

# Exploring TikTok as an Alternative Learning Platform: Student Perceptions at Politeknik METrO Tasek Gelugor

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## Abstract

Social media has become a vital part of students' daily lives. Most students use social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram to connect and find information at their own convenience. The widespread use of social media has made a positive impact on education, helping students and teachers connect easily, making learning more efficient and assisting students in developing their skills. TikTok's popularity as a learning platform increased substantially throughout the pandemic and has transformed how students access information and engage with learning materials. Hence, the objective of this paper is to identify the perceptions of Politeknik METrO Tasek Gelugor students regarding their use of TikTok as an alternative learning platform. The quantitative research method was applied to PMTG students, and 71 questionnaires were administered. The findings reveal that TikTok has the potential to arouse students' interest in the content and foster learning. It has been discovered that introducing TikTok can make learning more convenient and effective. Future educators can integrate TikTok into their teaching and learning strategies to engage students and make independent learning more efficient.

**Keywords:** Engagement, Learning Platform, Short Videos, Social Media, TikTok

## 1.0 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated the adoption of technology and social media in education. Higher educators in Politeknik and Kolej Komuniti have profoundly altered the educational landscape, necessitating a rapid shift to remote learning and the increased use of technology and social media platforms. This shift was driven by the need to maintain educational continuity during lockdowns and social distancing measures. The integration of digital tools and social media into educational practices has introduced new opportunities for learning but also presents unique challenges. Students' needs for data-efficient online learning prompt educators to explore ways to impact distance education.

The integration of technology within educational contexts has undergone significant transformation over recent decades. Traditionally, classrooms functioned in relative isolation, thereby restricting collaboration to students within the same physical environment. However, advancements in technology have revolutionised communication and collaboration, facilitating a more interconnected learning experience. This study centres on TikTok, a social media platform that has gained prominence as an educational tool. Its distinctive format, characterised by short, engaging videos, aligns with the

preferences of the younger generation, who increasingly utilise social media for learning purposes. As educational institutions adapt to this trend, it becomes imperative to examine how platforms like TikTok can enhance student-centred learning.

Recent research has underscored TikTok's potential as an effective pedagogical tool, highlighting its unique features, such as short-form videos, interactive elements, and strong visual and auditory appeal. Mayer's (2001) principles of multimedia learning provide a pertinent framework for understanding how multimedia can enhance learning outcomes. Specifically, TikTok's characteristics align with these principles, as learners benefit from a combination of textual and visual information. Presenting information in multiple formats enables students to process and integrate knowledge more effectively. Moreover, TikTok's dynamic platform frequently introduces new features, further contributing to its substantial growth. Lartey (2024) notes that the platform's innovative algorithm personalizes content delivery, allowing users to discover educational material that aligns with their interests, thereby fostering continuous and passive learning.

Despite its rapid rise in popularity, there is a significant lack of comprehensive studies evaluating TikTok's effectiveness in specific disciplines, such as IT and Design. Although existing literature has explored the broader implications of social media in education, the specific impact of TikTok on student engagement and learning outcomes remains under-researched. This gap necessitates an examination of students' perceptions of TikTok as a learning tool, particularly as educational methodologies shift from traditional to more innovative, technology-driven approaches. TikTok has emerged as a prominent medium for informal learning, providing diverse educational content through engaging videos. Understanding students' perceptions of TikTok is crucial for evaluating its effectiveness as a learning tool and its impact on educational outcomes. According to Nurul Ihsaniah (2024), teachers must acquire proficiency in a range of teaching methods in order to cater to students' diverse learning styles, such as problem-based learning. Regardless of the different types of learners a teacher encounters in the classroom, TikTok has the potential to engage a variety of learning styles.

To address this gap, the study aims to achieve two principal objectives: first, to determine the extent to which students find TikTok engaging as a platform for learning tutorials compared to traditional methods; and second, to assess the perceived effectiveness of TikTok tutorials in enhancing students' understanding and retention of educational content. These objectives are designed to yield valuable insights into TikTok's role in contemporary educational practices. The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on TikTok as a pedagogical tool within the context of IT and Design education. By providing empirical data on TikTok's effectiveness from the students'

perspective, this study seeks to fill a critical gap in the literature. Ultimately, this research will contribute to the academic discourse surrounding technology in education by offering a detailed analysis of TikTok's role as a learning tool, informing educators of its potential benefits and challenges. Furthermore, the findings aim to provide actionable insights that can enhance curriculum design and instructional strategies, ultimately supporting a more engaging and effective learning experience for students.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

