Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

EXPLORING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF TIK

TOK CONTENT CREATORS AMONG UNIMAS STUDENTS.

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Bachelor of Psychology (Honours)

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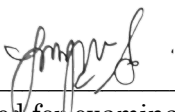
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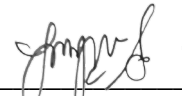
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This project is submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
Bachelor of Psychology with Honours

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK
(2022)

The project entitled **Exploring the Psychological Well-being of Tik Tok content creator among UNIMAS students'** was prepared by **Amethystia Edlyz Asfahani-Ayn anak Edward (72994)** and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Psychology with Honours

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Abstract

The study aimed to explore the experience and journey on how UNIMAS students became a content creator on the latest trend applications among youths, which is known as Tik Tok and also their psychological well-being on being one. To be more specific on the study, it also indulged on, besides their experiences, regarding the challenges they faced daily under their content and the advantages they give and received on making contents via their platform. The study had a total of 8 UNIMAS students who has a platform on Tik Tok for content creating were scouted to participate in the interview for the findings of this study.

Keywords: psychological well-being, university students, content creator, Tik Tok, trend, Gen Z

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

TikTok is a social networking platform that was launched in the middle of 2016. According to recent reports, this China's social networking app has 150 million daily active users. TikTok is an app where many could download it for entertainment purposes through Google Play Store for Android user and Apple app store for IOS user. TikTok is a social media platform for short videos and focuses on vertical reading (Yu1, 2019). This is quite similar to the reels from Instagram and YouTube where it also mainly focuses on the video production.

TikTok formerly known as Musically didn't received much recognition and support when it was relatively new. However, from the start of early 2020, TikTok received an enormous amount support mainly youths that wanted to present themselves as a content creator besides YouTube being the only platform for the purpose. In addition, the year 2020 are known to be the year where pandemic has struck our country which lead to full movement control order where we are required to stay at home.

Tik Tok influencers and content creators has made name to themselves through the various videos they have done in which showcases their talent either in beauty, music, providing useful advices to their targeted audiences and many more. One of the notable Tik Tok influencers would be Charlie D'Amelio, a famous 18-year-old teenager from the USA where she went viral on the

platform for her charming ways of dancing which is now making her the most followed Tik Tok influencers. This has not only lead Charlie to create a name for herself but also to their whole family; older sister, Dixie D'Amelio, mother, Heidi D'Amelio and Marc D'Amelio. In terms of followers, it is no surprise they have reached millions of followers thanks to Charlie's influence in the platform. However, despite being the most popular one in the platform, she experienced tons of malicious comments just because she was enjoying her time posting videos and also for being a teenager and what is ironic about the situation was most of her haters are from teenagers themselves and also adults. This is nothing to be surprise of as from personal experience, many would flood other Tik Tok influencers and content creators who are still in their adolescent with malicious comments and a few went too far by sending death threats as well. As the 'breakthrough generation,' or young people who spend the majority of their time online, bring a large part of their life online, associating with genuine friends as well as strangers, hate speech may have a big impact on their personal growth and well-being (Jabłońska, 2016).

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Because of the rapid growth of the short video market, a variety of short video applications appear at the appropriate moment and spread swiftly. Tik Tok or formerly known as Musical.ly is not falling behind as they managed to keep up on becoming one of the trending application among social media users since 2020. It has been growing steadily for the past years since it first establishment in 2016 but the numbers of users' double from 55 million in 2018 to 689 million in 2020 (Shen, 2021). There is no finalized statistic including this year however, the growth will be expected to increase for the upcoming years. There is a reason why this video social software is very popular among the youths; one would be the data algorithm. The big data algorithm of Tik Tok here means it follows the users' browsing content analysis and preferences and then

recommended related content to different users (Liqian, 2018). Due to the algorithm system, it helps content creator on Tik Tok to reach a bigger audience among the users themselves due to constant engagements from their users.

