Tiktok Features On Adolescent Communication Patterns: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Social media platforms like TikTok have significantly reshaped the way adolescents communicate and form their identities. Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage where communication plays a key role, and TikTok's interactive features have increasingly influenced how teenagers express themselves and build social connections. This study aims to systematically review recent literature to examine how TikTok's interactive features influence adolescent communication patterns. It focuses on identifying the most frequently used features by adolescents, understanding their impact on digital communication behaviors, and analyzing how these features shape routine communication in online environments. This study employed a systematic literature review following PRISMA 2009 guidelines. Literature was collected from the ScienceDirect database using the keywords "TikTok Features," "Adolescent Communication Patterns," and "Digital Communication." After screening (n= 2,801) initial records and applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, (n= 10) relevant articles were selected for in-depth analysis. The study concluded that TikTok significantly influences adolescent communication patterns. Although it supports creativity and identity formation, there are risks such as compulsive use and uncritical acceptance of content. It is recommended that the platform improve transparency of its algorithms and moderation features. Further research needs to examine the impact of TikTok features more specifically on adolescent digital communication.

Keywords: Adolescent Communication, Communication Patterns, TikTok

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has changed the communication paradigm by uniting various levels of communication in one social networking platform (Damayanti et al., 2023). According to Backlinko (2025), social media usage is currently increasing, with around 5.24 million active users. Globally, the average time a person spends on social media per day is 2 hours and 21 minutes. This is reinforced by the use of the TikTok application according to the DataReportal (2023) report, TikTok has around 109.9 million active users aged 18 and over in Indonesia in early 2023, making it one of TikTok's largest markets in the world. As technology improves, the TikTok platform has evolved into a platform with a variety of features designed to attract users' attention.

TikTok is one of the fastest growing social media platforms, with over 6 billion global downloads, and is especially popular among young users, particularly teenagers and young adults (Rowdhwal & Boghdady,

2025). Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage, marked by significant physical, emotional, and cognitive changes, including the formation of self-identity and social relationships. In this phase, communication plays a central role in how adolescents express themselves, connect with peers, and navigate their social environments. Digital media is increasingly becoming the primary space in which these interactions take place, shifting traditional communication patterns to fast-paced, multimodal, and often public exchanges (Pedrouzo & Krynski, 2023). Understanding how teenagers communicate in digital spaces is important, not only because it reflects their evolving social behavior, but also because it shapes how they view themselves and others and the focus on the formation of teenagers' virtual identities through TikTok in Indonesia, supports the section on how teenagers express themselves and construct identities through digital media (Mahmudah et al., 2023). Therefore, analyzing adolescents' communication patterns, particularly on popular

platforms like TikTok, can provide valuable insights into the development of social and emotional skills in the digital age.

Recent studies have shown that TikTok's interactive features are having a real impact on how teens communicate and build social interactions in the digital space. Features like Duet and Stitch allow users to respond directly to other people's videos, creating a form of collaborative communication that encourages active participation and a culture of reciprocity (Putra & Junita, 2024). In addition, the For You Page (FYP) algorithm that adjusts content based on user preferences has created a highly personalized and curated communication experience (Syarif, 2019). Research by Garrido et al. (2025) shows that adolescents also use TikTok not only for entertainment, but also as a means to explore opinions, express emotions, and build their social identity. Meanwhile, other studies emphasize that although these features expand self-expression, they can also pose challenges such as the spread of misinformation or social pressure due to expectations of public interaction. Therefore, an in-depth understanding of the impact of TikTok features on adolescent communication is important to be reviewed systematically.

This study provides valuable insights into the development of adolescent communication patterns in the digital era through a systematic literature review focusing on TikTok's features. The review explores how interactive elements within TikTok influence how adolescents express themselves, interact with their peers, and shape their communication patterns in digital spaces. This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What TikTok features are most frequently used by adolescents in the context of communication?
2. How do TikTok's interactive features influence adolescents' digital communication patterns?
3. How are adolescents' communication patterns shaped through their routine use of TikTok?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Adolescent communication in the digital age

Today's teenagers experience communication patterns not only in face-to-face situations but also through various digital platforms. This shift in communication behavior is influenced by the rapid growth of social media, particularly platforms offering interactive features like TikTok.

2.2. The role of TikTok's features in shaping communication

TikTok offers various features like duets, stitches, hashtag challenges, and comment sections that encourage expressive and participatory communication. These features create a dynamic space for teens to build emotional connections, express their identities, and create content collaboratively.

