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TikTok as an Informal Music Learning Platform: An Analysis of the Impact of Music Extracurricular Activities on Students of SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu, Indonesia

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Abstract: The TikTok phenomenon, which initially served solely as a source of entertainment, like other social media, has now evolved into a creative and educational medium for music learning. This study aims to explore TikTok's role, focusing on SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu Jember. Students take turns singing on TikTok, videos of which have circulated widely and been appreciated by the community. This study used a qualitative and visual ethnographic approach, supported by in-depth interviews involving students and teachers. The results indicate that activities on TikTok not only serve as a fun form of musical expression but also generate several more significant impacts beyond music. Through the viral power of the For You Page (FYP), several students have received scholarships to study abroad. Furthermore, this activity can enhance the school's branding and reputation, both regionally and nationally. Furthermore, singing on TikTok strengthens students self-confidence and collective pride. This research provides a clear picture of TikTok's potential for the future if utilized appropriately. Not only is it an innovative medium for artistic and social learning, but TikTok will go far beyond its typical use as a social media platform. These findings also highlight the need for teachers and schools to integrate digital technologies, to expand student learning outcomes and foster the critical and imaginative thinking needed. This study contributes to the literature on social media in music education by demonstrating how TikTok can function as an effective informal learning platform in the Indonesian context.

Keywords: TikTok, informal music learning, music extracurricular impact, social media in education, SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, a shift has occurred in the digital ecology, transforming social media from mere entertainment to a more complex platform for identity construction and knowledge production. TikTok has brought about a significant shift in the digital ecosystem with its addictive short videos, interactive formats, and customized algorithms. As (Castro, 2025) notes, TikTok has created an "ethos of self-directed learning characterized by resilience, experimentation, and adaptability." This aligns with the global education system's transition toward tablet-based learning and digital platforms. Education is gradually shifting away from the traditional linear text model. Although not located in the urban center of Jember in East Java, SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu has demonstrated a successful transformation in integrating TikTok into social and learning practices. This vocational school has demonstrated the increasing use of social media platforms as tools for social mobility and transformative learning in the broader rural area. At this school, the simple activity of creating song cover videos has evolved into a complex socio-cultural phenomenon,



generating not only virality but also substantive achievements, such as international scholarships and invitations to prominent media podcasts, while significantly contributing to the development of students' cultural identities.

According to the school's vocal teacher, Mahmud Ali, the success of the students TikTok content has been "very satisfying and beyond expectations", with the prediction that "students will cover more songs" than expected a projection that finds scientific legitimacy in the research of (Erydani et al., 2025) and (Pozzo et al., 2024) on the cycle of positive reinforcement generated by the TikTok algorithm. This phenomenal achievement did not arise in a vacuum; this initiative, which began in 2021, actually embodies (Castro, 2025) concept of "self-directed learning tenacity", where perseverance, continuous experimentation, and adaptability are the key pillars of success in a rapidly evolving digital ecosystem. This success should be understood as a meeting point between individual agency and platform structure, where TikTok's algorithm serves as an amplifier for existing creativity, while also acting as a catalyst for the emergence of new, previously suppressed forms of creativity.

While research remains limited on TikTok and informal music education in Indonesia, with this research will be done on the TikTok and the use in informal music education in the extracurricular activities at SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu, and music learning at (Lokollo, 2025) states there is social media use for self paced informal learning (YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp) for academic interactions and skills development) in Indonesia. However, none of Windy's (Indonesia) works focus on TikTok music education. This research will draw on other studies on informal learning in Indonesia and on social media, and will focus on music education.

