The Impact of TikTok on Body Image: A Narrative Review of the Literature

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Abstract
TikTok is a widely used social media platform that enables users to create and share short videos with music, using various filters and creative features. It has a large and diverse user base, especially among young people, who are particularly vulnerable to influences on body image. This study aims to review the existing literature on how TikTok influences users’ perceptions of their bodies and those of others. A narrative review was conducted using various databases. The selection and screening of studies were based on predefined criteria, focusing on those that investigated the relationship between TikTok usage and body image perceptions. The review revealed a mixed impact of TikTok usage on body image perceptions. Several studies indicated that exposure to body-related content on TikTok could lead to negative body image and dissatisfaction among users. However, some studies suggested that TikTok could also be a platform for promoting body positivity and acceptance. The findings underscore the need for further research to understand the nuanced effects of TikTok on body image perceptions. They also highlight the potential of social media platforms like TikTok in shaping societal norms and attitudes toward body image.

Keywords: TikTok, Body Image, Narrative Literature Review, Social Media, Content Analysis

INTRODUCTION
In the swiftly changing digital environment of today, social media platforms have become an integral part of our daily lives, significantly impacting our interactions, behaviors, and perceptions. Among these social media platforms, TikTok has risen to global popularity as a platform that uniquely combines entertainment and social interaction, captivating users all over the world (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016).

TikTok, a short-form video hosting service owned by ByteDance, has rapidly gained global popularity since its initial release in September 2016. The platform was initially introduced as the global counterpart of the well-known Chinese platform Douyin, and later in 2018, it was consolidated with Musical.ly. TikTok is a platform where users can upload videos, which can vary in length from 3 seconds to 10 minutes. By October 2020, TikTok had achieved a milestone of over 2 billion downloads on mobile devices globally (Feldkamp, J. 2021).

TikTok provides a range of features that make it a unique platform. Users can record and upload videos, use robust editing tools, apply filters and effects, use sounds from a vast database, and even perform voiceovers. The platform also allows users to create Duet or Stitch videos, which are ways to interact with other users’ content. In terms of demographics, TikTok appeals to a diverse audience. However, it is particularly popular among the younger generation. One in four TikTok users are under 20 years old, and the majority of TikTok creators are aged 18 to 24. Interestingly, TikTok has more Gen Z users than Instagram2. The platform also has a slightly higher female user base, with females making up 57% of the users (Montag et al., 2021).

Understanding these aspects of TikTok is crucial for our research as it provides context and highlights the significance of our study. By examining how TikTok influences body image perceptions among its vast and diverse user base, we can gain valuable insights into the broader impacts of social media on societal norms and individual self-perceptions.

Although TikTok has attracted many users, there's a significant gap in our understanding of its psychological impact, especially concerning body image. Body image is a complex concept influenced by various factors, including societal beauty standards, peer influence, and media exposure. Given TikTok's emphasis on visual content and its popularity among young people, it's crucial to examine its influence on users' body image. The main research question guiding this study is: How does TikTok influence users’ perceptions of their bodies and those of others?
The purpose of this study is to review the existing literature on how TikTok influences body image perceptions among its users. Specifically, we aim to understand how TikTok’s unique features and content may influence users’ perceptions of their bodies and those of others. This study will not only contribute to the existing body of knowledge on social media and body image but also provide valuable insights for parents, educators, and policymakers grappling with the issues brought about by social media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the existing literature on the impact of social media, particularly TikTok, on body image perceptions. The literature is organized into three sub-sections: definitions and theories of body image, previous studies on social media and body image, and TikTok and body image.

Definitions and Theories of Body Image

Body image is a complex concept that encompasses an individual’s perceptions, feelings, and thoughts about their body and physical appearance. It is not merely a passive reception of societal beauty standards or biological factors but an active, subjective, and ongoing perceptual process (Quittkat HL et al., 2019).

Numerous theories have been proposed to understand the factors influencing body image. For instance, social comparison theory suggests that individuals determine their self-worth based on how they compare to others. This theory has been used to explain how media images and peer influences might impact an individual’s body image. Another theory is objectification theory, which posits that individuals internalize the view of their bodies as objects to be evaluated based on appearance rather than functionality. This theory has been used to explain how media exposure and sexualization might affect an individual’s body image.

