Psychosocial Factors that Contribute to Tiktok Addiction Among University Students: A Case of Turkana University College, Kenya

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Abstract: *TikTok is a popular social media networking site among university students. The features of this application such as collaborating videos, and duet has attracted and impressed billions of users all around the world and in Turkana University College too. Studies have observed how TikTok addiction is affecting the mental health of users. Generally, this study sought to investigate the psychosocial factors that contribute to TikTok addiction among university students. Self-Determination theory guided the study. The study adopted a mixed method approach with a basis on qualitative and quantitative research design. The sample size was 305 comprising of 300 students spread in the 5 academic departments of Turkana University who were selected using simple random sampling and 5 key informants in the students' welfare management identified through census. Questionnaires and interviews were utilised as methods of data collection and to enhance validity and reliability. Qualitative data was analysed using thematic content analysis. Quantitative data was analysed with the help of SPSS. Data presentation was through tables, graphs, charts and verbatives. The study findings established that 145(58%) of the respondents were addicted to TikTok because of immense loneliness. Academic pressure attributed to 6% of the addiction which came in as a relaxer during the exam period. Additionally, 30% of students got addicted because of the availability of the university free Wi-Fi and bundles on offer. Findings of this study have major implications on student's mental wellbeing because, students tended to engage in upward social comparisons with TikTok users perceived as better and more successful, which produced feelings of inferiority and unsuccessfulness. The study concludes that TikTok is a platform full of all kinds of information, with strong openness and interaction, and has a strong attraction and influence on young people. The study recommends that, parents and universities should be more concerned about their student's mental health and cooperate with each other to design effective mental health counselling strategies. There's need for future research on investigating how specific behaviors on TikTok like 'live video streaming' affect users' self-esteem and mental wellbeing among university students.*

Key words: Addiction, TikTok, Mental Health, Counseling, Univesrity Students

1.1 Background and Context of the Study

TikTok is a social media application that allows its users to create mobile videos and share them with friends. Previously it was known as Musical.ly has grabbed the attention of youth globally. Because of

its diverse technology, design and usage TikTok has become one of the most downloaded Apple iOS video application, youngsters that comprised of half of the 500 million monthly users (Chen, 2018). A dramatic change has been observed in the frequency of internet users globally from the year 2005 to 2019 (Freund & Weinhold, 2020). Innovation and evolution in technology has changed the life of students in certain ways (Mese & Aydin, 2019). Social media is a platform where ideas, views, feelings and information are exchanged easily. It includes Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. Students spend most of their time using different media applications and eventually getting addicted to it. Consequently, this addiction affects their education performance (Sabir et al., 2020).

TikTok addiction has dramatically affected the youth mental wellbeing. Young people utilize most of their time in making videos. They are not responsible towards their time management. They waste their time on making TikTok videos (The Nation, 2021). There are countless videos available on TikTok application, students watch videos and waste their time, in this way they get addicted to the application and they do not spend time on studies, which shows decreased grades (Dawn, 2021). Addiction is normally associated with alcohol and drugs. Any activity which is not controlled by human beings is known as addiction (Harris, Nagy, & Vardaxis, 2019). In a technological context, excessive use of the internet results in technological dependency among the people (Kuss & Griffiths, 2021). With the passage of time, it has been observed that students are spending maximum time using social media that ultimately affects their mental health (Ishaq, et al., 2019; Maguire & Pellosmaa, 2022). This 'addiction' results in affecting the emotional, social and physical health of the students.

A study done by Barry et al. (2021), in selected Kenyan universities observed that, TikTok provides a compellingly hopeful glimpse at what responsible stewardship of social media platforms should look like. According to Barry et al, (2021) despite having a long way to go, the platform has struggled with persistent concerns, such as the sexualization of youth in university education. Considering that 25% of TikTok users are under 29 years, the application must do everything possible to shield young adults from the harm that other applications like Instagram have unwittingly inflicted (Auerbach et al., 2019). On the positive lane, mental health practitioners are starting to use the widespread popularity of TikTok to spread awareness, disseminate uplifting messages, and promote self-care advice to a younger, broader audience. Self-care and mental health awareness have become "cool" on TikTok, or at the absolute least, one of the most popular media has made these previously inaccessible concepts far more approachable(Devoe et al., 2022; Sheldon et al., 2021).