TikTok's effectiveness as an informal learning medium has been demonstrated across various disciplinary contexts. According to Siraji (2025) and Ross et al. (2025), TikTok's short video format is intrinsically suited to breaking down complex musical concepts into digestible, engaging, and cognitively manageable content units. This characteristic perfectly aligns with the consumption patterns of the digital native generation. The platform's ability to enhance student understanding and engagement is not limited to the music domain alone. Still, it has also been validated in language and chemistry education contexts, demonstrating its broad and flexible adaptability across disciplinary boundaries (Zulkifli et al., 2022). When compared to other platforms, TikTok demonstrates a clear competitive advantage. YouTube, despite being the most established learning platform with an extensive library of educational content, tends to facilitate passive content consumption, primarily for the purpose of explaining or reinforcing music theory through visualized lectures (Martinez & Ramos, 2025; Timmi et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Instagram demonstrates less effectiveness in informal learning contexts, with lower user satisfaction rates among students (Jiao, 2024), and is associated with materialistic content that can potentially undermine intrinsic learning motivation (Otto & Thies, 2024). Spotify, as a purely music streaming service, lacks comparable educational features, making its position as an informal music learning medium ineffective.

TikTok's collaborative dimension is a key pillar of its success. Features like "Duet" enable what (O'Toole, 2023) calls "decentralized co-creativity", a collaborative model that allows users to add new layers of content to original videos, creating an



organic, participatory, and democratic creative process. TikTok's intuitive interface and diverse creative features actively encourage the development of 21st-century skills, such as creativity, curiosity, and experimentation (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2021). While YouTube supports collaboration through comments and shared playlists, its interactivity and closeness in creative relationships are considered lower than TikTok's Duet feature (Timmi et al., 2024). While Instagram has a similar Reels feature that can enhance collaborative experiences (Khasawneh, 2024), its platform's strong, materialistic context can be counterproductive to learning. TikTok's impact on learning motivation is also significant; the platform successfully creates an engaging learning environment, promotes creativity, and helps reduce anxiety, for example, in language learning contexts, thus boosting student confidence (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2021; Hongsa et al., 2023; Siraji, 2025). Supporting features such as subtitles and clear pronunciation in TikTok's educational content also contribute to building sustainable learning motivation (Sirgii, 2025).

For students at SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu, TikTok provides an informal learning pathway that can enhance and amplify the impact of traditional music extracurricular activities. Participation in music extracurricular activities has been consistently linked in the literature to increased social connections, strengthened peer relationships, and a stronger sense of community belonging (Luo et al., 2025). This supportive and inclusive environment, in turn, contributes significantly to students emotional well-being and social skills (Olivier et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2024). In addition to crucial socio-emotional benefits, music activities also significantly stimulate cognitive and creative development, including improved memory function, enhanced imagination, and more effective emotional expression (Kuimova & Semchin, 2016). These positive impacts extend to academics; participation in informal music activities is positively correlated with academic achievement, not only in arts subjects but also in core subjects such as language (Guo et al., 2022). Participation in music programs can strengthen the structure, discipline, and intensity of student engagement, ultimately contributing to a more positive school experience and improved long-term academic outcomes (Costa et al., 2023). For example, in the Indonesian context, Trunthung music practices emphasize local cultural identity values and traditions, creating a rich educational experience that transcends the boundaries of the formal classroom (Sinaga et al., 2025).

The syneraistic potential of TikTok in informal music learning is promising. In education, TikTok can enhance student engagement and motivation by providing a more adaptable context than traditional school environments. Educators can offer a more comprehensive and contemporary music education incorporating rhythmically stimulating TikTok materials. encompasses all dimensions of the learning process, emotional, social, and academic, and is something formal schools can adopt and embrace. The benefits of extracurricular music education have been empirically demonstrated in numerous contexts. Adolescents with musical training have been reported to have better school grades, with the effect even more significant in students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, where music participation is also associated with increased conscientiousness, openness, and ambition (Hille & Schupp, 2015). Positive relationships between music participation and academic achievement in subjects such



as languages have also been found in various contexts, including primary school students in China (Guo et al., 2022). Non-cognitive or socio-emotional aspects are often the most prominent areas of impact. Extracurricular music activities have a profound and positive impact on students emotional and social development, including fostering a sense of community, enhancing morale, and strengthening peer relationships (Luo et al., 2025). Perspectives from music school teachers also acknowledge the profound impact of music lessons on children's non-cognitive development, particularly in areas such as collaboration, task performance, and interpersonal skills (Kawase & Kitabayashi, 2023). Music also serves as a powerful vehicle for understanding, managing, and expressing emotions (Kuimova & Semchin, 2016), while also fostering a strong sense of belonging and social identity among students (Luo et al., 2025). These benefits can even extend to students with special needs, where inclusive and adapted creative music activities have shown significant improvements in communication and social skills in children with disabilities (Després et al., 2022).