3. METHODOLOGY

The main method used in this study is a systematic literature review. To assess the existing literature on a particular topic, a rigorous and structured technique in the form of a systematic literature review can be applied. The three research questions mentioned above were analyzed based on the process of identifying and collecting relevant literature. Boland et al. (2017) emphasized that since findings from similar or comparable previous literature were collected through a comprehensive assessment process, this method is considered the 'gold standard' in this type of research design.

3.1. Search strategy

Academic literature for this study was collected using one primary online database, ScienceDirect, selected for its extensive collection of reputable and peer-reviewed journals relevant to digital media, communication, and adolescent behavior. This database was also chosen for its accessibility to Open Access publications and archived open content, which allowed for comprehensive access to materials included in this review.

The search terms were determined using the Population, Intervention, and Outcome (PIO) approach, aligned with the study's focus and research questions. This process was intended to identify literature that specifically examined the relationship between TikTok and adolescent communication patterns.

The keywords used in the literature search included:
- "TikTok Features"
- "Adolescent Communication Patterns"
- "Digital Communication"

3.2 Inclusion and exclusion of criteria

This study applies certain inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure that the selected literature is truly accurate, relevant, and in accordance with the objectives and research questions. These criteria are used to maintain quality and focus in the systematic literature review process.

Inclusion criteria: The study must meet the following criteria:
- The study must align with the main objective of this review, which is to explore the influence of TikTok features on adolescent communication patterns.
- The study must be empirical research.
- The study must discuss TikTok or its features in relation to communication, media use, or social interaction.
- The target population must include adolescents (ages 12–18).
- The study must be published between 2021 and 2025.
- The full text of the article must be accessible.
- The study must be published in an indexed and peer-reviewed journal, preferably available in ScienceDirect.

Exclusion criteria: The following studies should be excluded:

- Studies that do not meet the inclusion criteria mentioned above.
- Studies that discuss TikTok in general but do not focus on communication patterns.
- Theoretical or opinion-based articles without empirical data.
- Studies that only focus on adult populations or age groups outside of adolescence.
- Articles that are not available in full-text or cannot be accessed completely.
- Studies that discuss other platforms (such as Instagram or Snapchat) without linking them to TikTok.

3.3 Search strategy data extraction procedures

A systematic search was conducted using the keywords "TikTok Features," "Adolescent Communication Patterns," and "Digital Communication" on the ScienceDirect database. The search was limited to articles published between 2021 and 2025, yielding an initial total of 2,801 records.

To ensure accessibility, the records were filtered by Open Access and Open Archives, reducing the number to 1,211 articles. No duplicate records were identified.

All 1,211 articles were then screened by title and abstract. As a result, 888 articles were excluded due to:

- General discussions on social media,
- Focus on unrelated topics such as educational technology,
- Or lack of emphasis on adolescent communication.

A total of 323 articles proceeded to full-text review. Among them, 184 were excluded for the following reasons:

- Not focused on adolescents as the target population (n = 103),
- Not related to communication patterns (n = 66),
- Irrelevant topics or scope (n = 15),
- Other methodological misalignment (n = 138, where applicable).

After applying all inclusion and exclusion criteria, a total of 10 articles met the final requirements and were included in this literature review. An additional 139 articles proceeded to the quality assessment stage due to ambiguity in identifying the study population or research context. These titles underwent further abstract-level analysis.

Most of the 139 articles were excluded after closer examination for the following reasons:

- The studies focused on adult populations rather than adolescents,
- They presented purely theoretical discussions without empirical data,
- Or they analyzed unrelated aspects of social dynamics.

Furthermore, studies that:

- Discussed general social media platforms without specific reference to TikTok,
- Focused on platform comparisons without analyzing TikTok-specific features,

- Or lacked communication-related analytical depth, were also excluded.

