social research. As Rokeach (1973) highlights, values are central to human behavior, shaping attitudes and guiding actions across a range of life contexts.

A value is a belief that an individual adopts and adopts, which influences them to become morally upright and capable of adapting to their group or society. These values are often referred to as "social values" because they emerge from the interactions and communications between individuals within a group or society, as Schwartz (1992) suggests. Values reflect personal traits that align with what people prefer or desire within a particular culture. Customs, traditions, and norms are shaped by these values within any society. Consequently, values are typically acquired; the deeper and more ingrained they are, the more they are absorbed unconsciously, ultimately guiding behavior without conscious awareness. Recent studies by Graham et al. (2019) emphasize how values form the foundation of social systems and cultural identities, influencing how individuals relate to their communities. In addition, Bourdieu (1990) argues that values are not just abstract beliefs but are embedded in social practices and norms that define cultural and social behaviors. These values are perpetuated through ongoing social interactions, significantly contributing to both personal identity and the broader cultural fabric of society.

For this study, a specific set of values has been derived from an established scale, including: (Solidarity; Using kind words in communication and dialogue; The pursuit of knowledge; A desire for success; Diligence; Ambition; Religious commitment; Providing advice and guidance; Modesty and decency; Humility; Respect for others; Friendship; Honesty). These values play a crucial role in shaping behavior and social interactions, directing individuals toward what is deemed culturally appropriate and desirable.

**3. MATERIAL AND METHOD**

This study employed a descriptive and quantitative research model to gather data and derive findings. Utilizing survey forms as the primary tool for data collection, the researcher sought information that aligns with the objectives of the study.

For testing the reliability, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program and Cronbach's Alpha were used in this study to assess the internal reliability. As a result, the internal reliability level of the provisions was found to be excellent Table 1.

**Table1. Alpha Cronbach’s Result**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Items** | **Cronbach's Alpha** |
| 19 | 0.98 |

Questionnaire forms used in the study and included three sections, the demographic information of the participants, and the TikTok platform and Social values. The questionnaire form was distributed among the participants, who were young people from Halabja city and 195 young people responded. To analyze this data, the researcher utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software and Microsoft Excel. SPSS was particularly useful for processing and analyzing the survey data, while Excel was employed to create visual representations, such as figures and tables, for clearer understanding (Ahmed & Muhamad, 2024; Palani et al., 2025).

Two key tools in SPSS were used for the analysis. The first tool, "Frequencies," helped to gather personal information and determine the percentage of young people in Halabja, who actively use TikTok. This tool provided an overview of the demographic breakdown of the participants and their platform usage patterns. The second tool, "Correlate," was used to explore the relationship between TikTok usage and social values. This function allowed the researcher to assess whether a significant correlation exists between the two variables among the youth in Halabja.

By using these tools, the researcher was able to draw insights into the extent of TikTok usage and its potential effects on social values within this specific demographic. These methods ensured a comprehensive analysis of the data, contributing to a clearer understanding of the topic.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Table 2. Socio-demographic information of participants**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Information** | | **N. participant** | **%** |
| Gender | Male | 78 | 44.6 |
| Female | 108 | 55.4 |
| Age | 16-20 | 73 | 37.4 |
| 21-25 | 99 | 50.8 |
| 26-30 | 9 | 4.6 |
| 31-35 | 11 | 5.6 |
| 36-40 | 3 | 1.5 |
| Education Level | Basic | 7 | 3.6 |
| High | 37 | 19 |
| Diploma | 6 | 3.1 |
| Bachelor | 134 | 68.7 |
| Master & PhD | 11 | 5.6 |

The demographic analysis of TikTok users in this table reveals that the platform is predominantly used by young individuals, with 88.2% of participants aged between 16 and 25 years old. The largest age group is 21-25 years old (50.8%), followed by 16-20 years old (37.4%), while older age groups (26-40 years old) are significantly underrepresented. In terms of gender distribution, there are slightly more female users (55.4%) than male users (44.6%), indicating a marginal preference for TikTok among females. Regarding education levels, the majority of participants hold Bachelor’s degree (68.7%), while a smaller percentage have attained Master’s or PhD degree (5.6%). Individuals with only a basic or high school education make up 22.6% of the sample. These findings suggest that TikTok is widely used among young, university-educated individuals, with a slight predominance of female users (Hamasalih et al., 2025).