Today's generation of teenagers, as digital natives, no longer passively absorb content; they actively engage with it. They actively create, curate, and share knowledge a role shift from consumers to knowledge producers, or "producers", that has profound pedagogical implications. In the context of language learning, the impact of TikTok has been significantly researched. Research by (Tan et al., 2022) identified the potential of key TikTok features, such as "duet" challenges, as innovative pedagogical strategies for English as a Foreign Language (ESL) classes. These interactive features encourage active learning and contextual and authentic language practice. This is supported by a study by Hongsa et al. (2023), which empirically demonstrated that TikTok usage has a positive impact on students English speaking skills. The most tangible impact of this role shift, which transcends traditional extracurricular activities, is the offer of undergraduate scholarships to China after a video of students from SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu singing Mandarin songs went viral. "Free education comes from a renowned university", said Sufa'ati, a Mandarin teacher at the school. This phenomenon can be understood through several theoretical frameworks. First, this is a concrete example of the shift from mere presence to active and transformative participation (Lopes et al., 2025), where participation involves organic community building through genuine student engagement in content creation. Furthermore, the process of learning and singing Mandarin songs perfectly illustrates the acquisition of a new language and the enhancement of language self-efficacy in a stress-free and enjoyable setting (Siraji, 2025). Third, the adaptation of TikTok songs into Mandarin and the resulting global resonance demonstrate how TikTok serves as a virtual portal for cultural understanding, cross-cultural engagement, and transnational selfdevelopment (Li, 2025).

The activities of students at SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu, which involve covering songs, also align with Septiawan & Setiyono's (2024) findings regarding the song creation process, which relies not solely on personal ingenuity but also on social and cultural factors that play a crucial role. The school environment, which includes social connections with classmates and encouragement from teachers, can provide a rich source of stimulus and ideas throughout the creative process. The collaboration between students and music teachers at the school is a good example of an



environment that fosters students creative and innovative potential in music. Furthermore, the students' achievements in learning to sing a new song and confidently perform it on the TikTok platform illustrate the principles of self-confidence described by Hidayatullah et al. (2024). Learning to trust oneself through planning, practice, and evaluating one's own work is crucial to mastering any instrument or vocal piece. These students not only practiced their work but also evaluated their performances in reflection, directly and interactively with peer feedback, comments, and engagement on TikTok. This phenomenon is consistent with Hidayatullah and colleagues' observations of self-confidence practices in music, which emphasize structured practice planning, critical, reflective performance assessment, and interpretation.

Considering that integrating TikTok into learning practices and curricula faces specific challenges and issues that must be addressed, several studies on TikTok have raised concerns about addiction and difficult-to-control flow states (Lopes et al., 2025). Involving TikTok and similar platforms in teaching and learning activities requires careful strategic planning. The most important prerequisite, and one that cannot be underestimated, is digital literacy. Using platforms like TikTok safely, ethically, and responsibly requires adopting a range of skills, including managing large amounts of information, utilizing privacy controls, and detecting incorrect, harmful, and risky material. Therefore, it is the responsibility of educators to ensure that they and their students have the necessary skills and competencies (Abu Quba & Nour Abu Guba, 2025; Carpenter et al., 2024; Rodriguez-Hidalgo et al., 2023). Ultimately, educational content on TikTok varies significantly in terms of quality and credibility. In the absence of adequate explanation and content curation, students will likely struggle to distinguish between valid and valuable information and inaccurate, false, misleading, and fraudulent content.

Furthermore, without proper understanding, students also have the potential to create and spread inaccurate content unknowingly. Therefore, the role of educators in guiding students to become critical consumers and responsible producers of reliable content is crucial (Lau et al., 2025; Schwab-Reese et al., 2025). Ultimately, striking the right balance between entertainment and education is crucial to achieving successful integration. TikTok is fundamentally a platform built on the logic of entertainment and the attention economy, so the biggest challenge is leveraging its appeal without sacrificing depth and substantive educational value. Appropriate and well-designed strategies are necessary to ensure that learning content remains engaging, viral, and relevant without devolving into mere entertainment that loses its educational value (Langlais et al., 2025; Middleton, 2022; Shao et al., 2023).