To this end therefore, the researcher believes that the university students' mental health can be negatively affected by their consistent use of this platform and its inappropriate content. It is against this background, that this study seeks to investigate the impact of TikTok addiction on the mental well-being of university students, with a specific focus on Turkana University in Kenya. The research will premise on determining the psychosocial factors that contribute to TikTok addiction, exploring the mental health disorders linked to TikTok addiction and thus examine effective strategies for managing TikTok addiction and its impact on the mental health of university students.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Poor mental health associated with addictive social platforms continues to be a prevalent issue for students across the globe, with more than 35% of students meeting diagnostic criteria for at least one common psychiatric disorder (Auerbach et al., 2019). While university attendance is often considered a driver of human growth and development, it is also associated with a plethora of negative outcomes, a likely consequence of the academic, financial and psychosocial stressors experienced by students (Gardani et al., 2022). Moreover, the transition to university life and living away from the family can also be harmful to students' mental health who embark on social media platforms like TikTok for solace, exploration and discoveries (Devoe et al., 2022). Several studies have explored the addiction patterns of digital media like Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. However, very few studies have to analyze the mental health impact of university students watching short-videos through TikTok (Su et al., 2021). Previous literature also explains the relationship between TikTok and mental health while several studies claim the excessive use of social media apps has negative effect on the academic performance of students. However, minimal research has explored the relationship of TikTok addiction and university students' mental health in Kenya specifically. Therefore, this study bridges the gap by exploring TikTok addiction and mental health problems and it further explores the psychosocial factors that contribute to TikTok addiction its impact on the mental health of university students.

1.3 Research Objective

Investigate the psychosocial factors that contribute to TikTok addiction among university students.

1.4 Research Question

Which psychosocial factors contribute significantly to the development of TikTok addiction among university students?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Despite evidence that social media is effective at improving mental health awareness and encouraging health-protective behaviors (De La Garza et al., 2021), research on TikTok is limited due to it being a relatively new platform. As social media use is especially prevalent among university students, a population characterized by poor mental health and a higher susceptibility to developing psychiatric illnesses (Chekole & Abate, 2021), the present study aimed to determine whether TikTok was beneficial or detrimental to university students' wellbeing. Specifically, the study hypothesized that using TikTok would improve students' mental health awareness and facilitate positive behavior changes. The study aimed to establish whether TikTok use promote psychological resilience and reduce loneliness.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study was undertaken in Turkana University College because it's the only public university in Turkana County consisting of more than 1,000 students both government and self-sponsored students of various adult age brackets from 18 years and above. Study population entailed registered students in TUC from the 5 academic departments. The university managers in the student's welfare department and schools were sampled too. The study was conducted in the year 2024 and hopefully it will be used as reference for TUC communication and students' welfare policy. To enable accurate information gathering, focus was on a period of ten years that is 2021-2023 period for secondary data so as to avoid obsolete data due to time lapse. The respondents were interviewed during the working hours of daytime.

The following limitations were experienced during the study: There was a risk that some of the nuances of responses were lost during translations. To counter this, the researcher used an audio recorder to capture all details. Since the study was only carried out in Turkana University, specifically on-campus students, the results may not be generalized to off-campus students. To counter this, the researcher targeted both full-time and part-time students.

1.7 Literature Review

University students are already in a stage of exploratory discovery, and the content of TikTok video itself is very attractive, and it allows young people to obtain short-term, fast and high-intensity stimulation, which makes it more difficult for them to get out of it. In addition to the attractiveness of the TikTok video itself, TikTok is indeed full of addictive and elaborate designs. Just like there is no clock in a casino, TikTok deliberately blurs the user's time judgment and hides the time in design information. These lead to addiction in adolescents and are highly likely to impact their lives as well as their mental health (Devoe et al., 2022). Behavioral addictions can happen quickly or slowly, but the rise of social media has made it easier for people of all ages to struggle with such compulsions. Children, in particular, may be more susceptible to these insidious effects. The Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale consists of six questions that indicate problematic Facebook use. Signs of a TikTok addiction include: Feeling restless when not using TikTok. Feeling easily distracted when not using TikTok. Experiencing heightened FOMO (fear of missing out) when not using TikTok. Neglect of relationships or important responsibilities due to TikTok. Wanting to cut down on TikTok use but feeling unable to do so. Having sleep problems (i.e. consistently going to bed very late) due to using TikTok (Holm-Hadulla et al., 2021; Tinsley, 2020). Loneliness can be seen as the difference between the level of social relationships one desires and the level of social relationships one achieves (Olezeski, 2021). People with loneliness usually have trouble making friends, working in groups, or socializing (Franzidis & Zinder, 2019). Although lonely people have difficulty socializing in real life, the Internet gives them a whole new opportunity. Morahan-Martin's research points out that lonely people are more likely to be attracted to the Internet (Farsi, 2021; Szeto et al., 2021).