These theories provide useful frameworks for understanding how body image is formed and influenced by various factors. However, they also come with their own set of limitations and challenges. For instance, social comparison theory does not account for the role of individual differences or coping strategies in moderating the effects of comparison. Objectification theory does not consider the potential positive aspects of self-objectification or the role of agency and resistance in challenging objectification. Moreover, these theories were developed before the advent of social media, which has introduced new forms and modes of media exposure and interaction that may have different impacts on body image (Jiotsa et al., 2021).

Therefore, there is a need for more theoretical work that integrates and extends existing theories of body image to better explain the observed phenomena on TikTok and other social media platforms. For example, how do existing theories such as social comparison theory or objectification theory apply in the context of TikTok? Are there new theoretical constructs or mechanisms that need to be considered? Addressing these questions would help advance our theoretical understanding of body image in the digital age.

Social Media and Body Image

An increasing number of studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between the use of social media and perceptions of body image. The majority of these studies have discovered a negative correlation between the two, indicating that higher levels of social media usage are often associated with a more negative body image. This could be due to the fact that social media platforms are often saturated with images and content promoting unrealistic beauty standards, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction among users.

However, it’s important to note that not all studies have found this negative association. Some research has reported positive or mixed results, suggesting that the impact of social media on body image is not always negative and can vary depending on several factors. For instance, the type of social media platform used can play a role. Different platforms have different types of content and ways of interacting, which can influence how users perceive their bodies. For example, a platform that emphasizes photo sharing and receives a lot of body-focused content might have a different impact on body image than a platform that is more text-based (Rahmadiansyah, 2022).

The nature of the content viewed or shared on social media can also influence body image perceptions. For example, viewing or sharing content that promotes body positivity and acceptance might lead to more positive body image perceptions. On the other hand, viewing or sharing content that promotes unrealistic beauty standards or body shaming can lead to more negative body image perceptions.
Individual differences among users can also affect how social media impacts body image. Factors such as age, gender, self-esteem, and personal attitudes toward one’s body can influence how one perceives and reacts to social media content related to body image ((Mahon C et al., 2021). In simple terms, while there is a growing consensus in the research community about the potential negative impacts of social media on body image, it’s clear that this relationship is complex and influenced by various factors.

**TikTok and Body Image**

TikTok, a popular social media platform, has been the subject of several studies investigating its impact on body image. Research suggests that TikTok, like other social media platforms, may influence body image through mechanisms such as comparison and internalization of beauty standards.

A study that appeared in the Journal Body Image indicates that even brief exposure to short-form social media videos that depict unachievable beauty standards - referred to as appearance-ideal content - can negatively affect body image. Another study found that TikTok usage is related to body dissatisfaction, appearance comparison, and body surveillance (Kurz et al., 2022).

Moreover, a study conducted on Chinese TikTok (Douyin) revealed that recent trends on the platform encourage users to demonstrate thinness through participation in 'body challenges,' which may contribute to negative body image concerns (Hu et al., 2023).

Despite these findings, there is still a need for more research to understand the specific ways in which TikTok influences body image. Future research could focus on strategies for mitigating any negative effects of TikTok on body image. For example, interventions in schools aimed at improving media literacy have been proposed as a potential strategy to decrease body dissatisfaction and foster a positive body image (Samari et al., 2022).

In summary, while preliminary studies suggest potential negative impacts of TikTok on body image, more comprehensive research is needed to fully understand these effects and develop effective strategies for mitigation.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a narrative review as the research design. A narrative review is a type of literature review that provides a broad overview of a topic and synthesizes findings from multiple studies. It was chosen for this study because it allows for a comprehensive exploration of the diverse and complex literature on TikTok and body image, and facilitates the identification of common themes and gaps in the existing research.

**Data Collection Methods**

The data collection process involved a comprehensive search of academic databases for peer-reviewed articles published in English. The search strategy included keywords related to TikTok (e.g., “TikTok”, “ByteDance”) and body image (e.g., “body image”, “body perception”, “body dissatisfaction”). The inclusion criteria were studies that focused on TikTok and body image and were published in the last three years. By integrating findings from these various sources, we aimed to provide a holistic perspective on the subject.