Based on the comprehensive description above, this article aims to provide an in-depth and contextual analysis of TikTok's role not only as an informal music learning platform, but also as a catalyst for multidimensional non-musical impacts on student development at SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu. Using a visual ethnography methodology, this study argues that relatively simple and accessible creative tasks conducted on the TikTok platform can serve as a powerful alternative pathway for students to acquire 21st-century competencies, encourage broader socialization and network expansion, and, most importantly, achieve equal opportunities to experience transformative education and open



doors to previously unimaginable possibilities. The findings of this study are expected not only to document a positive phenomenon but also to provide an applicable strategic framework for educators, practitioners, and educational policymakers to utilize social media optimally, critically, and responsibly, while mitigating the various potential risks that accompany it. Through a thoughtful and informed approach, the transformative potential of TikTok and similar platforms can be harnessed to create a more inclusive, relevant, and empowering learning ecosystem, particularly for students in areas that have traditionally had limited access to quality educational resources.

2. METHODS

For this study, a qualitative approach using a case study research design was employed to investigate TikTok as an informal platform for music learning, as well as its relevance to students' extracurricular music activities at SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu. This approach is practical because of its ability to explain and analyze various phenomena in a detailed and contextual manner in real-life situations (Maulida et al., 2021). The primary approach employed in this study is virtual ethnography (L. N. Braun & Mateus, 2024), which examines cultural practices, social interactions, and learning activities on the TikTok platform. This approach incorporates the unique features of TikTok, particularly its digital aesthetics and participatory culture, which are primarily driven by the platform's algorithm. Data was collected using three primary methods:

- 1. The activities of TikTok students, including their videos, hashtags (#smk1pancasilaambulu and #simistudioteam), and audience interactions (likes, comments, shares) were observed through both participant and non-participant observation. The interactions were also analyzed in terms of the collaborative dynamics among the TikTok accounts. This observation technique is similar to the study on the #MusicChallenge, which investigated the storytelling techniques and strategies used on TikTok by integrating music (Vizcaíno-Verdú & Abidin, 2022).
- 2. To understand the motivations, creative processes, perceptions, and perceived impacts of content creation, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with student content creators, vocal teacher Mahmud Ali, Mandarin teacher Sufa'ati, and school representatives. The interviews formed part of a qualitative research approach aimed at gaining in-depth insights (Alino et al., 2024; Maulida et al., 2021).
- 3. Document analysis included student-uploaded videos, podcast transcripts, and media articles covering their achievements to complement and confirm data from primary sources.

A qualitative case study was conducted to examine TikTok as an informal medium for learning music. The main method was ethnography, which focused on TikTok's cultural norms and social relationships. The study participants included 15 students, two teachers, and a school representative, all of whom were purposefully sampled based on their TikTok activity. The primary means of data collection were in-depth interviews and direct observation, which were then analyzed thematically in keeping with the procedures articulated by Braun and Clarke in 2006, involving transcription, familiarization, and coding to identify potential themes and revise them until a final thematic structure



was reached. The analysis was contextualized and rationalized through the combination of the frameworks introduced.

Specifically, the analysis of self-regulated learning in music practice will draw on research demonstrating the effectiveness of reflective feedback and videos in improving musicians' self-regulation and practice strategies (Boucher et al., 2020; Pike, 2017). Meanwhile, to understand the influence of the social environment on creativity, findings from research on collaborative creativity (Martinović-Bogojević, 2020) and the dynamics of social cohesion in improvisation (Kempf et al., 2024) will be used as analytical lenses. Ethical aspects of the research were addressed by obtaining informed consent from all participants, providing anonymity when requested, and ensuring the security of the personal data collected.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

In this study, interview data were analyzed according to the six phases of thematic analysis described by (V. Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process began with transcribing the interviews and familiarizing myself with the data (phase 1). I then coded the entire set of interviews with teachers and students (phase 2). As this process progressed, I generated several first-order codes, including "motivation for creativity", "song challenge", "confidence enhancement", "team solidarity", "community response", and "scholarship opportunities." These codes were then grouped into possible themes (phase 3). After rigorous iterations of review and refinement (phases 4 and 5), I established four main themes that framed the discussion. These four themes are: (1) From hobby to viral, which outlines the motivation and creative process behind the content; (2) Teachers as catalysts, which details the role of educators in guiding and motivating; (3) Music extracurricular impact, which highlights increased confidence, opportunities, and school image; and (4) School policies, which outline the dynamics between support, challenges, and future vision.

