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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Mapping the role of tiktok in academic motivation: a bibliometric analysis of university students' learning engagement

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Abstract

This study aims to map scientific publication trends concerning the role of TikTok in fostering academic motivation among students, utilizing a bibliometric approach. Data were collected from the Scopus database using a refined keyword combination focusing on 'TikTok AND study AND motivation'. A total of 561 documents published between 2019 and 2024 were analyzed using VOSviewer software to examine keyword co-occurrence, author collaboration, and citation patterns. The findings reveal that TikTok-related academic motivation studies are linked to digital learning, student engagement, academic performance, and higher education's use of social media. Five main clusters were identified, each representing thematic approaches to the integration of social media in learning. The United States, China, and the United Kingdom were the leading contributors, reflecting significant global academic attention. This study underscores TikTok's emerging influence in academic contexts and its potential as a motivational tool for enhancing student learning.

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Introduction:

The short video-based platform, TikTok, is increasingly used by students to find study references, get encouragement from fellow students, and find effective learning strategies. Short video-based applications that were originally popular as entertainment media, but are now increasingly used as a means of sharing educational and motivational content (Xihua Chen et al., 2020). Professionals also present persuasive video content on tips for professional development, procedural insights, dissemination of scientific information from experts, and sharing formal knowledge and information on the latest scientific developments (de-Casas-Moreno et al., 2024; Puwo et al., 2023). It is also common to find lecturers creating educational and motivational content to encourage the acceleration of students' studies in working on their thesis. For lecturers, the TikTok platform facilitates closer relationships with students and motivates them through short video interactions (Lemana II et al., 2024). TikTok supports micro-learning strategies that enable students to consume information in short videos to understand

complex subjects and develop communication skills (Pozzo et al., 2024). The integration of microlearning and social media also shows great potential in improving student learning outcomes (Denojean-Mairet et al., 2024).

Students, especially those in their final year, face high academic pressure in completing their final project or thesis. This positions TikTok as an alternative that offers psychological encouragement through content such as "study with me", time management tips, and inspirational stories from fellow students (Bulley et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2024; Ramsden & Talbot, 2024). "Study with me" video content provides social support by simulating the presence of study buddies and presenting a virtual learning atmosphere, especially for those who study alone (Ibtasar et al., 2022; Ren et al., 2025). Students in the thesis work period are in a situation of learning alone which can weaken the motivation to complete their thesis. Watching others learn can generate motivation so as to encourage student viewers to stay on task (Lee et al., 2021). This virtually forms a conducive learning environment. This phenomenon is interesting to study further, especially in the context of TikTok 's role in building students' academic motivation. The attractiveness generated from productive content revives the enthusiasm for learning in doing assignments and preparing student theses (Amezcua-Núñez, 2024).

This phenomenon shows a change in the model or learning style of students in seeking learning motivation. Not limited to formal environments such as classrooms or lecturer guidance, but also through digital content that is considered relatable and easily accessible. Content that displays real-time academic struggles, productive study routines, and a calm *learning* atmosphere triggers the emergence of *social learning* and *vicarious motivation* among TikTok users (Amaluisa Rendón et al., 2023; Jacobs et al., 2022; Rendon et al., 2022). In this context, TikTok not only provides information, but also builds a sense of community and collective spirit to solve academic challenges, especially in the final study period. Although this student audience does not interact in comments or make posts, they can still actively observe and consume video content. This social media user criteria is categorized as a "Lurker" (AlAfnan, 2024). This type of student uses TikTok as a source of motivation or study reference secretly without public involvement.