Social peer pressure contributes to TikTok addiction. With approximately 1218 million monthly active users, TikTok has rapidly become one of the most popular social media platforms worldwide, surpassing Snapchat (750 million monthly active users), X/Twitter (666 million monthly active users) and Pinterest (465 monthly active users; Kemp, 2023). Despite its global success, however, understandings of students' motivations behind using the platform remain largely ambiguous (Darvin, 2022; Montag et al., 2021; Roche et al., 2021). Having said that, Omar and Dequan, (2020) proposed five key motives behind TikTok usage, based on an adapted Instagram use measure: social integration; self-expression; archiving; escapism; and peeking. Similarly, Falgoust et al. (2022) identified six gratification niches motivating students to use the platform: entertainment; convenience and utility for widespread communication; increasing social interaction; finding social support; seeking and sharing information; and escaping from everyday life. While several psychological processes relating to negative affect have been implicated with TikTok use, including upward social comparisons, loneliness and the fear of missing out (Elhai et al., 2020; Kross et al., 2021; Smith & Short, 2022), TikTok may still provide a potent channel for promoting health-related information, encouraging health-protective behaviors and alleviating stress (Comp et al., 2021; Gu et al., 2021; Scherr & Wang, 2021).

Evidence suggests that social media use is especially prevalent among students, who are particularly appreciative of the availability of information and the opportunities to learn how to improve their wellbeing (Lupton, 2021; Tasswe, 2020). Accordingly, public health practices have increasingly used social media to promote health-related information, encourage health-protective behaviours ((De La Garza et al., 2021; Hou et al., 2019; Vasconcelos Silva et al., 2020) and respond to particular health concerns (Gatewood et al., 2020; Sadagheyani & Tatari, 2021; William & Suhartono, 2021). Such platforms have even proven beneficial for raising students' mental health awareness in the online community, helping to challenging sociocultural norms that promote unrealistic ideals towards mental illnesses (Branley & Covey, 2017; Lamarre & Rice, 2017; Smethurst & Kuss, 2018). Furthermore, information shared across social media can often be inaccurate or misleading, transmitted by users without any expert knowledge of a given field (Hagg et al., 2020; Yeung et al., 2022). Celebrities, political figures and other highly prolific users with large followings can be particularly influential in spreading false information and encouraging unhealthy behaviours in students (Braunberger et al., 2017; Sierro et al., 2020; Szeto et al., 2021). These adverse effects are only exacerbated by a general lack of monitoring and accuracy verification across social networking sites, allowing individuals to easily claim to be health professionals without sufficient evidence (Gupta & Ivanova, 2021; Schuster et al., 2020).
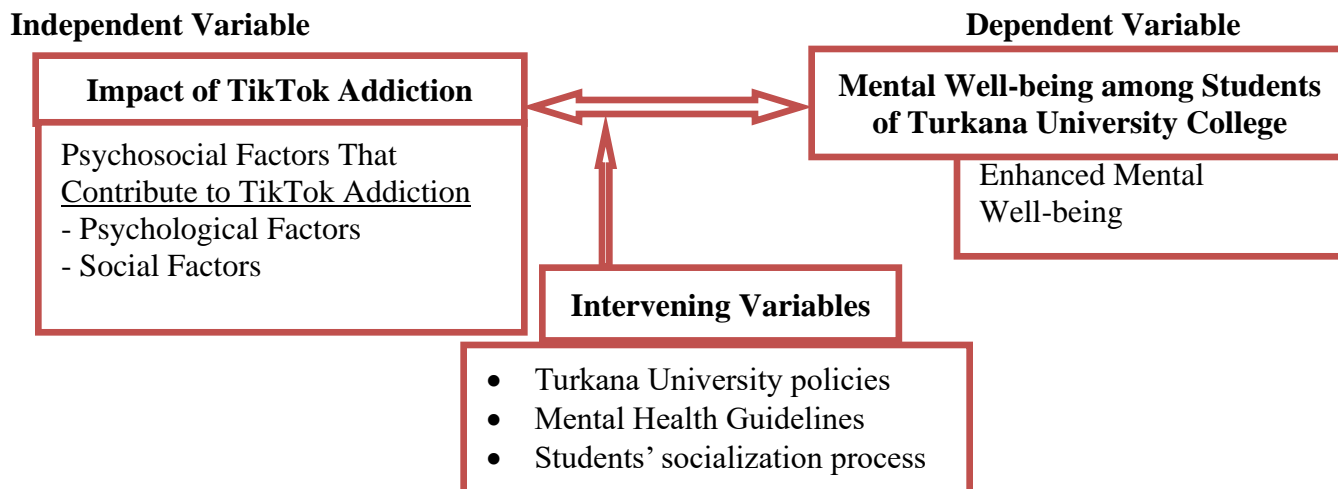
1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) has proposed by Ryan and Deci (Ryan, 2000) and belongs to the most influential motivation theories of human behavior. Hence, it clearly can also be used to explain why people are motivated to use a social media service. According to SDT, motivated behavior (here using TikTok) should be high, when such a platform enables users to feel competence, autonomy, and being connected with others. Design of the platform can help to trigger related psychological states (e.g., push notifications can trigger fear of missing out, hence, not being connected to significant others); but clearly also, individual differences play a relevant role, and this should be discussed as the next important area in this work. A sense of self-determination might rise to different levels, when users are actively or passively using TikTok and this also represents an interesting research question. SDT is an approach to human motivation and personality that uses traditional empirical methods while employing an organismic metatheory that highlights the importance of human's evolved inner resources for personality development and behavioral self-regulation (Ryan, Kuhl, & Deci, 2019). Thus, its arena is the investigation of people's inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs that are the basis for their self-motivation and personality integration, as well as for the conditions that foster those positive processes