Motivation and the Creative Process Behind the Content

This theme explores the driving forces behind student participation and how their creative processes evolve. Qualitative data obtained from interviews with students at SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu revealed that their primary motivation was not simply to seek fame, but rather a deep desire to channel their creativity and musical passion, while also building and strengthening friendships in the studio environment. This intrinsic motivation aligns with TikTok's fundamental characteristics as a platform designed to encourage creative and collaborative participation (Vizcaíno-Verdú & Abidin, 2022). Student Bella's statement, "We create content on TikTok because we want to channel our creativity, musical passion, and build friendships in the studio", serves as concrete evidence that corroborates (Grant & Berry, 2011) theory that intrinsic motivation combined with prosocial motivation (such as the desire to connect with friends) is a powerful formula for igniting creativity.

Behind the videos' seemingly fun and spontaneous appearance, their creative process is depicted as a systematic and diligent collaborative effort. Their workflow includes selecting trending songs on the platform, diligently practicing to master pitch and harmony, and navigating the often-challenging recording



process. The process's collaborative dynamics, collectively developing ideas and solving problems, resonate with (Martinović-Bogojević, 2020) conclusion that creativity emerges from social interactions, rather than in isolation, and the importance of group cohesion. Thus, this activity serves as both informal music learning and a means to foster teamwork, verbal interaction, and collaborative problem-solving.

Taking social intrinsic motivation, cooperative creative approach, and TikTok's collaborative features into consideration, a distinctive learning environment is created. The TikTok environment serves as a conduit to transform motivation and collaboration in the offline realm into digitally creative products ready for public sharing. This, in turn, broadens the scope of students' music learning experiences beyond the formal curriculum.

Teachers, as catalysts, play a crucial role in guiding and motivating.

In fostering student engagement and motivation, a teacher's role goes far beyond instruction in technical components. They attend to the psychological components relevant to optimal engagement and achievement. According to (Schatt, 2024), addressing the psychological components of autonomy, relatedness, and competence fosters achievement, well-being, and engagement within the context of music learning. The catalytic role of a teacher can be presented in various forms. A case study at SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu demonstrates how vocal teacher Mahmud Ali embodies this dual role, comprising both a challenger and a reinforcer. He challenges his students with songs while also working to strengthen their vocal characteristics and train their pitch-hearing abilities. This description of his role aligns with (Beheshti, 2009) findings on the importance of teaching students to transcend the physical barriers of a piece of music and facilitating the experience of its underlying aesthetic.

On the other hand, Mandarin teacher Sufa'ati engages as a motivator by implementing songs to formulate a contextual and enjoyable learning experience. This method has been effective in developing learner motivation (Korsakova et al., 2020). The integration of these two methods demonstrates the enhanced effectiveness of a feedback system and self-guidance, where the teacher loosens the reins and encourages students to explore and think critically about a portion of their learning (Boucher et al., 2020; Pike, 2017).

Through mentoring designed as a modeling and learning opportunity (Palmer, 2018), teachers also serve as catalysts for learner empowerment in the sense of song motivation, fostering other learner capabilities.

The Impact of Music Extracurricular Activities Increases Self-Confidence, Opportunities, and School Image

TikTok has a wide range of psychological implications, whether positive or negative. Some psychological implications of TikTok include an increase in users' self-worth and confidence. (Nasidi et al., 2024) and (Dudukovic et al., 2023) explain how creative TikTok users gain positive feedback and appreciation, which boosts confidence. The case of SMK 1 Pancasila illustrates this phenomenon. The students noted that content creation on TikTok resulted in improvements in their self-confidence. Egis remarked,



"Since we started actively creating singing content on TikTok, we have felt improvement in our musical abilities and self-confidence".