TikTok creates an engaging, interactive and supportive learning environment that increases students' motivation to complete their studies (Collins, 2025; Haliti-Sylaj & Sadiku, 2024; Siraji, 2025). It is a unique blend of psychological support, educational content and a sense of being in the same situation (Bulley et al., 2024; Woolard et al., 2024). In practice, this phenomenon is increasingly widespread, but scientific studies that map the role of TikTok in the context of learning motivation are still limited. The lack of academic synthesis in the form of bibliometric mapping causes a gap between real practice and scientific understanding of the role of TikTok in higher education. Based on these considerations, mapping the literature through a bibliometric approach is important to identify trends, collaborations, and research focuses that develop in this TikTok topic

Therefore, this study aims to map scholarly views related to the role of TikTok in student learning motivation through a bibliometric approach. Comprehensive mapping of TikTok research provides knowledge of the conditions of various technical and social fields related to the investigation of TikTok themes (Rejeb et al., 2024). Later stages of this writing take the form of analyzing and mapping scientific literature that discusses the role of TikTok in study or student learning motivation. The use of a bibliometric approach intends to examine publication trends, dominant keywords, author collaboration, and topics that are at the center of attention in this field. The results of this analysis are expected to provide deeper insights into the dynamics and influence of TikTok as a learning platform, as well as assist academics and educators in designing more effective learning strategies. The benefits of this research are not only limited to theoretical contributions in expanding the horizon of social media studies in education, but also have practical implications for lecturers, educational policy makers, and edutech actors.

Data and methodology:

This study uses a bibliometric approach to analyze scientific publications related to TikTok and students' academic motivation. Bibliometrics applies statistical methods to analyze books, articles, and publications in a scientific context (Erümit et al., 2024). The usefulness of bibliometric analysis is to conduct a comprehensive literature review, identify trends in a particular field (Hallinger & Kovačević, 2022). Bibliometric review can analyze the direction of further research that should be done or can still be done (Mulay et al., 2020).

Data sources were obtained from the Scopus database using relevant keyword combinations, namely ("TikTok" OR "social media" OR "video platform" OR "short video") AND ("study" OR "learning" OR "education" OR "academic") AND ("motivation" OR "inspiration" OR "engagement") AND ("impact" OR "effect" OR "influence" OR "role") AND ("higher education" OR "students"). This query also focused on including the words "TikTok AND study AND motivation" to make the results more specific to the topic. As presented in Table 1, the data was retrieved on April 8, 2025 and focused on publications published between 2019 and 2024. Based on the search and filtering results, 561 documents were obtained which were then analyzed further. Visualization and exploration of

data, VOSviewer software was used to see the relationship between keywords (keyword co-occurrence), collaboration networks between authors and institutions, and citation patterns. This bibliometric analysis was conducted to identify research trends, dominating topics, and the contribution of countries and institutions in research related to TikTok and student learning motivation.

Table 1 Data collection mechanism.			
Stages	Technical description		
Topic Determination	TikTok and student learning motivation		
Query Formulation	("TikTok " OR "social media" OR "video platform" OR "short video") AND		
	("study" OR "learning" OR "education" OR "academic") AND ("motivation"		
	OR "inspiration" OR "engagement") AND ("impact" OR "effect" OR		
	"influence" OR "role") AND ("higher education" OR "students")		
	Focus on "TikTok AND study AND motivation"		
Database Selection	Scopus		
Time span	Year 2019-2024		
Search Execution	Performed on April 8, 2025		
Data Filtering	561 final documents		
Export Data	.csv or.ris format		
Descriptive	Descriptive analysis of metadata elements from the Scopus database		
Bibliometric Analysis			
Bibliometric Analysis	Analysis of keyword co-occurrence, co-authorship, citation, and text data		
Visualization	Focus on the position of the keyword "TikTok", dominant clusters,		
Interpretation	relationships between topics		

Result Discussion:

Based on the analysis of 561 documents retrieved from the Scopus database, Table 2 shows that English is the most frequently used language in publications discussing TikTok and students' learning motivation was English, with a total of 551 documents or 98.2% of all publications. This reflects that this topic has global appeal and is of major interest among international researchers who use English as the language of scientific communication. In addition, there are publications in other languages, although in much smaller numbers, namely Spanish with 7 documents (1.2%), Indonesian with 2 documents (0.4%), and Portuguese with 1 document (0.2%). The dominance of English publications indicates the direction of international academic attention. However, the emergence of publications in languages other than English also reflects the interest in this phenomenon from different regions, as well as the potential for future developments in contextualized research that considers aspects of local culture, language and education systems. The high use of English in the pooled documents allows for a wider range of readers and collaborators globally. On the other hand, the lack of publications in local languages (such as Bahasa Indonesia) may lead to a lack of reflection on the needs and behaviors of students from specific cultural contexts, even though the dynamics of TikTok use are highly contextualized and influenced by local digital culture.