1.9 Conceptual Framework

The independent variable is impact of TikTok addiction. This was measured by Psychosocial Factors That Contribute to TikTok Addiction; Psychological Factors and Social Factors. The dependent variable is Mental Well-being among Students of Turkana University College. This was measured by Enhanced Mental Well-being. The intervening variables are; Turkana University policies, Mental Health Guidelines and Students' socialization process.
This is illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework*

Independent Variable   **Dependent Variable**

Impact of TikTok Addiction		**Mental Well-being among Students of Turkana University College**
Psychosocial Factors That Contribute to TikTok Addiction - Psychological Factors - Social Factors		Enhanced Mental Well-being

Intervening Variables

- Turkana University policies
- Mental Health Guidelines
- Students' socialization process

Source: Own Conceptualization, 2024

1.10 Research Design and methodology

This is a mixed method study that adopts qualitative and quantitative research design. This study employed a transformative worldview. The researcher employed both quantitative and qualitative methods during research question formulation, data collection, analysis and interpretation. The qualitative and quantitative research design was selected because it permitted the researcher to go into addressing the in-depth issues of TikTok addiction and its impact on mental health of university students. *Site Description:* The study site was Turkana University College. The University Act 2021 envisages that there will be established at least one University in each of the 47 counties of Kenya. It further stipulates that those counties without universities will be prioritized. Turkana County is such a County with immense resources but without an institution of higher learning to tap from these resources. Indeed, university education is a critical component of human development worldwide. It produces the high-level skilled manpower to drive economic development. It is our view that an educated populace is vital in today's world which is knowledge driven. Accumulation of knowledge and application has become major factors in economic development and are at the core of any country's competitive advantage. The Turkana University College is situated in Lodwar the county headquarters of Turkana County. It is the youngest University College in Kenya operating under the stewardship of MMUST. Turkana University College has proximity to Uganda to the west, South Sudan and Ethiopia. The neighboring counties are West Pokot, Baringo and Samburu Counties. Turkana County is the home of four sites of Stone Age cultures situated upon tributaries along the west side of Lake Turkana in West Turkana. The University College will transform the economy of the County by introducing new opportunities for business. Research on local issues is bound to produce results that will alleviate poverty, not only in the County, but in the whole country. A university by its very nature is universal. It will connect the County to other universities worldwide and establish the international networks that are essential for growth. This will forever end the marginalization of the County.

Study Population and Target Population: The study population entailed registered students in TUC from the 5 academic departments. The university has an enrolment of 1300 students (Registrar academics, 2024). These students are enrolled in postgraduate and undergraduate programmes in TUC undertaking day, evening or weekend classes. The 2 university managers in the student's welfare department (office of the dean of students) and schools were targeted too. TUC has 3 academic schools. The school of education and social sciences host majority (65%) of the students of majorly undertake Bachelor of Education Arts and Science.

Inclusion-Exclusion Criteria: The study included registered and active in session students in TUC. The admissions office facilitated the identification of respondents. To be included in the study, a student respondent must be in possession of a smart/android phone and currently using TikTok application. This implied that students out of session for instance those on attachment were excluded. Those with no TikTok application in their phones were excluded too from the study.

Sample and Sampling Techniques: The target sample for this study was determined using a statistical formula by Yamane (1967), as shown in equation 3.1

$n = N/(1+Ne^2)$ ……………………… equation 3.1
Where,
n = Corrected/desired sample size,
N = Population size,
1 = Constant value
e = Margin of error (e = 0.05 at confidence level of 95%).

Thus, $n = 1305/(1 + 1305*0.05^2)$ giving a sample size of 305 as the minimum. Using Yamane (1967) formulae, the researcher got a sample size of 305 to the TUC student population and the university managers in the schools and dean of students' office. A sampling summary is illustrated in table 1.