1. Academic Databases: We conducted a comprehensive search of academic databases, including PubMed, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar, to identify a wide range of scholarly articles related to TikTok and body image. This search allowed us to access numerous peer-reviewed articles that contribute to the body of knowledge on this topic.
2. Academic Journals and Specific Studies: In addition to our database search, we meticulously sought out academic journals and specific studies that hold relevance to our research question. Several of these sources were instrumental in providing a deeper understanding of the impact of TikTok on body image. Notable among these academic journals and studies include:
   2) Wang, J. (2023): "The Impact of Social Media on Body Image Perception and Eating Disorders" in the Journal of Innovations in Medical Research. This source offers information on the impact of social media, including TikTok, on body image perception and its potential connection to eating disorders.
3) Hülsing, G. M. (2021): A Bachelor's thesis from the University of Twente, titled "#Triggerwarning: Body Image." This source is a qualitative study exploring the influence of TikTok consumption on the body image of adolescents.


6) Carpenter, A. (2023): "Associations between TikTok Use, Mental Health, and Body Image Among College Students." This source examines the associations between TikTok usage, mental health, and body image among college students.


8) Seekis, V., & Lawrence, R. K. (2023): "How exposure to body neutrality content on TikTok affects young women’s body image and mood" published in Body Image. This source investigates how exposure to body neutrality content on TikTok influences body image and mood among young women.

9) Sagrera, C. E., Magner, J., Temple, J., Lawrence, R., Magner, T. J., Avila-Quintero, V. J., & Murnane, K. S. (2022): "Social media use and body image issues among adolescents in a vulnerable Louisiana community" in Frontiers in Psychiatry. This study examines the relationship between social media use, including TikTok, and body image issues among adolescents in a vulnerable community.

10) Mackey, E. (2021): "Uses and Gratification Theory & How TikTok Affects The Body Images Of Young Adults." This source delves into the Uses and Gratification Theory to understand how TikTok affects the body images of young adults.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis Procedures involved a content analysis of the impact of TikTok on body image. We have conducted a comprehensive review of existing literature, including ten key journals that offer valuable insights into the subject. The content analysis is done in a Table based on key characteristics, such as the Journal title, authors, publication year, Data Collection Method, Data Type, Data Analysis Technique, and Key Findings. Each of these journals is summarized below in a Table, highlighting its relevance to our analysis:

Table 1: Data Analysis of 10 Literature Review Journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Journal Title: Chinese TikTok (Douyin) challenges and body image concerns: a pilot study</th>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Data Analysis Technique</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
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| 1  | Chinese TikTok (Douyin) challenges and body image concerns: a pilot study
Authors: Hu, S., Gan, J., Shi, V., et al.
Published: Journal of Eating Disorders, 2023 | Interviews with Chinese TikTok Users and Content Analysis | Qualitative
Thematic Analysis | The study revealed that Chinese TikTok challenges are significantly linked to body image concerns among users. These challenges often promote unrealistic beauty standards, which contribute to body dissatisfaction. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal Title</th>
<th>The Impact of Social Media on Body Image Perception and Eating Disorders</th>
<th>Literature Review and Case Studies</th>
<th>Mixed Methods</th>
<th>Content Analysis and Comparative Case Studies</th>
<th>The research identified that TikTok, through its algorithm, often promotes content that leads to social comparison, which has the potential to negatively impact self-image and contribute to body dissatisfaction.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>J. Wang</td>
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<tr>
<td>Published</td>
<td>Journal of Innovations in Medical Research, 2023</td>
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<td>---------------</td>
<td>#Trigger warning: Body Image: A Qualitative Study on the Influences of TikTok Consumption on the Body Image of Adolescents</td>
<td>Grounded Theory Interviews with Adolescents</td>
<td>Qualitative Theory Analysis</td>
<td>Grounded Theory Analysis</td>
<td>The qualitative analysis of this study highlighted how extensive social comparison on TikTok among adolescents can lead to increased body dissatisfaction, shedding light on the platform's influence on youth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>G. M. Hülsing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Published</td>
<td>[Bachelor's thesis, University of Twente], 2021</td>
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<td>---------------</td>
<td>The impact of body-positivity and body-checking TikTok videos on body image</td>
<td>Longitudinal Content Analysis of TikTok Trends</td>
<td>Quantitative Regression Analysis</td>
<td>Content Trend Analysis</td>
<td>The study found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a surge in TikTok content related to body transformations and appearance ideals. This trend could significantly influence body image perceptions of TikTok users.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>J. M. Westenberg, C. D. Oberle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Published</td>
<td>The Journal of Social Media in Society, 2023</td>
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<td>---------------</td>
<td>TikTok, Body Image, and Eating Behavior: An Analysis of College-Age Women</td>
<td>Surveys and Interviews with Men and Women</td>
<td>Mixed Methods</td>
<td>Factor Analysis</td>
<td>This research indicated that body image dissatisfaction tends to decrease with age in men but remains relatively stable in women. It emphasized gender differences in body image perceptions over the lifespan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>A. Bavikatty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Published</td>
<td>[Doctoral dissertation], 2022</td>
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<td>---------------</td>
<td>Associations between TikTok Use, Mental Health, and Body Image Among College Students</td>
<td>Surveys and Data Analysis</td>
<td>Quantitative Regression Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td>The study found a strong positive correlation between frequent social</td>
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<td>Authors</td>
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</table>
Authors: A. Carpenter
Published: 2023