Table 2 Most com	Table 2 Most common languages of the documents.		
Language	Count	% 561	
English	551	98.2	
Spanish	7	1.2	
Indonesian	2	0.4	
Portuguese	1	0.2	

Source: Author based on Scopus query results using keywords related to "TikTok", "study", and "motivation", as of April 8, 2025. N = 561

As presented in Figure 1, the trend of scientific publications on TikTok in the context of student learning motivation has shown a consistent and significant increase over the past six years. Based on data obtained from Scopus, the number of publications in 2019 was recorded at 37 documents, then experienced a gradual increase to 42 documents in 2020.

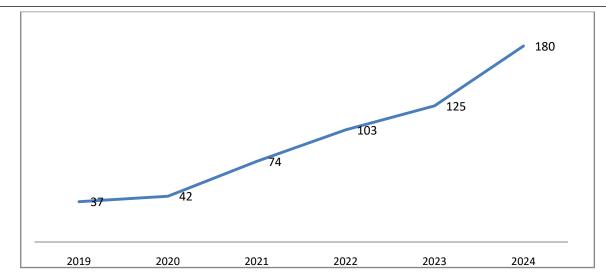


Figure 1 Evolution of the number of articles on TikTok and academic motivation published between 2019 and 2024.

Source: Author based on Scopus query results using keywords related to "TikTok", "study", and "motivation", as of April 8, 2025. N = 561

A more prominent increase began to appear in 2021 with 74 documents, and continued to increase in 2022 with 103 documents. The most significant spikes occurred in 2023 and 2024, with 125 and 180 documents respectively. This trend reflects the increasing academic attention to TikTok as a relevant digital phenomenon in higher education, particularly in relation to student engagement and motivation to learn. The dramatic increase in the last two years can also be attributed to students' increasing reliance on digital content in their learning activities, as well as the rise of educational content on the TikTok platform that plays a role in building non-formal learning communities. In addition, this trend also shows how the COVID-19 pandemic triggered the wider adoption of social media in educational contexts, followed by further post-pandemic research exploration of the long-term impact of social media on young people's learning.

The distribution of publications related to TikTok and student academic motivation spans various countries, with both developed and developing nations contributing significantly. As shown in Table 4, the United States ranks first in publication output with a total of 98 documents (11.78%), followed by the UK with 79 documents (9.50%) and China with 70 documents (8.41%). These three countries show a central role in producing academic literature on the topic, reflecting the great attention to social media dynamics in their respective higher education systems. Interestingly, some countries from the Southeast Asian region also showed significant participation, such as Indonesia which ranked fifth with 34 documents (4.09%) and Malaysia with 24 documents (2.88%). The presence of countries such as Saudi Arabia (3.61%) and India (3.61%) also shows active involvement from the Asian and Middle Eastern regions in the global discourse on the role of TikTok in the context of education.

Table 3Top 10 countries publishing on the topic of TikTok and academic motivation.

Country	Count	%
United States	98	11.78
United Kingdom	79	9.50
China	70	8.41
Spain	40	4.81
Indonesia	34	4.09
India	30	3.61
Saudi Arabia	30	3.61
Australia	27	3.25
Malaysia	24	2.88
Canada	21	2.52

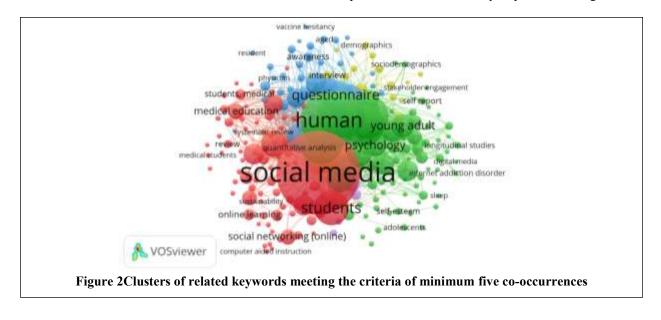
Source: Authors based on Scopus query results using keywords related to "TikTok", "study", and "motivation", and analyzed using the 'Analyze Results' tool on the saved list of N = 561 documents, as of April 8, 2025.