Conversely, TikTok can invoke social pressure and constitute a fear of missing out (FOMO), causing possible anxiety and depression as well as a distorted self-concept, particularly among youth (Barry et al., 2024; Dodan & Negru-Subtirica, 2025). Learning from experience at SMK 1 Pancasila, the potential support that could be provided, proving to be positive, is the building of digital resilience. Students are learning to handle the public's reactions, including the emotional labor of responding appropriately to backlash. "We use negative comments as a catalyst for growth", is how Egis describes their social media practices, offering a constructive perspective to the more ostensible social media consequences.

Equally important is the digital community on TikTok, which aids in self-identity formation and unlocks life-changing possibilities. This community can celebrate and support its members. In contrast, at SMK 1 Pancasila, the digital community is also having a positive impact outside the virtual domain. Principal Luluk Farida elaborated that the community's success on the digital platform provided them with opportunities, such as scholarships to China and recording deals with national companies.

Learners experience the influence and alter the institution's reputation as innovative and engaging, enhancing its appeal to potential students. Hence, although psychological risks, including social anxiety and the fear of missing out, will continue to exist (Hong-Ngoc, 2025; Purba & Metia, 2025), this is an instance where TikTok, under specific guidance, can become an empowering resource to stimulate self-innovation, promote social mobility, and enhance the image of the institution.

Support, Challenges, and a Vision for the Future

Support for TikTok as a music learning platform comes not only from literature but also from forward-thinking school policies. The literature indicates that TikTok can enhance student engagement and motivation by providing short, easily digestible content, while also fostering creativity and collaboration in informal learning environments (Ghosh & Figueroa, 2023; Jacobs et al., 2022). SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu actively responds to this potential by providing concrete institutional support. Principal Luluk Farida's flexible policies, along with the provision of facilities such as a mini-studio and basic equipment, demonstrate recognition that learning can occur outside the formal classroom. By providing a "space for expression", the school effectively shifts students informal activities into a facilitated learning ecosystem, where the intrinsic motivation from the platform is channeled toward positive, productive, and responsible goals.

Beyond this support, the challenges in utilizing TikTok are also clearly acknowledged by both the literature and the school. Risks such as passive consumption, which limits in-depth learning, potential addiction that interferes with time management, and exposure to inappropriate content are real obstacles (Lopes et al., 2025; Martinez & Ramos, 2025). Being proactive, rather than reactive, in matters such as the ban on educational devices demonstrates the flexibility of SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu. The certainty of measures such as implementing a time management structure, digital ethics education, and teacher mentoring demonstrates the actionability of positive and aligned literature recommendations. Digital ethics education, in particular, demonstrates responsiveness



to the pressing demands for critical digital literacy. Teacher mentoring is a positive step in addressing the lack of integration and supervision in the educational process, as noted in recent literature (Martinez & Ramos, 2025).

SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu's progressive vision for modernizing facilities is evident in the educational landscape, particularly in the integration of teachers. Research on the use of TikTok in education advocates for the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary integration of content, highlighting the need for active content creation rather than passive consumption (De Moya Martinez et al., 2024; Ghosh & Figueroa, 2023). Social media for educational content, including music, digital marketing, and podcasting, can be powerful tools in developing Bakhtin's dialogical education.

This uses TikTok not just as a means for learning music but develops it into a professional skill adapted to the realities of the digital era. Consequently, the objective is not merely to utilize the application for recreational purposes; it aspires to transform learners into proficient content creators who can thrive within the global workforce. This forwards the notion that the school is an educational institution that is progressive and responsive to changes within a dynamic society, as well as a leader in educational reform.

3.2 Discussion

Virtual Ethnography to Map the Digital Learning Environment

The contemporary educational landscape has expanded far beyond the physical classroom, rapidly migrating and evolving into the digital space. To understand the dynamics of learning in this new ecosystem, a methodological approach is needed that can encompass and uncover the social and cognitive interactions that occur within it. This is where virtual ethnography plays a crucial role. As Hancock et al. (2010) emphasize, virtual ethnography is an adaptation of traditional ethnographic methods specifically designed to investigate communities and cultures that exist in virtual environments. In the context of this research, this method serves as a navigation map to trace the traces of informal music learning on the TikTok platform.