**Table 3. Percentage of TikTok users based on, gender, age, economic status**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **%** | **N** | **Information** | |
| 25.1 | 49 | Female | Gender |
| 44.6 | 87 | Male |
| 37.4 | 73 | 16-20 | Age |
| 32.3 | 63 | 21-25 |

The analysis of Table 3 indicates that male users (44.6%) are more active on TikTok compared to female users (25.1%), contradicting the previous table, which showed a higher number of female participants. This suggests that while more females may have participated in the study, male users tend to be more engaged on TikTok. In terms of age, the highest percentage of users falls within the 16-20 age group (37.4%), followed closely by those aged 21-25 (32.3%). This confirms that TikTok is primarily popular among young individuals, particularly teenagers and young adults. However, the table does not provide insights into economic status, which was mentioned in the title but not reflected in the data (Hameed et al., 2025; Aziz et al., 2025).

**Table 4. The use of TikTok and reflects on social values**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **St. Deviation** | **Mean** | **Disagree %** | **Natural %** | **Agree %** | **Opinions** |
| 0.794 | 2.35 | 38 | 17.4 | 13.8 | It leads to increased cooperation among individuals. |
|  | 2.58 | 46.7 | 16.9 | 6.2 | It leads to an increase in the commitment to the deal and promises. |
| 0.834 | 2.29 | 36.9 | 15.9 | 16.9 | It affects increase the love among individuals. |
| 0.710 | 2.51 | 44.1 | 16.6 | 8.7 | It causes rising tolerance among individuals. |
| 0.696 | 2.57 | 47.7 | 13.8 | 8.2 | It causes us to build strong Social Relationships. |
| 0.642 | 2.63 | 47.7 | 13.3 | 6.2 | TikTok is the reason to spread honesty between individuals. |
| 0.603 | 2.65 | 49.7 | 15.5 | 4.6 | It Causes to rise in respect among individuals. |
| 0.750 | 2.49 | 45.1 | 12.8 | 10.8 | It leads to an increase in Donations among individuals. |
| 0.803 | 1.65 | 14.4 | 16.4 | 39.0 | TikTok is the reason to spread selfishness among individuals. |
| 0.830 | 1.61 | 12.8 | 16.9 | 40.0 | It Causes Increased Infidelity in the Marital Relationships. |
| 0.696 | 1.36 | 8.7 | 7.7 | 53.3 | TikTok is the reason to appear strange social values in society. |
| 0.835 | 1.88 | 20.5 | 20.5 | 28.7 | It is the reason to make more money and build a better life. |
| 0.801 | 2.30 | 35.9 | 19.0 | 14.9 | it is an important place to learn new skills and find new jobs. |

The results indicate that TikTok has a limited positive impact on fostering social values, as most statements reflecting positive social behavior received higher disagreement percentages. For instance, 49.7% of respondents disagreed that TikTok spreads honesty, while 47.7% disagreed that it helps build strong social relationships. Similarly, 46.7% of participants disagreed that TikTok increases commitment to deals and promises. The mean scores for these aspects are relatively low (ranging between 2.29 and 2.65), indicating that most users do not strongly associate TikTok with enhancing social cooperation, respect, or tolerance.