Table 4 shows the most cited articles in the study of TikTok and students' academic motivation shows a trend that research that combines educational, psychological and social dimensions has a high level of influence in the scientific literature. The most cited article is by (Chaturvedi et al., 2021) entitled *COVID-19 and its impact on education, social life and mental health of students: A survey*, with a total of 364 citations. This article highlights the impact of the pandemic on students' education and mental health, reinforcing the importance of the global crisis context in encouraging the use of social media as a means of coping and learning motivation. Similarly, an article by (Ansari & Khan, 2020) discussing the role of social media in collaborative learning received 297 citations, emphasizing the contribution of social media to a more participatory and connected learning model. The majority of the most influential articles did not exclusively highlight TikTok, but rather discussed social media in general, especially in relation to digital use, psychological engagement, and influence on students' study behavior. Some articles also addressed aspects of internet addiction, sleep disorders, anxiety, and FoMO (Fear of Missing Out), all of which are closely related to intensive interaction with platforms like TikTok. For example, studies by (Wong et al., 2020) and (Li et al., 2022) demonstrated the link between social media use and psychological well-being, an aspect relevant to students' academic motivation in the digital age.

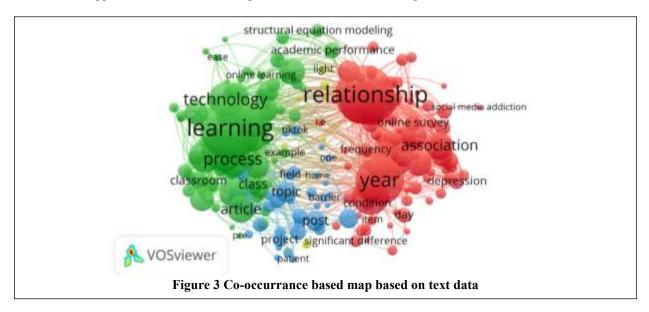
These findings suggest that the most influential literature in this field tends to take a cross-disciplinary approach, focusing on the integration of technology, psychology and pedagogy. In addition, many articles were published during or after the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting that the global event was a major catalyst in amplifying scholarly attention to the role of digital media, including TikTok, in education. Thus, future research directions could lead to a deeper exploration of how platforms like TikTok are used not only as entertainment, but also as a means of learning, inspiring, and strengthening students' academic motivation, especially in the context of post-pandemic recovery and the era of hybrid learning.

Authors	Article title	Source title	Number of citations
Chaturvedi K.et al,(2021)	COVID-19 and its impact on education, social life and mental health of students: A survey	Children and Youth Services Review	364
Ansari J.A.N. & Khan N.A.(2020)	Exploring the role of social media in collaborative learning the new domain of learning	Smart Learning Environments	297
Wong H.Y.et al,(2020)	Relationships between severity of internet gaming disorder, severity of problematic social media use, sleep quality and psychological distress	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	287
Dunn T.J.& Kennedy M.(2019)	Technology Enhanced Learning in higher education; motivations, engagement and academic achievement	Computers and Education	222
Hogue J.V.& Mills J.S.(2019)	The effects of active social media engagement with peers on body image in young women	Body Image	164
Chen IH.et al,(2021)	Problematic internet-related behaviors mediate the associations between levels of internet engagement and distress among schoolchildren during COVID-19 lockdown: A longitudinal structural equation modeling study	Journal of Behavioral Addictions	124
Katz M.& Nandi N.(2021)	Social media and medical education in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: Scoping review	JMIR Medical Education	118
Alamri M.M.et al,(2020)	Social media applications affecting students' academic performance: A model developed for sustainability in higher education	Sustainability (Switzerland)	117
Li L.et al,(2022)	A network analysis approach to the relationship between fear of missing out (FoMO), smartphone addiction, and social networking site use among a sample of Chinese university students	Computers in Human Behavior	100
Pérez-Escoda A.et al,(2020)	Social networks' engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic in Spain: Health media vs. healthcare professionals ed on Scopus query results using keywords related to '	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	89