It was also no surprise that the application itself was made for the Gen Z cohort based on an interview being made by Musical.ly or now known as Tik Tok founder, Alex Zhu. He stated that this focus on the target of the young generation as it swiftly dominates the teen market over the years since 2016 until the recently. During the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, the global lockdowns further catalyzed the massive expansion and diversification of Tik Tok's user groups (Zeng, Abidin, & Schafer, 2021). Due to this sudden growth, this was the start of an early and rapid growth of the Tik Tok community which leading people especially the youngsters to indulge themselves in the world of Tik Tok as a content creator as they post videos mainly on their specialty whether based on education purposes, cooking, entertainment and more. The lockdown may be the bad news for the year 2020 due to the pandemic but it has contributed a lot of help into growing the Tik Tok community into something meaningful.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The research on social media has influence the psychological wellbeing of youth in general has been made into a research and study by many notable researchers from every field. However, there seems to be lacking on qualitative studies on university students who is also a content creator in general. This study may be an important inclusion to the knowledge in this field as it explores further in details on the influence of university students' psychological wellbeing as both students and content creators. There seems to be lacking of study being done focusing on university students specifically besides (Swathi & Devakumar, 2020; Mathewson, 2019-2020) as most of the studies found mainly focusing on gender wise (Lokithasan et al, 2019), young adults in general as it does

not specify either a university students or working adults (Burnell, George & Underwood, 2020) and also surprisingly young children (Pederson & Aspevig, 2018). This study will focus mainly on university students maintaining their wellbeing while also playing a role as a student and content creator.

This research will also contribute from the eastern point of view as it will focus mainly on university students from UNIMAS, Malaysia as some of the research being done in the western perspective (Mathewson, 2019-2020; Ostic et al, 2021). The study was narrow down to the eastern side to further clarify other perspectives especially on cultural differences. Also, from my point of view, most of the research papers found online mainly focuses on other social platform that can considered old but still popular among the youths today such as Instagram, Twitter and even Facebook while there seems to be lack of research and study on Tik Tok as this application platform can be considered very new while the ones mentioned are mostly being taken as a study focus due to its popularity on the main topic of effect of social media. The media has become a source of fascination for teens and young adults all around the world and the Gen Z generation, defined as those born between 1997 and 2012, is adept at expressing themselves through mobile devices such as phones and tablets, and TikTok is only one of hundreds of options available to them (Dilon,2020). The research is centered on the Tik Tok platform due to it immense popularity among Malaysians as its not only can allows people to see videos based on their location but due to the advance technology of Tik Tok called algorithm, it is easier for users to watch videos related to the ones of their interest.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.3.1General Objective

1.   To explore the psychological well-being of Tik Tok content creators among UNIMAS students.

1.3.2   Specific Objectives

1.   To explore the challenges faced by students as a Tik Tok content creators (Tik Tokers).

2.   To explore the advantages of being a Tik Tokers as a student.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What are the experiences of the students on their journey as a Tik Tok influencer (Tik Tokers)?
2. What are the challenges faced by content creators before and after they joined Tik Tok?
3. What are the advantages they faced while becoming a content creator as a student?

1.5 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING OF TIKTOK CONTENT CREATORS (TIKTOKERS) AMONG UNIMAS STUDENTS

-Challenges as a Tik Tok creator and to well-being
--Advantages as a Tik Tok content creator

Data Collection

Data Analysis

THEMATIC ANALYSIS by Braun & Clark (2006)

-Qualitative Approach

-Snowball and Purposive Sampling

-Semi-structured Interview

-Location: UNIMAS, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak.