Table 1 : Summary of the sampling strategy of respondents by study population units

Study population units	Estimated number of target population	Sample size per academic department	Sampling technique
Turkana University Students	1300 (Registrar Academics, 2024)	1.Arts & Social Sciences 60 students	Simple Random sampling
		2.Renewable Energy & Tech 60 students	
		3.Management Science 60 students	Apply Questionnaires
		4.Biological & Physical Sciences 60 students	
		5.Teacher Education 60 students	

		(Sub-total = 300 Students)	
Turkana University,	5	1. Dean of student's office 2. Students Counsellor	Census
Students Welfare Management	(Registrar Administration, 2024)	3. Three Deans of the Schools (Sub-total = 5)	Apply Interviews
	Total (N) = 1,305		**Total Sample (n) = 305**

Source: Field data, 2024

The study site (Turkana University College) was selected purposively to explain occurrence (as recommended by Creswell, 2020). TUC was selected because it is the only public university in Turkana County with regular and self-sponsored students. A list of active students in session was acquired from the Chair of Academic Departments. The researcher was conducting interviews with the key informants who were present in their offices when visited there. The researcher looked for their contacts, so as to call them to confirm availability in the offices and shared the interview schedule questions intended to be used during the interviews.

Methods and Instruments of Data Collection: Relevant data for this study was collected through primary and secondary data. Primary data refers to data collected for a specific research problem at hand; using procedures that fit best the research problem and study variables. The data protection Act of Kenya (2019) guided the data collection procedures. Secondary data on the other hand refers to data that has been collected before and is available to the researcher (Neuman, 2006).

Primary Data: To effect primary data collection, two instruments were used; questionnaires and interviews. Utilization of these methods of data collection enhanced validity and reliability of the study findings. The researcher enlisted the services of research assistants who underwent two-day training on basic research techniques. The enumerators conducted the interviews and collected data from the respondents using the questionnaires and interview guides. In addition, field note books and audio recorders aided the researcher in data collection. However, where applicable, mails were used especially for key informants who were busy.

Questionnaire: To facilitate collection of data using the mixed methods approach, this study employed semi-structured questionnaires on the 300 randomly selected students of TUC. The preference for using questionnaires was based on the fact that respondents may be able to complete it without help and anonymously. The questions were developed based on the information required to generally evaluate how TikTok addiction impacts on mental health. The questionnaires were pre-coded in order to facilitate the process of data entry into SPSS. The researcher administered the questionnaires to the respondent students using face to face.

Interviews: To facilitate collection of data using the mixed methods approach, this study employed interviews on the Dean of student's office, Students Counsellor and three Deans of the Schools. These key informants fall in the student's welfare management. The researcher adopted semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions which were employed as one of the methods for data collection to provide qualitative data which complemented the quantitative data.

Secondary Data: The researcher collected secondary data from a variety of relevant sources to the study scope. This included library books, publications, articles and information from refereed journals to complement primary data. Secondary data was in relation with the study variables and their indicators; the independent variable was TikTok addiction. The dependent variable was mental health among Turkana University College students.

Reliability and Validity: To ensure reliability of the collected data by questionnaires and interviews, triangulation was conducted. The content validity of questionnaires and interviews was based on the research objectives. Validity was also verified by comparing the results obtained through content analysis of the three instruments. The content validity was further examined by academic mentors/advisors of the study and other scholars of the department of psychology of the Kingdon Life Christian University where suggestions were made and adjusted accordingly. The researcher conducted a two-day training facilitative induction to take the research assistants through aspects of research while undertaking the study. This was done by identifying suitable research assistants then taking them through training in research aspects. In addition, the researcher conducted the study in person in order to ensure systematic validity. In this study, four criteria were used to ensure valid interpretation of data. These are: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Pilot Study: To ensure reliability and enhance validity, the researcher carried out a pre-test of instruments at the Lodwar Technical Training Institute. The researcher used 30 students and the student's counsellor of Lodwar Technical Training Institute in the pilot study because this made 31(10%) of the sample size (305) as guided by Hair et al (2010) rule of the thumb. In piloting the questionnaires, the researcher administered them randomly. The results obtained from the pilot study assisted the researcher in revising the questionnaires and interview guides to make sure that it covered the objectives of the study and elicited the same results. An internal consistency index of reliability of the instruments was carried out by the researcher. Thereafter, the researcher made changes as appropriate based on the field test, supervisor(s) and expert opinion. Furthermore, this study provided a chain of evidence from authors in literature. This study came out with clear definitions of the key terms and these terms are used consistently in this study.