7 Journal Title: Social Comparison and Body Image in Teenage Boys and Girls Users of the TikTok App
Authors: M. R. Rahmadiansyah, Y. Amir, I. Mundzir
Published: 3rd Tarumanagara International Conference on the Applications of Social Sciences and Humanities (TICASH 2021), 2022

Comparison on TikTok and increased body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness among college students.

Literature Review and Case Studies
Mixed Methods
Content Analysis and Comparative Case Studies

The study showed that TikTok's algorithm often promotes content that leads to social comparison, impacting self-image and potentially contributing to body dissatisfaction in teenagers.

8 Journal Title: How exposure to body neutrality content on TikTok affects young women's body image and mood
Authors: V. Seekis, R. K. Lawrence
Published: Body Image, 2023

Surveys, Interviews, and Content Analysis
Mixed Methods
Regression Analysis and Content Analysis

It revealed that gender differences influence how young individuals process body image content on TikTok. Girls tend to use active coping strategies to manage body image concerns, while boys often demonstrate greater agency in rejecting unrealistic beauty standards on the platform.

9 Journal Title: Social media use and body image issues among adolescents in a vulnerable Louisiana community
Authors: C. E. Sagrera, J. Magner, J. Temple, R. Lawrence, T. J. Magner, V. J. Avila-Quintero, K. S. Murnane
Published: Frontiers in Psychiatry, 2022

Surveys and Interviews with College Students
Mixed Methods
Regression Analysis

The study explored associations between TikTok use, mental health, and body image among college students in a vulnerable Louisiana community. It found that higher TikTok use was associated with increased body dissatisfaction and poorer mental health among college students.
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Main Findings

Our literature review has led to several key findings. Firstly, we found that TikTok, much like other social media platforms, can have a dual impact on body image perceptions. On the negative side, TikTok can contribute to poor body image perceptions by exposing users to content that reinforces unrealistic beauty standards and encourages unhealthy comparison behaviors. This is often seen in the form of highly edited or filtered images, videos promoting extreme fitness or dieting, and content that glorifies a certain body type as the 'ideal'. These elements can lead users to compare themselves unfavorably with the images they see, potentially leading to feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction with their bodies.

On the positive side, TikTok also serves as a platform for body positivity and acceptance movements. These movements aim to challenge traditional beauty norms and celebrate body diversity. Users can share and engage with content that promotes self-love, acceptance, and positivity towards all body types. This aspect of TikTok can help foster positive body image perceptions among its users by providing them with alternative narratives about beauty and worth that go beyond physical appearance.

Comparison with Prior Research

Our findings align with previous research on social media and body image, which has generally found a mixed relationship between the two. However, our review also brings to light some unique aspects of TikTok that may influence body image perceptions differently compared to other platforms. For instance, TikTok’s focus on short-form video content allows for quick consumption of a large volume of content, which could potentially expose users to a wide range of body images in a short period of time. The algorithmic recommendation system of TikTok, which curates content based on users’ past interactions, could reinforce certain body image perceptions by showing users more of what they have previously engaged with. This could mean that users are more likely to come across body-focused content even if they are not actively seeking it out, which could potentially heighten its impact on their body image perceptions. The editing tools and effects available on TikTok, such as filters and beauty effects, could alter the appearance of users and create unrealistic body ideals. Moreover, the journal could provide examples of the types of body-focused content on TikTok, such as body challenges that encourage users to compare their bodies with others, body positivity content that promotes acceptance and appreciation of all body types, and body neutrality content that emphasizes the functionality and health of the body over its appearance. By providing more details and examples, the journal could offer a more comprehensive understanding of how TikTok may influence body image perceptions.

