HOW TIKTOK IMPACTS TEENS' CAREER CHOICES

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary digital era, social networks have gained a considerable degree of influence over various aspects of socialization, information processing, and decision-making processes, including the career orientation of young individuals. This study investigates the impact of the TikTok platform on the development of career preferences among high school students. The present study aims to identify the digital consumption habits of students, the types of content they watch, and their perceptions of TikTok's role in vocational decisions. To this aim, a 30-item structured questionnaire was applied to a sample of 200 respondents in grades IX-XII. The instrument explored usage patterns, the nature of consumed content, awareness of platform algorithms, and the self-perceived impact on career aspirations. The study's results indicate that over 80% of students actively use the platform, with most spending at least an hour on it daily. It has been observed that content of an educational, motivational, and entrepreneurial nature is among that to which the highest number of users access. Interestingly, one-third of respondents reported that TikTok had prompted them to search for more information or reconsider their career paths. The study also examined the perceived influence of peers and family members, revealing that TikTok's role in shaping career aspirations is embedded within a broader social framework. Students' responses revealed varying degrees of awareness of TikTok's algorithmic recommendations; some recognised that the content they see may reinforce particular career stereotypes or trends. Differences in responses were observed based on students' geographic and socioeconomic contexts. This suggests that digital influence intersects with broader social realities. However, trust in influencers is conditioned by perceptions of their expertise, and many participants emphasize the risks of promoting unrealistic ideals or "cool" but inappropriate jobs. Participants expressed a balanced view, combining optimism with concern about the long-term implications of TikTok for their professional careers. These insights emphasise the importance of integrating digital media literacy and critical thinking into career guidance programmes. This will enable students to navigate online content more discerningly and develop more informed and sustainable vocational aspirations.

Keywords: TikTok, Career Choices, Adolescents, High School Teens, Algorithmic Influence, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

The impact of media and the online environment on our lives, choices and society's evolution is significant. Once a simple tool for information, the media has become a fundamental part of our lives, changing our perspective on socialisation and