Participants:
8 Tik Tok content creators who are UNIMAS students

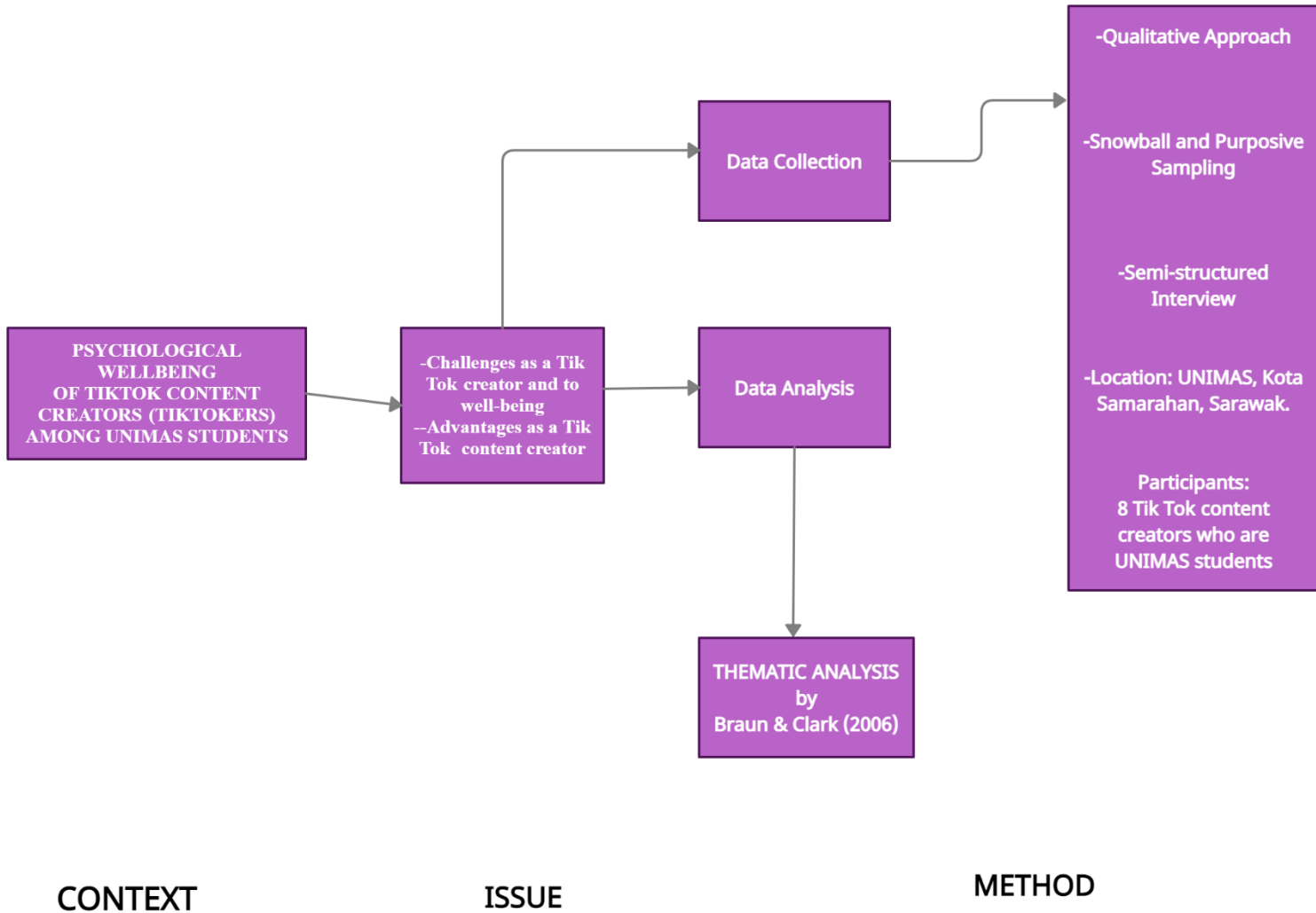CONTEXT   ISSUE   METHOD

Figure 1.6 Research framework of study

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1.6 DEFINITION OF TERM

1.6.1 TIKTOKERS OR TIK TOK INFLUENCERS

Conceptual definition: Tik Tok influencers is a person who regularly appears or share in Tik Tok videos as the content creator. It allows them to make short videos content as part of their daily routine for the entertainment of their audiences.

Operational definition: Tik Tok influencers or Tik Tokers here brings the meaning of an individual who is currently running a Tik Tok account as a content creator where they post content related to what they specialized at in order to reach their specific target of audiences as a student. For example, A is a content creator that is related to music so that falls in the category of either dancing and singing. From there, their main target audience would be people who watch Tik Tok to see other people dancing or singing. Another example would be an individual who is student but wanting to help people in their studies by giving them tips and study hacks hence their content are related more on educational purposes where they post their study life, the tips they are doing in life as a way to create the motivation in the audiences' targeted.

1.6.2 Psychological well-being

Conceptual definition: Psychological wellbeing is extremely comparable to other phrases that relate to good mental states, such as happiness or contentment, and in many respects, worrying about small distinctions between such concepts is neither required nor beneficial.

Operational definition: In this research, psychological well-being refers to the exploring the experience of students who own a Tik Tok platform as a content creator while facing the hardships and even benefits on being one through the interview session being held by the researchers through a guided questionnaire being prepared.

1.6.3 Tik Tok

Conceptual definition: TikTok is a video-sharing software that allows users to make and share 15-second films on any subject. The TikTok app provides users with a diverse range of noises and music excerpts, as well as the possibility to apply various effects and filters. There is also the ability to immediately upload movies from your phone.