Data Analysis Procedures and Presentation: The study adopted a mixed methods design in an attempt to answer the stated objectives and to complement insights discovered. The data protection Act of Kenya (2019) guided the data analysis procedures. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences - version 23) was adopted to help in quantitative data analysis. This quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics specifically frequencies, percentages and mean. On the other hand, qualitative data was analysed using thematic content analysis that entailed coding, transcribing, categorization, voices analysis and narrative analysis. Therefore, the qualitative data was recorded, transcribed and translated from the respondent's language to English. The data was then be coded and themes related to the variables. Descriptive analysis in particular frequencies averages and percentages were employed to compliment qualitative analysis and interpretation. The results were displayed in form of tables, charts, graphs and verbatives. Pseudonyms were employed in protecting identity of personalized sources.

Ethical Considerations of the Study: The researcher was guided by the Kenya data protection Act (2019). In reporting verbatives for qualitative data, the study utilized pseudonyms for participants who appended their acceptance to participate in the study through a consent form. The researcher sought authority to research from the management of The Kingdom Life Christian University (KLCU). The researcher sought a research licence from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), Turkana County Commissioner and TUC authorities so as to allow data collection in the university. The questions asked did not have information of personal or political nature. An introduction caption and University student identification card by the researcher was used for self-identification and the study purpose to the respondents. The information collected was treated strictly confidential and purely for academic work. The respondents were not being obliged to write their names on the questionnaires. As a mechanism to curb any psychological harm that arose in the event of interview or data collection, this study adhered to the Psychologists and Professional Counsellors code of ethics, principles and values.

Limitations of the Methodology: The study adopted a mixed methods research methodology, which has its own limitations. Using mixed methods can pose some difficulties and drawbacks that a researcher needs to consider before choosing this approach. For instance, one needs to have sufficient skills and resources to collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data, which can be time-consuming and costly. There's also need to have a clear and coherent rationale for using mixed methods, and a suitable design and strategy for integrating the data. Moreover, researchers need to be aware of the potential conflicts and contradictions that may arise from combining different paradigms, assumptions, and methods, and how to resolve them.

1.11 Data Analysis, Presentation and Discussion of Findings

It is worth noting that, the study response rate was 250(83%). This is ideal and reliable because as guided by Hair et al., 2010, a response rate of more than 70% can be relied upon on making conclusions and generalizations. The data was presented through charts, figures, and tables and verbatim. The data protection Act of Kenya, (2019) guided the analysis of data, presentation and interpretation of findings. The study was in particularly interested in examining the psychological effect of TikTok addiction on university students. This is because the study hypothesized that TikTok had an effect on mental wellbeing, thus a need to examine the contributory factors.

Figure 2: Psychosocial factors that contribute to TikTok addiction
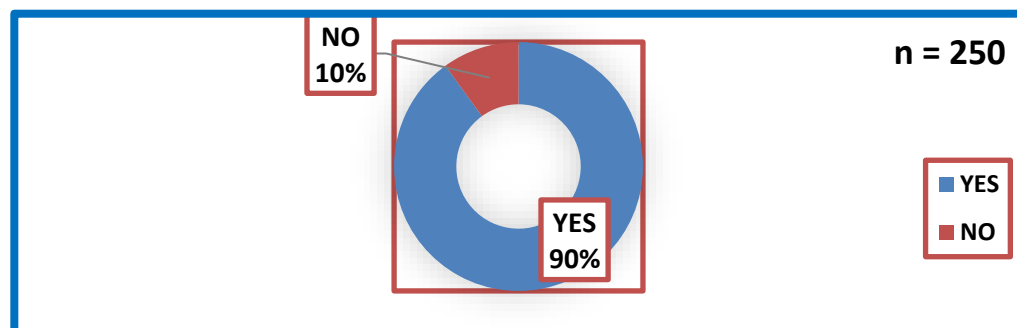
Source: Field data, 2024

As depicted in figure 2 out of the 250 respondents, 90% confirmed that psychosocial factors contributed to TikTok addiction among university students, while only 10% disagreed with that statement. This triggered the study to proceed on establishing these factors that affect TikTok addiction as portrayed in table 2.

Table 2: Psychological factors that contribute to TikTok addiction among students

Loneliness	145	58
Personality	60	24
Academic Pressure	15	6
Peer Pressure	30	12
Total	**250**	**100**

Source: Field data, 2024

The results shown in table 2 portray that 145(58%) of the respondents were addicted to TikTok because of immense loneliness. This is justified by the factor that Lodwar may be far for the students to reach their families and loved ones hence loneliness leading them to seek company on social media. The individuals' personality contributed 24% because some people are technophobic and others are explorative by nature. Academic pressure attributed to 6% of the addiction which came in as a relaxer during the exam period. Peer pressure led to 12% of the TikTok addiction. This associative pressure hails from class mates and generational peers.