However, to create a comprehensive map, ethnographic observation cannot stop at surface descriptions. Therefore, in this study, the mapping of the digital learning environment was conducted through two complementary analytical lenses: Content and Aesthetic Analysis and Interaction and Audience Analysis. This dual approach allows researchers to capture not only what is learned (content), but also how the learning and collaboration processes occur and their impact on the learning community.

Content and Aesthetic Analysis

The school's official TikTok account, @smkfpancasilaambulu, has become a hub for student creative activity, boasting 1.2 million followers and 32.6 million accumulated likes, which demonstrates a high level of audience acceptance and engagement. Video content is dominated by singing reels, curated into two main playlists: "OpenMic" (213 posts) and "Cover Songs" (128 posts), as well as "Space for Collaboration" (29 posts) and "Instrumental" (5 posts). This confirms that music is central to the school's digital identity.

An analysis of some of the most popular videos, which have garnered tens of millions of likes and thousands of comments,



reveals a consistent production pattern. These videos often feature dynamic group shots to highlight the team's togetherness and collaborative spirit, aligning with the school's slogan, "Independent, Creative, Innovative". The settings used are well-organized yet straightforward, often evoking the intimate atmosphere of the school studio, which creates an authentic and relatable feel.

The collaborative vocal relay pattern not only showcases group harmony but also allows each student to showcase their individual vocal uniqueness. Natural and passionate facial expressions create a powerful visual narrative, fostering an emotional connection with the audience. Technically, synchronized transitions with music breaks and the use of trending audio (as seen in the trending video titles) are key to both visual and algorithmic appeal.

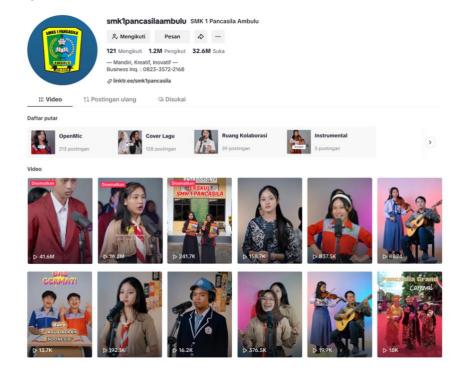


Figure 1. SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu TikTok account with collaborative music video content.

The strategy for utilizing digital platforms was also meticulously executed, as reflected in the use of specific hashtags such as #smk1pancasilaambulu and #simistudioteam. These two hashtags are not merely labels but have successfully created a digital community space that is easily accessible and recognizable. Data effectiveness, demonstrates their with #smk1pancasilaambulu being used in 3,272 posts on TikTok, while #simistudioteam has been used in 741 posts. Consistency in presenting a uniform theme, format, and visual identity across all content ultimately creates a cohesive and strong branding. This unified branding is highly appealing to the digital community, strengthening their identity and ultimately contributing significantly to the account's virality and overall success.

Issues and Disadvantages of TikTok as a Learning Tool

Even with several TikTok advantages, some unique challenges must be acknowledged. Distractions caused by overlapping notifications and opportunities to drown in unrelated video content



are common among TikTok learners. Even worse is the absence of a teacher to guide engagement, which leads to musical misinformation and a superficial approach to the content. Educators should examine how best to address these challenges through digital literacy and content curation.

Interaction and Audience Analysis

The video content, featuring song covers performed by these students, has garnered widespread attention, as evidenced by the significant number of views, likes, comments, saves, and shares. For example, the Mandarin cover of "Tomorrow Will Be Better" has been viewed 16.2 million times, liked 938,000 times, received 20,433 comments, and has 79,400 saves and 33,600 shares.