Operational definition: Tik Tok is chosen to be the main platform for content creators to post their videos for entertainment or just simply showcasing and sharing their inner talent onto the platform. The participants being chosen should be a Tik Tok content creator where they should have at least more than 1,000 followers and more than 1,000 likes based on their video engagement to be regard as a Tik Tok influencer.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The findings of this study will contribute to the benefit of students into pursuing their creativity as a content creator since Tik Tok has been a vital social video platform for youngsters to unleash their creativity. There is no doubt that social media platform has taken over the lives of youngsters in today's generation where they are getting creative every single day with new idea and content that never fail to surprise the public with the outcome. Challenges, advantages and many outcomes might be something they experience along the way as a content creator but knowing how youngsters these days are dealing well in coping with negative mindset and opinions, it was the only reason why they managed to step forward without looking on the downside in fact leaning more on what comes as a benefit to them and their audiences especially if they are in the same position as a student with them. Despite this being a popular issue nowadays especially on the overwhelmed usage of Tik Tok, it was no doubt that research being done regarding this topic

especially from a Malaysian's students point of view is quite minimal as it focuses more on the western perspective. This research can be helpful to indulge into the experiences of Malaysian's students who are content creator specifically students from UNIMAS. The research might be able to show us about the challenges they went through as content creators and the advantages they received while being a content creator and student such as opportunities on sponsoring a brand as part of their side income while studying full time. This can give some sort perception to other students who are interested into posting contents on Tik Tok based on what to expect as content creator, the challenges, advantages and most importantly their experiences. Next, the research being made can help students to unleash their creativity by showcasing their hidden talent like dancing, singing, acting, lip-syncing, vlogging and even giving academic tips in the subjects they can considered as their main strength other students, either from primary school, high school or university. I am hoping that this research should be an eye opener to everyone that being a content creator even as a student can bring much hassle and challenges through their own experiences and how it affects their psychological wellbeing but that never stop them on making content that could bring a difference for their targeted audiences or followers.

1.8 LIMITATION OF STUDY

The participants selected are specifically students who are pursuing their side hobby as a content creator while being a full time or part time student which made the difficulties of choosing or searching for them is one of the challenges into doing this research. In addition, some of the students might be a content creator with non-daily posting onto the account so it is difficult to obtain information on their experience with more in-depth. It is also not applicable to all students and only limited to the ones who has experience as a content creator in Tik Tok with content posted to see their engagement as a creator as well.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will further clarify the source of reference of literature being used for this study. The research that is going to be conduct mainly focuses on the connection of youth being social content creator or specifically in this study a Tik Toker and their psychological wellbeing. Rather than being called an influencer like Instagram and Twitter, it is more to the terms of content creator as they create the platform of Tik Tok for the entertain of their audiences and followers through the algorithm system on followers or users "For You Page" (FYP). A literature review is being written at the earlier process of research. Starting off by searching the connection of social media influencer and youth, then to content creator and youth alongside exploring their psychological wellbeing as a content creator and university student. The data will be organized using thematic analysis where the literature review will be further clarified and explained with key themes as this research is relatively new. The review will be started off by explaining the general topic of psychological wellbeing of youth and their involvement in social media and the rapid growth of Tik Tok from the start of its establishment to recently as well as how youth utilize the use of Tik Tok for their own purposes.

2.1 Seligman Well-being PERMA+ model

Positive psychology that are interconnected with the PERMA theory by Martin Seligman explains that it is a study of happiness, healthily and the reason why life is worth living for. The Seligman PERMA model included five factors leading to well-being which are positive emotions,

engagement, relationships, meaning or purpose and accomplishment. Positive psychology seeks to develop a better understanding of positive emotions, qualities, and institutions. Over the years, the study of mental disorders and human suffering has dominated the science of psychology. Seligman's aim that help in developing this positive psychology theory was heavily influence by the humanistic psychology and also to depend more on building a more accurate picture from the human's experiences. This has altered psychology's principal assumption from examining psychological difficulties to assessing mental health and pleasure at its most fundamental levels. Due to the criticism he received from his 'authentic happiness theory', he made an alteration to it and produced another theory called the 'Well-being theory'. Rather of focusing on happiness, this idea highlights the importance of obtaining well-being. After all, people are motivated to perform a variety of activities in life that may or may not lead to increased satisfaction in the present.

2.1.1 Positive emotions (P)

The positive emotion here means so much more than just 'happiness' in general. This kind of emotions include the feeling of hopefulness, interest, joy, love, compassion, pride, amusement and also gratitude. According to Fredrickson (as cited in Madeson, 2021), positive emotions are a key sign of thriving, and they may be nurtured or learnt in order to increase one's well-being. When people can explore, relish, and incorporate pleasant feelings into their daily lives (and future life fantasies), they enhance their habitual thinking and action. Positive emotions can counteract the detrimental consequences of negative emotions and increase resilience. By increasing positive emotions can help individuals to build physical intellectual, psychological and also social resources that can lead to the resilience and overall being (Madeson.2021).