As a result, only 10 studies remained that fully aligned with the research objectives and satisfied all methodological and thematic selection criteria (see **Figure 1.** for PRISMA diagram).
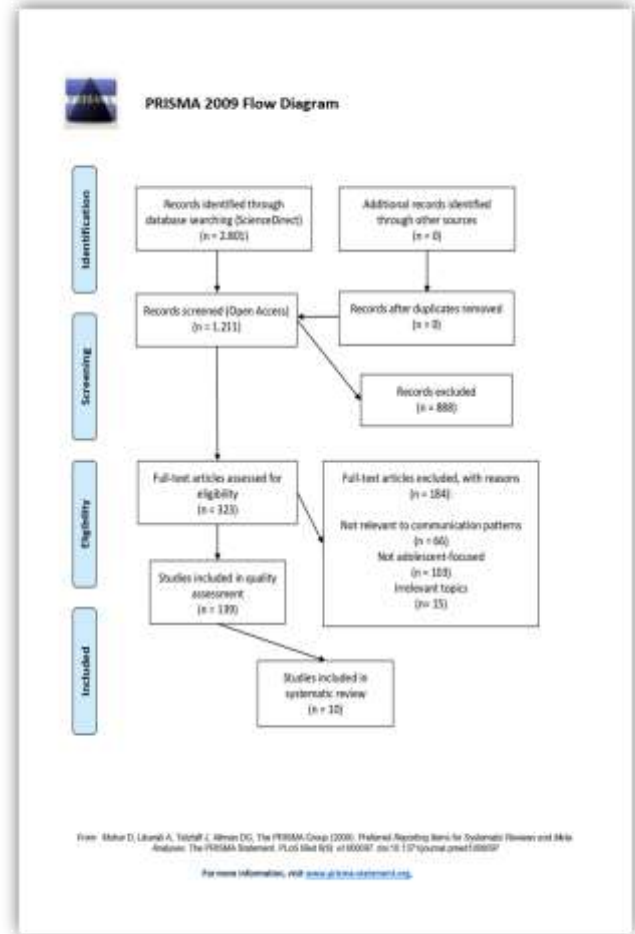

Figure 1 . PRISMA flow diagram results.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Result

The findings should be interpreted in relation to the context of the reviewed articles and subsequently connected to the research questions.

Author(s) (Year)	Article Title	Study Focus	Key Findings
(Wang & Shang, 2024)	How do social and parasocial relationships on TikTok impact the well-being of university students? The roles of	Young people, Social media.	Parasocial relationships and the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) both show a positive correlation with

Citation	Title	Keywords	Findings
	algorithm awareness and compulsive use		compulsive use of TikTok. This means that the stronger the PSRs and FoMO experienced by university students, the higher the intensity of their excessive TikTok usage.
(Sanchez & Jenkins, 2024)	Social media & subjectivity: Adolescent lived experiences with social media in a Southern California middle school	Social media, Adolescent subjectivity, Youth culture, digital platforms.	Teenagers use social media not only for entertainment but also as a space to express feelings such as loneliness, stress, and anxiety. They also use it to build emotional bonds with friends, even through empathetic conversations and shared tears.
(Engel et al., 2024)	Social media influencers and adolescents' health: A scoping review of the research field	Adolescent health, Health communication, Digital media.	Studies show that there is little research exploring the benefits of social media influencers in health promotion, even though they have great potential as an effective
			bridge to reach adolescents through authentic and emotionally touching content.
(Seekis & Lawrence, 2023)	How exposure to body neutrality content on TikTok affects young women's body image and mood	TikTok content, Social media exposure, Digital media, Mental health.	While the primary focus of this study was on young women, the findings on the impact of TikTok content on self-perception and mood also provide insight into the potential for algorithms to shape young users' self-narratives on social media.
(Kobilke & Markiewitz, 2024)	Understanding youth participation in social media challenges: A scoping review of definitions, typologies, and theoretical perspectives	Youth participation, Digital trends, Youth culture.	Teens' motivations for participating in social media challenges vary depending on the type of challenge. For example, challenges with positive intentions may attract participation for different reasons than challenges that are

			harmful or negative.
(Vassey et al., 2025)	Worldwide connections of influencers who promote e-cigarettes on Instagram and TikTok: A social network analysis	TikTok, Communication Patterns, Adolescent Exposure, Social Network Analysis.	The influencer network on Instagram has a density of 1.48 times higher, transitivity is 281 times higher, and reciprocity is 86 times higher than the TikTok network. This shows that influencers on Instagram are more interconnected and actively interact with each other than on TikTok.
(Poll et al., 2025)	Using a scoring template to identify intervention goals for adolescent social communication interventions	Social Communication, Adolescents.	Adolescents' interpersonal communication skills, such as initiating conversations, responding appropriately, and adjusting communication styles, as identified in the Transition Pragmatics Interview, play an important role in shaping their digital interaction

			patterns. Although social media has changed the medium of communication to be text-based and visual, basic social competencies remain the foundation for adolescents to interact effectively in the digital space, from responding to comments, maintaining online relationships, to expressing emotions through digital symbols.
(Zhu et al., 2024)	The relationship between short-form video use and depression among Chinese adolescents: Examining the mediating roles of need gratification and short-form video addiction	TikTok, Short-form video, Adolescent communication.	The use of short video applications such as TikTok is significantly positively correlated with depression levels in adolescents. However, the direct effect is weak, indicating that other factors may be intervening.
(Lemana et al., 2024)	TikTok for language teachers: Affordances	Social media affordances, Communication patterns,	TikTok is not only a space for teenagers,

	of TikTok on teachers' identity and emotional vulnerability	Digital expression.	but also shows how digital space can change the form of social interaction and identity, including the position of authority in the educational context. A study showed that teachers use TikTok as a means to express emotions, form a more expressive digital identity, and establish more personal relationships with students. This confirms that social media platforms like TikTok have affordances that go beyond mere entertainment, and help shape complex social dynamics between users of different ages and social roles.
(Barta et al., 2023)	Influencer marketing on TikTok: The effectivenes	Youth engagement, Communication patterns, TikTok.	According to the study's findings, TikTok users will follow

	s of humor and followers' hedonic experience		an influencer's advice if they are perceived as an opinion leader, but they don't always cite that as a reason to follow their account. This means there is a difference between the motivation to be "entertained" and "influenced."