On the contrary, TikTok appears to be linked to certain negative social behaviors. For example, 40% of participants agreed that TikTok increases infidelity in marital relationships, while 39% agreed that it spreads selfishness. A significant 53.3% agreed that it introduces strange social values into society, which received one of the lowest mean scores (1.36), indicating strong agreement. Additionally, the perception that TikTok helps individuals make more money and build a better life had mixed responses, with 28.7% agreeing and 20.5% disagreeing. Similarly, opinions were divided on whether TikTok is a valuable platform for learning new skills and job opportunities, with 35.9% disagreeing while only 14.9% agreed.

**Table 5. Correlation between social value and TikTok usage**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **N** | **P-value** | **r.** | **Item** |
| 136 | 0.000 | 0.877 | Social value and TikTok usage |

This table reports a **strong positive correlation (r = 0.877, p = 0.000)** between **TikTok usage and social values**, indicating that as TikTok usage increases, social values also tend to increase. Since the **p-value is 0.000**, this correlation is statistically significant, meaning that the relationship is unlikely to be due to chance.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Fig. 1. Percentage of TikTok users**

According to Figure 1, the majority of survey participants use the TikTok platform, representing a significant percentage of the study's respondents. This high usage rate suggests that TikTok plays a prominent role in the daily lives of many individuals within the study group.

**Fig. 2. Reasons for not use TikTok**

Figure 2 illustrates various reasons why people avoid using TikTok, with the majority (green) selecting "All of them," indicating multiple concerns. A significant portion (blue) simply dislikes the platform, while smaller sections highlight specific issues like fake news (orange), irrelevance to daily life (yellow), and conflicts with social values (light blue). Some also feel TikTok doesn’t align with their priorities and goals (gray). Overall, the data suggests that while personal preference plays a role, broader concerns like misinformation and social impact contribute to TikTok’s avoidance.

**Fig. 3. The figure focuses on reasons for using TikTok**.

Figure 3 illustrates the various reasons why participants use TikTok. The largest portion of respondents indicated that they use the platform to "be aware of news and information" and "to pass time," as shown by the dominant green section of the figure 4. Other reasons include advancing business and skills, maintaining social relationships, showcasing personal activities, and seeking fame or wealth. Notably, a significant percentage of participants selected "All of them," suggesting that many users engage with TikTok for multiple purposes rather than a single reason. This highlights the platform's multifaceted role in entertainment, communication, and personal development (Saeed et al., 2025; Abdula et al., 2025; Sirwan et al., 2025).

**Fig. 4. The figure displays four time duration options**, **showing** **the amount of time spent on TikTok.**

According to Figure (4), the time spent on TikTok varies among participants. The largest segments of respondents reported using the platform for less than 1 hour and from 1 to 2 hours per day, as indicated by the blue and orange sections of the figure 4. A smaller percentage of participants spend 3 to 4 hours (gray) or more than 5 hours (yellow) on the platform daily. These findings suggest that while TikTok usage is common, the duration of engagement differs, with most users spending a moderate amount of time on the platform rather than excessive hours.

**Fig. 5. The figure displays the most popular TikTok Categories**

Figure 5. represents the most popular TikTok content categories. The most significant category is **"Each information that I get it,"** indicating that users consume a wide variety of content. The **"Public Information Subject"** follows as another highly popular category, suggesting users engage with informational or news-related content. Other categories, such as **"Sexual subject," "Health subject," and "Sport subject,"** have lower engagement levels. **Political, economic, and science subjects** appear to be the least popular. This suggests that TikTok users predominantly seek general information, entertainment, and lifestyle-related content rather than niche or academic topics.

**Fig. 6. The figure visually compares the prevalence, importance, or rating of different motivations for using a TikTok platform**

Figure 6 highlights that the most common consequence of using TikTok is **spending time**, followed by users experiencing **multiple effects** (All of them). Some users also associate TikTok with **depression**, while others find it useful for **science and information** or raising awareness on various topics. However, TikTok appears to have minimal impact on **job opportunities, financial gain, or social connections**. Overall, the platform is primarily used for entertainment, with both positive and negative effects on users.