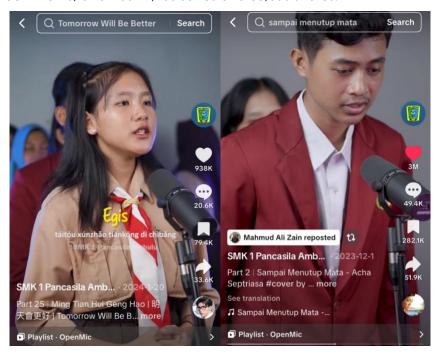


Figure 2. Screenshot of viral video showing an extremely high number of views, likes, and comments

Meanwhile, the cover of the song "Sampai Menutup Mata" achieved even greater success, garnering 41.6 million views, 3 million likes, 45,183 comments, 282,100 saves, and 51,900 shares. The engagement rate for this content is very high, not only from these numbers, but also from the quality of interactions in the comments section, which has reached tens of thousands of comments per video, with the majority being positive and supportive. Many viewers appreciated the musical abilities, vocals, and the spirit of togetherness that radiated from the students. The interaction patterns in collaboration between student accounts demonstrated a strong and mutually supportive community dynamic. Analysis of thousands of comments revealed that audiences not only enjoyed the music but were also inspired by the spirit of togetherness and the students achievements, which reinforced the theme of the music extracurricular impact of the content, highlighting the values of education, motivation, and unity that were also appreciated.

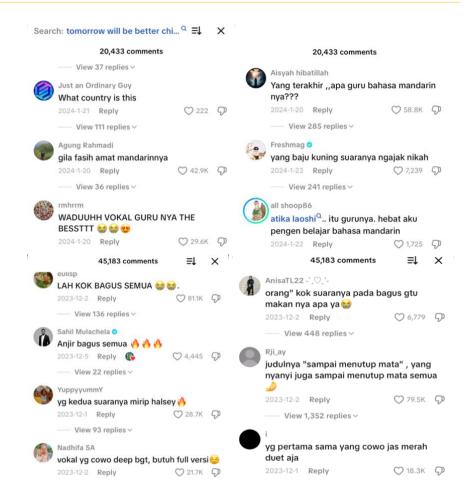


Figure 3. Examples of positive comments from audience members who praised the performance and were inspired by the students.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the entire analysis conducted, TikTok has played a significant role as an effective informal music learning platform for students at SMK 1 Pancasila Ambulu. Initially started as a hobby and creative expression, the activity of creating song covers on the platform has not only achieved high levels of virality but also generated positive impacts beyond the musical achievements themselves music extracurricular. The collaborative creative process, supported by students intrinsic motivation, has yielded content that is not only musically engaging but also embodies a spirit of togetherness and solidarity.

The role of teachers as catalysts and facilitators has proven crucial in guiding, motivating, and providing a structured learning framework, while also providing space for the development of student self-regulation and creativity. The most tangible impact of this activity is seen in increased student confidence, the emergence of transformative opportunities such as scholarships to study abroad and recording contracts, and the enhancement of the school's branding and reputation at the regional and national levels.

The school's support, in the form of flexible policies and the provision of facilities, is balanced with an awareness of challenges and risk mitigation strategies, demonstrating a proactive and responsible approach. Through virtual ethnography, it is clear that the success of school accounts on TikTok is inseparable from a well-thought-out content strategy, a strong visual identity, and close



interaction with the digital community, ultimately creating a dynamic and inspiring digital learning ecosystem.

Support driven policy flexibility and more than school knowledge of potential issues and strategies, informational approaches for risk mitigation. Ethnographic data informs the success of the TikTok account through thoughtfully designed content frameworks, combined with visual aesthetics, community interactivity, and a learning ecosystem planned and integrated.

This study confirms the value of using TikTok and similar platforms within formal music education to close educational gaps and teach necessary 21st-century skills. To close educational gaps and teach the essential 21st-century skills, academic institutions need to emphasize the development of digital skills among educators and learners, within a risk framework. Subsequently, two aspects of future research emerge: the enduring influence of TikTok on the acquisition of musical skills and the challenges educators encounter when using such technology in formal education.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Condro Wratmoko served as the lead author and principal researcher; Mahmud Ali Zain as the field data provider and resource person for the music learning process; Luluk Farida as the source of information on school policies; and Shuting Wu as the contributor of perspective analysis and literature review. The synergy among members' roles yielded comprehensive, contextually relevant Research.

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