The rapid development of networks and technologies has significantly enhanced the accessibility of smartphone devices, facilitating seamless communication and information retrieval for users. Social media has witnessed remarkable growth, particularly in Malaysia, where, by the end of 2022, 91.7% of the population were active social media users, equating to approximately 30.25 million individuals. This figure represents an increase of over 2.3 million users compared to 2021, underscoring the deep integration of social media into various aspects of daily life, including social, personal, and professional domains. Among the most prominent platforms, TikTok has emerged as a significant player, engaging 21.9% of users, while Facebook maintains a considerable share of the market at 18.8% (Howe, 2024). TikTok's short-form video content is particularly appealing to younger audiences. In Malaysia, users aged 19 to 25 comprise the largest segment of TikTok's user base, accounting for 35.61%. This is followed by Millennials aged 26 to 32, who constitute approximately 29% of users (Siddharta, 2023). This trend highlights TikTok's potential as an educational tool, as its design for rapid content consumption enables educators to disseminate meaningful information effectively.

Research has demonstrated that short videos, often employed in microlearning contexts, enhance memory recall and processing efficiency. For instance, a study by Hsin and Cigas (2013) revealed that incorporating video content into teaching significantly improves students' learning capabilities. Recent studies by Zhu et al. (2022) and Mohamed (2023) further reinforce these findings, indicating that short videos not only engage students but also accommodate diverse learning styles by combining visual and auditory elements. Such adaptability is invaluable in educational contexts, where student engagement and comprehension are paramount. Furthermore, Zhang and Fadzilah (2024) observed that short videos can transform passive learning into an active experience, enabling students to engage more deeply with content, enhancing both their understanding and retention.

Beyond structured educational applications, TikTok's potential as a platform for informal learning is also noteworthy, as it allows students to explore

educational content independently. According to the *New Straits Times* (2023), TikTok's engaging format fosters motivation and a sense of ownership in learners, encouraging them to take charge of their educational journeys. This independent exploration aligns with constructivist theories of learning, which emphasize active engagement to deepen understanding. By leveraging TikTok's unique features, such as music, movement, and interactive visuals, educators can create interactive learning experiences that resonate with today's digital-native learners.

In summary, the increasing prominence of social media, particularly platforms like TikTok, presents both opportunities and challenges for education. While studies support the effectiveness of short videos in enhancing learning outcomes, further exploration is necessary to address potential drawbacks, such as overreliance on screen time, the need for content accuracy, and the potential for distraction. As social media continues to evolve, ongoing research will be essential in understanding its impact on educational methodologies and developing best practices for its integration into learning environments.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This study aims to employ a quantitative approach to investigate the perceptions of students at Politeknik METrO Tasek Gelugor (PMTG) regarding the use of TikTok as a learning tool. A total sample of 71 students will be selected through a stratified random sampling method, ensuring representation across diploma programmes at PMTG. This method not only enhances the generalisability of the findings but also aligns with the study's objective of understanding how TikTok can serve as an alternative educational platform. By utilising a structured survey design, the study facilitates a systematic evaluation of student attitudes, which is critical for deriving actionable insights into TikTok's effectiveness in enhancing learning experiences.

Data collection will be conducted using a meticulously designed questionnaire comprising 17 items: six demographic questions, four focused on online learning experiences, and seven assessing the use of TikTok for educational purposes. The questionnaire is informed by a comprehensive literature review and has undergone validation through a pilot test with a separate cohort of students, ensuring both reliability and relevance. This validation process is essential, as it helps identify and rectify any ambiguities in the instrument, thereby enhancing its capacity to accurately measure student perceptions and experiences.

Following data collection, a frequency analysis will be conducted to examine the distribution and prevalence of key variables related to student perceptions of TikTok as an educational tool. This approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of patterns and trends in these perceptions, allowing for

deeper insights into the factors influencing students' views on social media in educational contexts. Through this rigorous analytical process, the study aims to generate findings that will inform future pedagogical strategies and practices, ultimately supporting the effective integration of social media platforms like TikTok to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. The flowchart of the methodology is illustrated in Figure 1.