This study agrees with a study conducted in America which found out that mental health in the United States continues to increase, and the amount of time Americans spend using social media is also on the rise. To reiterate, on average, Americans spend 28% of the time using the internet for social media interaction (Huang, 2018). Multiple studies have found social media use as a contributing link to various mental health symptoms associated with depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and negative well-being (Ashford, 2017; Hardy & Castonguay, 2018; Hussain & Griffiths, 2018). These studies find that social media has a direct impact on mental health and well-being through the pure nature of content and interaction found while using social media sites. Although most studies find that youth populations are at most risk, adults are also associated with high mental health symptoms related to social media use.

Social factors that contribute to TikTok addiction among university students
This study went ahead to determine the Social factors that contribute to TikTok addiction among university students. This was articulated on the social environment of students.

Table 3: Social factors that contribute to TikTok addiction among university students

Group Pressure	60	24
Desire to Trend on Social Media	65	26
Availability of WiFi/Bundles	75	30
Desire to Make Videos/Content	50	20
Total	**250**	**100**

Source: Field data, 2024

Results in table 3 show that 30% of students got addicted to TikTok because of the availability of the university free Wi-Fi and bundles on offer. On the other hand, 24% said that group pressure led them to addiction, while 26% eluded their addiction to their desire to trend on social media and attract more likes. The researcher established that 20% find themselves in addiction due to the desire to make videos and content for TikTok.

These findings were emphasized by one of the respondents who affirmed that;

> *TikTok is my half-life. TikTok helps me pay my fees and settle some of my bills. I get payment for going live on TikTok, attracting views and 'lions' and that is money.*
> *(Field Data, 2024)*

This is added synergy by Ashford (2017) study which found that individuals may experience feelings of social isolation, depression, insecurity, jealousy, and poor self-esteem while using social media. Some individuals develop cognitive distortions when comparing their lives to other users' content, which may lead to feelings of sadness and depression (Ashford, 2017). Some examples include comparing users' number of likes and followers, feeling left out for not being invited to events, and comparing grandiosity pictures to one's photos. As a result, social media has a higher rate of affecting vulnerable populations, like those who suffer from mental health diagnosis and have the potential to cause mental health symptoms to surface.

Extent to which psychological factors lead to TikTok addiction among students
It was prudent for this study to examine the extent to which psychological factors lead to TikTok addiction among university students as displayed in figure 3.
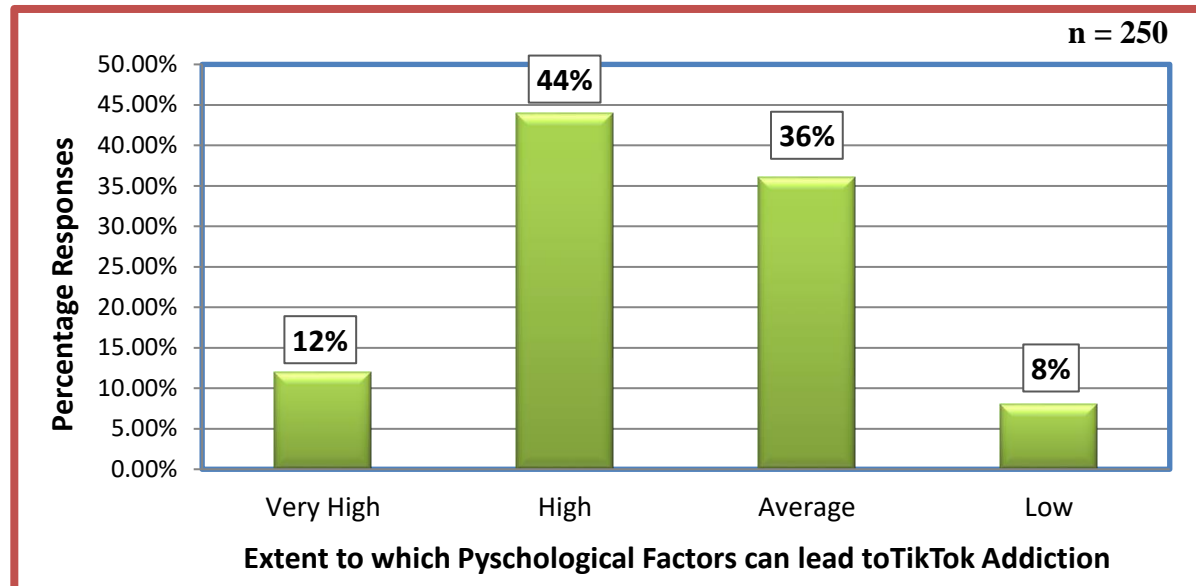
Figure 3: Extent to which psychological factors lead to TikTok addiction among university students
Source: Field data, 2024

Findings in figure 3 reveal that 44% of the respondents interviewed agreed that psychological factors lead to TikTok addiction at a high rate. While 12% said it's very high, 36% said that it is average while 8% were for low association. This means that there's a direct effect of psychological factors on TikTok addiction.