Implications for Future Research
The implications of our findings extend to future research directions as well. Firstly, there is a need for more empirical studies that investigate the specific impacts of TikTok on body image perceptions. These studies should take into account TikTok's unique features and content types. For example, how does the short-form video format influence the way users perceive and react to body-focused content? How does the algorithmic recommendation system shape users' exposure to such content? Answering these questions would provide a more nuanced understanding of TikTok's role in shaping body image perceptions.

Secondly, there is a need for more theoretical work that integrates and extends existing theories of body image to better explain the observed phenomena on TikTok. For instance, how do existing theories such as social comparison theory or objectification theory apply in the context of TikTok? Are there new theoretical constructs or mechanisms that need to be considered? Addressing these questions would help advance our theoretical understanding of body image in the digital age.

Implications for Practice

The implications of our findings are also significant for practice. For instance, educators and practitioners working in the field of body image and eating disorders could use these insights to develop interventions that promote positive body image on TikTok. These interventions could include educational content about media literacy, critical thinking skills to challenge unrealistic beauty standards, and strategies to foster self-acceptance and positivity.

Moreover, policymakers could use this information to inform regulations on social media content related to body image. This could include guidelines for advertisers about responsible marketing practices, policies to flag or remove harmful content, and requirements for platforms to provide resources or tools for users to manage their exposure to potentially triggering content.

In conclusion, our review highlights the complex role of TikTok in shaping body image perceptions among its users and points towards several promising directions for future research and practice.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Main Points

In this literature review, we embarked on an exploration of the impact of TikTok on body image perceptions among its users. Our guiding research question was: How does TikTok influence users' perceptions of their bodies and those of others? Our objectives were to understand the unique features and content of TikTok that may influence body image perceptions and to identify potential implications for body image-related attitudes and behaviors.

The analysis of these ten journals revealed consistent evidence that TikTok, like other social media platforms, has a notable impact on users' body image. Exposure to appearance-ideal content on TikTok can lead to negative body image perceptions. This can be particularly concerning for young users who form a significant portion of TikTok's user base. Additionally, TikTok's content seems to play a role in promoting body surveillance and comparison, which can further contribute to body dissatisfaction.

Contributions of the Study

The key contributions of this research are twofold. First, we provided a comprehensive overview of the existing literature on TikTok and body image, highlighting key themes and gaps. This overview not only synthesizes the current state of knowledge but also identifies areas where further research is needed. Second, we proposed several directions for future research and practice, such as the need for more empirical studies on TikTok's specific impacts on body image and the development of interventions that promote positive body image on TikTok.

Limitations of the Study

However, our research also has certain limitations. Being a narrative review, our study is reliant on the existing literature and does not involve the collection or analysis of primary data. As a result, our conclusions
are subject to the limitations of the studies included. Moreover, given the fast-paced evolution of TikTok, our review might not encompass all the latest developments or trends related to TikTok and body image.

**Final Thoughts**

In conclusion, our review highlights the complex role of TikTok in shaping body image perceptions among its users and points towards several promising directions for future research and practice. It underscores the importance of continued research in this area to fully understand the implications of social media use on body image perceptions and to develop effective strategies for promoting positive body image in the digital age.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I'd like to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to Allah SWT for bestowing upon me the knowledge and ability that have been instrumental in completing this research. I am profoundly thankful for the wisdom, understanding, and skills that have been granted to me, which have not only enabled me to undertake this study but have also enriched my life in countless ways.

I'd like to begin by expressing my gratitude to myself for the dedication, hard work, and sleepless nights that went into completing this research. This journey has been a testament to my perseverance and passion for knowledge. I am deeply thankful to my parents for their unwavering support and belief in my abilities. Their encouragement has been a constant source of strength throughout this process.

I'd also like to extend my sincere appreciation to the editors of the peer review portal. Their meticulous review and constructive feedback have significantly improved the quality of this paper. Furthermore, I am grateful to the authors whose work I have referenced in this journal. Their research has provided a solid foundation for my study and has been instrumental in shaping my understanding of the subject.

This paper is a testament to the collective efforts of all those involved and I hope it contributes meaningfully to our academic discipline. I hope it contributes meaningfully to our field of study. All praise and thanks are due to Allah SWT, the creator of all that exists, for His infinite mercy, guidance, and blessings. May Allah SWT continue to illuminate our paths with knowledge and wisdom.

**DAFTAR PUSTAKA**


Carpenter, A. (2023). Associations between TikTok Use, Mental Health, and Body Image Among College Students.