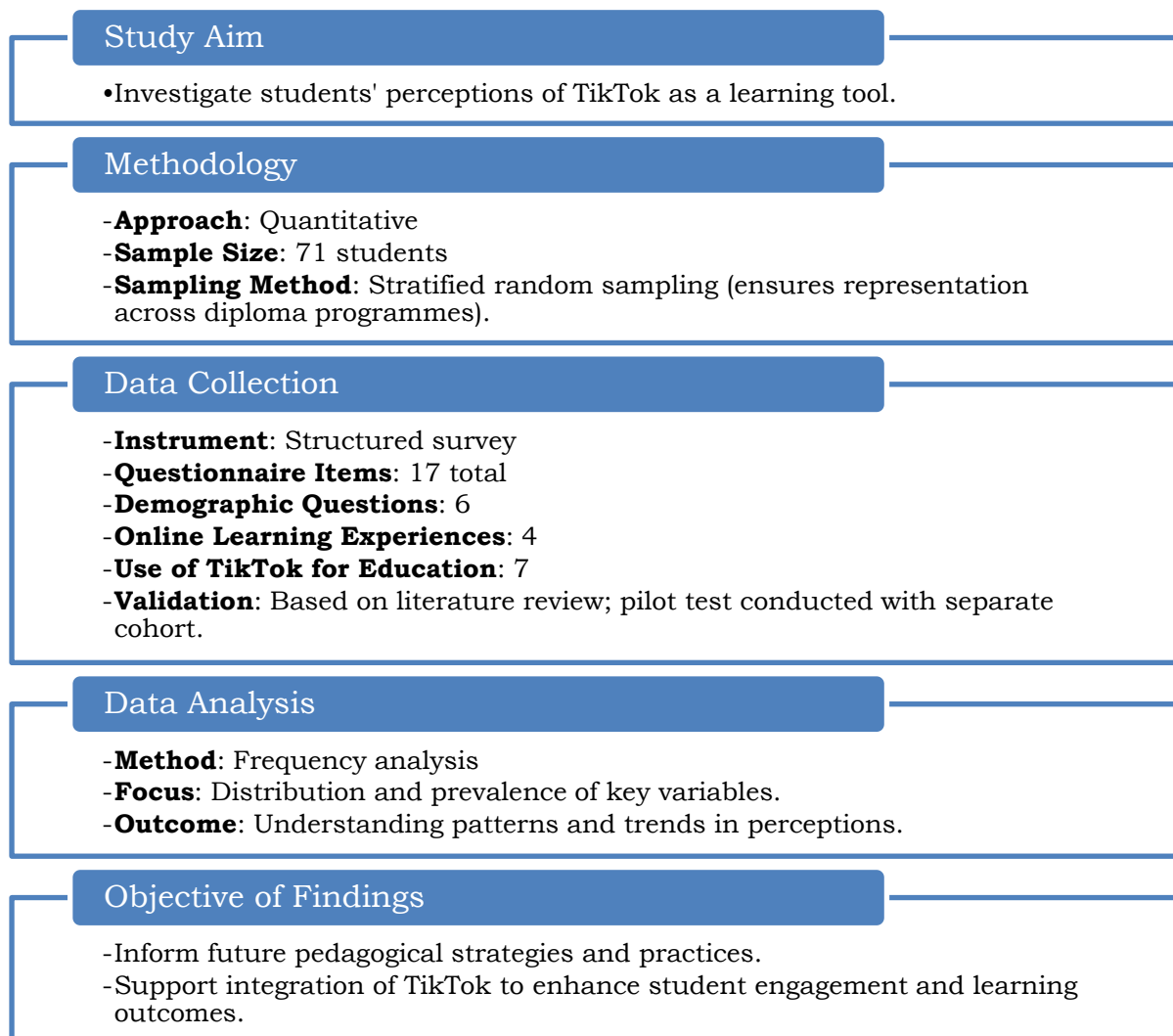


Figure 1: Flowchart of Methodology for Investigating Student Perceptions of TikTok as an Educational Tool

#### 4.0 Findings

The participants answered questionnaires via Google Forms to identify their perceptions of Learning Through social media Using TikTok as a learning tool. This questionnaire also gathers information on Digital Devices, Platforms, and Delivery Methods in the classroom, as well as preferred channels or social media. The findings of the study will answer the research questions based on the analysis of the surveys that have been conducted. These surveys were conducted on Politeknik METrO Tasek Gelugor students, and 71 feedback

from students have been included in this study.

Table 1: Percentage of student watched TikTok Video as Tutorial

Have you watched any TikTok video tutorial	Frequent	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not Sure	10	14.1	14.1	14.1
No	12	16.9	16.9	31.0
Yes	49	69.0	69.0	100.0
Total	71	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 illustrates that a significant majority of students (69.0%) engage with TikTok for educational purposes, suggesting a strong alignment with contemporary learning trends. This finding underscores TikTok's growing influence in the educational sphere, highlighting its potential as an innovative learning tool that resonates with students' preferences for engaging and accessible content. Similarities in findings with previous research highlight that social media platforms can enhance student engagement, yet TikTok's unique format distinguishes it as particularly effective for short, digestible content. However, this contrasts with traditional educational resources, where students may have experienced a more structured and comprehensive approach to learning. This divergence suggests a need for educators to adapt their strategies to integrate the strengths of platforms like TikTok while addressing the potential shortcomings of more conventional methods.