Co-occurrence keywords analysis was conducted to identify the relationship between keywords that frequently appear in research related to TikTok use, learning motivation, and student academic engagement. Based on the results of data processing from Scopus using VOSviewer, 237 keywords were obtained which were divided into 5 different clusters. Each cluster has its own color and reflects specific themes in this studyAs presented inFigure 2.



Co-occurrence keywords analysis was conducted to identify the relationship between keywords that frequently appear in research related to TikTok use, learning motivation, and student academic engagement. The red cluster shows that many of the studies in this dataset highlight the role of social media in education, particularly in the context of online learning and medical education. The green cluster focuses on psychological and behavioral aspects, with keywords such as *young adult*, *psychology*, *self-esteem*, and *internet addiction disorder*, suggesting a link between social media and students' mental health. The blue cluster highlights research methodologies with keywords such as *questionnaire*, *interview*, and *awareness*, indicating that research in this field mostly uses survey and interview approaches to measure the impact of social media on learning motivation.



This network map visualizationaccording to Figure 3 based on *co-occurrence* analysis of text data displays the relationship between words that often appear together in related documents. The red cluster shows that many studies address the relationship between social media and psychological and behavioral aspects, such as *social media addiction* and *depression*. The green cluster reflects the focus on digital learning relevant to the use of social media in educational contexts. The blue cluster consists of words such as *article*, *post*, *project*, and *topic*, which describe the general structure of the scientific publication or academic activity under study. Meanwhile, the smaller yellow cluster features terms such as *academic performance*, *light*, and *stakeholder*, which can point to other dimensions such as academic achievement and user perception.

The results of this visualization show that TikTok -related research does not only focus on technology or social media platforms, but also on the relationship with the learning process, academic performance, and mental health of students. The keyword "TikTok" appears in the middle (between the green and blue clusters), with a relatively small node size compared to other keywords such as *learning*, *relationship*, or *social media*. This shows that "TikTok" is not the main keyword, but it is still relevant and connected to several other important concepts in the analyzed literature

Positionally, "TikTok " falls between the green cluster (which has *learning* and *technology* themes) and the blue cluster (which contains many common terms in publications such as *post*, *project*, *topic*, and *example*). This can be interpreted that TikTok is discussed in the context of education and learning, and is often used as part of case studies or research objects in academic projects. The keyword "TikTok" has not yet dominated and this shows that TikTok is starting to be integrated in academic studies as a tool, phenomenon, or object of research related to the learning process and digital media. Its potential as a research topic is still wide open, especially if it is related to *academic performance*, *online learning*, and psychological aspects of students.

CONCLUSION:

The results of a bibliometric analysis of 561 documents from the Scopus database (2019-2024) show that TikTok is starting to be recognized in the academic literature as a potential platform that can influence students' learning motivation, especially in the context of study completion and academic engagement. Visualization through VOSviewer shows the connectedness of keywords such as motivation, learning, social media, education, and higher education, indicating that this topic has become a cross-disciplinary concern. The keyword map and author collaboration also show that the academic discussion on TikTok 's role in education is growing and starting to form its own research community.

The dominance of publications by developed countries and renowned institutions reflects the strong interest in social media integration in digital education strategies. TikTok is not only a medium of entertainment, but also a space for students to provide each other with academic inspiration and support. This research confirms the need to utilize social media wisely in supporting the learning motivation of the digital generation. The findings also open up opportunities for further research, both qualitative and quantitative, to explore the real impact of TikTok in encouraging academic engagement and student completion in higher education.

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