**Fig. 7. The figure displays the negative effect of using TikTok**

Figure 7 illustrates the negative effects of using TikTok on young people, based on survey responses. The most significant finding is that 71 percent of participants identified "wasting time" as the most common side effect of the platform. This suggests that a majority of young users are aware of how TikTok contributes to poor time management, likely due to its addictive short-form content and continuous scrolling features.

**Fig. 8. The figure displays changes in social value by TikTok platform**

According to figure 8, there is a significant contrast in values, with "Selfish" and "Values of respect" being the most dominant, both reaching the highest frequency. This suggests that while respect is highly regarded, selfishness is also prevalent, potentially indicating a gap between ideals and actions. "Value of cooperation" and "Value of love" show moderate representation, reflecting some level of teamwork and emotional connection. However, the lower frequencies in "Value of tolerance" and "Value of promises and agreements" suggest a potential struggle with patience, commitment, and trust within the observed group. The overall distribution indicates a complex dynamic where respect is valued, yet self-centered tendencies and a lack of tolerance may challenge interpersonal harmony.

**Fig. 9. The figure displays making money through the TikTok platform.**

Figure 9. illustrates responses to a question with four possible answers: "Yes," "No," "Sometimes," and "Never." The most prominent response is "No," which significantly outnumbers the other categories, suggesting a strong negative sentiment toward the subject in question. "Yes," "Sometimes," and "Never" have relatively similar counts, indicating a more balanced distribution among those who did not choose "No." The presence of "Sometimes" and "Never" suggests variability in experiences or opinions. Overall, figure 10, reflects a dominant trend of rejection, with some respondents exhibiting uncertainty or occasional agreement.

**Fig. 10. The importance of making money and protecting social values**

Figure 10. illustrates the distribution of motivations among three categories: "Make Money" (71%), "Social Value" (15%), and "Neutral" (14%). The majority prioritize financial gain, indicating a strong focus on profit-driven decisions. Social value holds significantly less influence, with only 15% considering it a primary factor. Meanwhile, 14% remain neutral, showing a small but notable portion without a strong preference. This suggests that financial incentives dominate decision-making, while social impact plays a much smaller role.

**Fig. 11. The feelings that arise when someone sacrifices social values to make money**

According to figure 11, presents different emotional and behavioral responses to a particular situation. The most dominant response, "I am going to be afraid of the future of my community," has the highest frequency, suggesting that the majority of respondents feel a strong sense of worry or uncertainty about their community’s future. The second most common response, "Going to be sad," indicates that a significant portion of individual’s experience sadness in reaction to the situation. Other responses, such as "It's normal to me" and "I am looking for a solution," have lower frequencies, suggesting that fewer individuals see the situation as routine or are actively seeking solutions. The least common response is "Everyone should do that," implying that there is little consensus on collective action.

Overall, the data reflects a strong prevalence of fear and sadness, with fewer individuals focusing on solutions or normalizing the situation. This suggests a need for strategies to address collective concerns and encourage proactive problem-solving.

**4. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the study reveals that the majority of participants are TikTok users. The primary objectives were, first, to determine which age group uses TikTok the most. Survey responses indicate that individuals aged 16–20 show the highest engagement with the platform. Second, the study explores the relationship between TikTok and youth social values. The findings suggest that TikTok negatively impacts social values. Specifically, the study highlights that participants prioritize protecting social values over earning money. Additionally, TikTok has been linked to increased infidelity in marital relationships, the emergence of unfamiliar social norms, and a rise in individual selfishness. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the platform tends to reinforce negative values more than positive ones. However, the study also acknowledges that TikTok offers some benefits, such as opportunities for business, talent showcasing, job-seeking, scholarships, and skill development.

Future research should focus on gathering more data from diverse segments of society, particularly among TikTok users in various cities across Kurdistan. Additionally, researchers could conduct comparative studies between TikTok users and non-users to analyze their behaviors and assess the platform's impact on their social values.

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