Table 2: Percentages of How students getting introduced to TikTok

How students getting introduced to TikTok	Frequent	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lecturer	3	4.2	4.2	4.2
Yes	9	12.7	12.7	16.9
Friends	39	54.9	54.9	71.8
Social media like Instagram or Twitter	20	28.2	28.2	100.0
Other: Self Discovery	71	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 reveals that most students discover TikTok through friends (54.9%) and other social media platforms (28.2%), particularly Instagram and Twitter. This data reflects a broader trend where social media serves as a conduit for introducing new platforms, reinforcing the interconnected nature of digital environments. The data in Table 2 reflects a broader trend where students are predominantly discovering TikTok through other social media platforms, particularly Instagram and Twitter. This highlights the interconnected nature of digital platforms and suggests that educational strategies could benefit from cross-platform integration, as students are already accustomed to consuming content in diverse formats. Conversely, the limited introduction to TikTok through educators (4.2%) may indicate a disconnect between



traditional teaching methods and emerging social media trends, suggesting that educational institutions must reconsider their approaches to incorporate these new learning modalities effectively.

Table 3: Percentages of Reason for learning through TikTok

Reason for learning through TikTok	Frequent	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Fast Step	18	25.4	25.4	25.4
Audio match the content	2	2.8	2.8	28.2
Focus one technique/lesson	23	32.4	32.4	60.6
Convenience learning	25	35.2	35.2	95.8
Other	3	4.2	4.2	100.0
All of the above	71	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 outlines the reasons students prefer learning through TikTok, with a notable emphasis on convenience (35.2%) and the ability to focus on specific topics (32.4%). The concise format of TikTok videos enables creators to distill complex ideas into easily digestible content, catering to students' needs for quick and effective learning. This aligns with previous studies suggesting that multimedia content can enhance engagement and retention. The repetitive nature of TikTok content further enhances learning by reinforcing key ideas, illustrating a shift in pedagogical practices towards shorter, more focused learning materials.

However, the focus on brevity may lead to superficial understanding, contrasting traditional educational practices that encourage deeper analysis and critical thinking. This tension indicates the importance of striking a balance between leveraging TikTok's strengths and ensuring comprehensive educational development.

Table 4: TikTok Usage Impact on Online Learning

Do you agree TikTok Give Positive Impact on Online Learning	Frequent	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not Sure	12	16.9	16.9	16.9
No	6	8.5	8.5	25.4
Yes	53	74.6	74.6	100.0
Total	71	100.0	100.0	Total

As shown in Table 4, a substantial majority of students (74.6%) believe that TikTok positively impacts their online learning experiences. This statistic underscores TikTok's potential to serve as an effective educational resource, particularly as its format encourages short, engaging content that aligns well with students' learning preferences. The findings here are consistent with emerging research indicating that social media can enhance student

engagement. However, the reliance on TikTok for educational purposes raises concerns about the depth of learning, as students may prioritize entertainment over substantive educational content. This contradiction highlights the need for educators to guide students in discerning the quality and relevance of the information presented on such platforms.

In summary, the data collected from the questionnaires indicate that TikTok is not merely a social platform but a valuable educational tool that aligns with students' learning preferences. The findings affirm the platform's potential for enhancing engagement and fostering innovative pedagogical practices, thereby supporting the effective integration of social media in educational contexts. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital tools like TikTok can be leveraged to meet contemporary educational demands and improve learning outcomes.

## **5.0 Conclusion(s)**

This study highlights the significant potential of TikTok as a learning tool, as evidenced by student feedback and data analysis. The unique characteristics of TikTok, which blend entertainment with informative content, attract users and encourage a shift towards mobile learning. The flexibility of the platform allows students to engage with educational material anytime and anywhere, fostering a culture of independent learning. Notably, a substantial majority of students believe that TikTok enhances their understanding of various topics, with short videos often proving more effective than traditional learning methods. The engaging format, enriched by humor, visuals, and current trends, makes complex subjects more accessible and memorable. Integrating TikTok into higher education presents a valuable opportunity to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. As educators adapt to this evolving landscape, leveraging TikTok's interactive features can significantly enrich the learning experience. The findings from this study affirm TikTok's role as a powerful educational tool, particularly as it continues to develop and introduce new features that support learning.

This research utilized a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms to gather insights from 71 students at Politeknik METrO Tasek Gelugor regarding their perceptions of learning through TikTok. The results provide clear answers to the research questions and reveal important trends related to the use of digital devices and platforms in education. Looking ahead, further investigation is warranted to evaluate TikTok's effectiveness as an alternative learning tool. This includes assessing its impact on knowledge transfer, student engagement, and the development of effective pedagogical strategies that maximize its educational potential. Continuous monitoring of the platform and addressing emerging challenges will be essential for educators to fully harness TikTok's benefits within the rapidly changing educational landscape.

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### **Author Contributions**

**Haryati M.:** Conceptualization, Abstract, Introduction, Conclusion, Findings, Data collection, Methodology, Editing, Proofreading

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The manuscript has not been published anywhere else and is not being considered by any other journals. Author have authorized the review, agree with the submission, and state that they have no conflicts of interest in the work.

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