Summary of Finding
In relation to the objective; psychosocial factors that contribute to TikTok addiction among university students, 90% confirmed that psychosocial factors contributed to TikTok addiction among university students, while only 10% disagreed with that statement. This portray that 145(58%) of the respondents were addicted to TikTok because of immense loneliness. Personality contributed 24% because some people are technophobic and others are explorative by nature. Academic pressure attributed to 6% of the addiction which came in as a relaxer during the exam period. Peer pressure led to 12% of the TikTok addiction. Additionally, 30% of students got addicted because of the availability of the university free Wi-Fi and bundles on offer. On the other hand, 24% said that group pressure led them to addiction, while 26% eluded their addiction to their desire to trend on social media and attract more likes. The researcher established that 20% find themselves in addiction due to the desire to make videos and content for TikTok. Thus, 44% of the respondents interviewed agreed that psychological factors lead to TikTok addiction at a high rate. While 12% said it's very high, 36% said that it is average while 8% were for low association. This means that there's a direct effect of psychological factors on TikTok addiction.

Implications of the Study Results
Findings of this study have major implications on student's mental wellbeing because, students tended to engage in upward social comparisons with TikTok users perceived as better and more successful, which produced feelings of inferiority and unsuccessfulness. TikTok's role in students' health and

wellbeing is explored through a thematic analysis of participants' narratives. Findings indicated that TikTok exerted a strong influence over various aspects of participants' mental health. Findings suggested that students felt conflicted as to whether TikTok positively or negatively affected their wellbeing, consistent with research conducted on other social media platforms (Ivie et al., 2020). As suggested by McCrory et al. (2022), these mixed effects may be the result of how individuals behave on the platform. Users that actively contribute content may temporarily increase their feelings of high self-esteem, while those that adopt more a "viewer" role may be more likely to experience feelings of envy and inferiority.

Contribution to the Mental Health Counselling Field
This study has a significant contribution to mental health and counselling field. Despite evidence that social media is effective at improving mental health awareness and encouraging health-protective behaviors, this research on TikTok provides a limitation of it due to it being a relatively new platform. Since university carries more young people who are majorly susceptible for mental health disorders, this study provides insight knowledge of understanding the types of mental disorders that affect young persons. As social media use is especially prevalent among students, a population characterized by poor mental health and a higher susceptibility to developing psychiatric illnesses. This study will help to determine whether TikTok is beneficial or detrimental to students' wellbeing. The study also contributes to establish whether TikTok use promoted psychological resilience and reduced loneliness. As indicated by research on several other platforms, using social media can support individuals to build connections with peers and obtain a sense of social belonging, which in turn may reduce feelings of isolation. The researcher, therefore anticipate that this study would go a long way of heling scholars in mental health and counselling in generating new insights, classifications and mental wellbeing especially for university students.

Importance of the Research
Although there are several studies completed about the impact social media can have on mental health, the literature is limited regarding the specific actions mental health practitioners should take in response to increased mental health symptoms related to TikTok. The current research study makes a significant contribution to the literature by exploring an under-researched area. The main discovery of this research is the correlation between TikTok addiction and mental well-being of university students. Moreover, this research contributes to the importance of mental health practitioners staying current and proactive in expanding their knowledge about the systems that impact an individual's well-being, such as technological advances like social media-TikTok. Finally, this research brings awareness to the significance of including questions and exploration of social media-TikTok use on assessment forms and in mental health treatment in present and for future.

1.12 Conclusion
TikTok is a platform full of all kinds of information, with strong openness and interaction, and has a strong attraction and influence on young people. As much as it may have a positive psychological impact on young people, but it can also lead to addiction to young people, and may lead them to form wrong values, more likely to lead them to depression and even suicidal tendencies. Thus, regulating the content of the TikTok platform and promoting the healthy and active development of young people is paramount. Therefore, parents and universities should be more concerned about their student's mental health and cooperate with each other to design effective mental health counselling strategies. The universities

should use the Internet to strengthen the education of young people's mental health, so that young people have a positive attitude towards life and sunshine healthy mind.

1.13 Recommendations
In relation to the study's findings and conclusion, this study recommends the following:
a) Public awareness on TikTok addiction and its effect to mental well-being should be intensively conducted and be captured as university activity through the dean of student's office, highlighting the negative effects of TikTok addiction especially for those students watching dirty and unproductive content.
b) University students should be engaged in extra activities like football, music and drama in order to reduce the free time they have and occupy them productively.
c) University students ought to be encouraged to join clubs such as peer counselling clubs to help them learn and improve their mental health knowledge and participate in helping others. If possible guiding rules and regulations should be put in place to guide students on the use of TikTok especially on official university platforms.

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