2.1.2 Engagement (E)

Based on a study by Seligman (as cited in Madeson, 2021), engagement refers to the metaphor of 'being one with the music and this refers to the line by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a Hungarian-American psychologist where he comes with the 'flow' concept. Flow here actually means the lack of self-awareness and the total immersion in a specific task hence to make it in a simpler statement would be living the present moment to the fullest and focus fully on the task at hand. This concept is engaged when there is a perfect combination of a challenge and strength being put together. It was stated that when people apply their top character qualities, they are more likely to feel flow. Individuals who tried to apply their abilities in new ways every day for a week were happier and less sad after six months, according to research on engagement. Engagement is more to simply being happy but also the byproduct of happiness.

2.1.3 Relationships (R)

In the general context, relationship here means to various interactions of individuals either with partners, family, friends and so much more however, when it comes to relationship in the context of the PERMA model, it actually refers to idea of feeling on being supported, loved and also appreciated by others. Relationships are incorporated in the model since people are social creatures by nature and social connection has become essential as we age. (Siedlecki et al, 2014 as cited in Madeson, 2021) Strong social networks lead to greater physical health in older persons, and the social environment has been demonstrated to play a vital role in avoiding cognitive decline. Many people want to improve their connections with those closest to them. According to studies, spreading good news or celebrating accomplishment strengthens ties and improves relationships.

To put it simply, by committing a relationship and interacting with others can actually increase the intimacy, wellbeing and satisfaction of an individual.

2.1.4 Meaning (M)

The need for purpose and the yearning for a sense of value and meaning is another essential human characteristic. Seligmen (2012) stated that the meaning here can refer to belonging and serving something greater than ourselves as an individual. In order to have a purpose in life, we as individuals can use the reference of meaning to focus on what is important into facing a significant challenge and adversity. There are times when individuals decide to support someone to attempt something new, by aiding them in carrying out an activity that provides them delight, or assisting them in taking steps toward independence may bring a whole different kind of satisfaction and bring joy to both the people in question and the one supporting them. This can simply invite the feeling of altruism in an individual where it can be described as a feeling of pleasure gained genuinely from their role on helping others. It can also best describe of individuals showing their love to humanity and this is the reason why they find meaning to live somehow (Hill, 2020).

2.1.5 Accomplishment (A)

According to Seligman (2012), Accomplishment here can bring the meaning of working for and achieving objectives, mastering an undertaking, and having self-motivation to do what you set out to achieve all contribute to a sense of success. This leads to happiness since people may look back on their life with pride. The principles of perseverance and having a desire for achieving goals are included in the concept of achievement. However, thriving and wellbeing occur when achievement is linked to internal desire or working for something just for the purpose of the pursuit and progress (Quinn, 2018 as cited by Madeson,2021). To further conclude it, by achieving the

intrinsic goals such as growth and connection, this can lead to greater increases in happiness than external aims like money or celebrity.

2.2 Usage of social media among youth

Social media refers to a variety of programs and websites such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube, among others, via which individuals exchange information and celebrate big events that occur around them. Social media has been in use since the early twenty-first century and these social media applications improve possibilities and engagement for learning diverse foreign languages. With the advent of social media, the globe has shrunk to the size of a hamlet (Rawatha et al, 2019). Youth, does not matter, whether they are student or a worker, use social media for various purposes like education, entertainment and even to get inspiration for their innovation. It was no doubt that social media has taken full influence on youth's life recently especially with the advancement of technology involved. However, their involvement can result them to receive the positive and negative impact, depending on how they manage their time and usage on the social media they owned. Social media can be a good platform into providing youths who are students, on tips regarding their studies which come to lead a perfect example of how social media users set up their own account for the purpose on teaching students on studies or teach them on how to start a new language. It can vary from all sorts of age range where not only students are allowed to access it but also to the individuals who are willing to learn something new can be part of it as it can assume they may not have the opportunity to catch up during their days as a student. Social media accounts that focuses on the education purposes are universal for everyone. It was not doubt that through social media, they are able to learn and enhance communications skills as it provides new web tools that can be utilize by the students to further improve their learning skills (Lusk, 2010 as cited in Rawatha et al, 2019).

Besides using the Internet and gadgets as part of academic purposes, accessing social media is also one of the sole reason why youngsters find it as an another alternative on making use of their leisure time.