The results of this literature review show that social media, especially TikTok, plays a complex and multifaceted role in shaping the communication patterns, identity formation, and psychological well-being of adolescents and other young users. This section discusses the various communication patterns identified in the reviewed studies and explores their implications in the context of digital youth interaction.

4.2 Discussion

Identifying Adolescent Communication Patterns on TikTok

Based on the results of the literature review, a number of communication patterns were found in adolescent digital interactions on social media, especially TikTok.

The first pattern is emotional and expressive communication, where social media is used as a space to channel adolescents' feelings of anxiety such as loneliness to mild stress that supports empathy through comments, emojis, and affective content (Lemana et al., 2024; Sanchez & Jenkins, 2024).

The second identified pattern is parasocial relationships and compulsive responses, namely one-way involvement with influencers or public figures that can trigger excessive media use, especially when accompanied by Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and addictive tendencies (Wang & Shang, 2024; Zhu et al., 2024).

The third pattern is collective and collaborative participation, which is seen in the involvement of teenagers in challenges, duet features, or stitches offered by TikTok, allowing for the formation of content-based communication that is viral and responsive to each other (Kobilke & Markiewitz, 2024).

The fourth pattern, hedonic and humor-based communication, is also very prominent. Teenagers tend to follow and engage with humorous and entertaining content that triggers emotional involvement, although not always accompanied by critical reflection (Barta et al., 2023).

Furthermore, adolescents also show symbolic and visual communication patterns, where messages are conveyed briefly through digital symbols such as emojis, GIFs, short captions, and other visual and audio-visual elements that replace long verbal narratives (Poll et al., 2025; Seekis & Lawrence, 2023).

In addition, a study by Engel et al. (2024) highlighted how communication patterns built by influencers including TikTok often center on risky content, such as promoting ideal bodies, unhealthy foods, or addictive products. This communication is reinforced by the parasocial relationship that exists between teenagers and influencers, as well as weak critical media literacy. In the context of TikTok, this pattern is represented in the form of persuasive communication based on self-image and lifestyle, where content is delivered through an emotional and visual approach that appears personal, but actually contains hidden commercial messages. As a result, teenagers often accept information uncritically, resulting in predominantly one-way communication that is reinforced by algorithmic repetition.

Lastly, the study by Vassey et al. (2025) introduces a new dimension in communication patterns by highlighting the influence of digital social network structures. Instagram influencers exhibit denser, more interconnected, and more active communication patterns compared to TikTok, thereby enhancing the potential for cross-national and cross-audience content dissemination, including the promotion of e-cigarettes to adolescents. These findings suggest that digital communication is shaped not only by individuals but also by algorithmic design and the dynamics of user networks.

Overall, these patterns demonstrate that social media has created a complex new communication ecosystem, where adolescents negotiate their identities, fulfill emotional needs, and build social relationships through forms of communication that are symbolic, collaborative, and at times, risky.

Emotional Communication and Adolescent Identity on Social Media

Social media like TikTok is not just a place to share entertainment, but also an emotional space and self-expression for teenagers. Teenagers use it to express feelings such as loneliness, stress, or anxiety, and build emotional bonds with friends through digital interactions (Sanchez & Jenkins, 2024). In this context, TikTok's algorithm also plays a role in shaping users' self-narratives, as seen in the influence of body neutrality content on the mood and body image of young users (Seekis & Lawrence, 2023).

TikTok as a Medium for Participatory Communication for Teenagers

Teenagers' participation in social media challenges is highly influenced by the type and intention of the challenge. Challenges with positive content, such as environmental cleanliness challenges or creative challenges, tend to trigger motivations such as the desire for recognition, to show solidarity, or to be part of a larger digital community (Kobilke & Markiewitz, 2024). TikTok, as one of the main platforms where these challenges develop, provides various features that support these participation patterns, such as duets, stitches, hashtag challenges, and trending sounds. These features not only make it easier for teenagers to get involved, but also create a collaborative and viral communication ecosystem.

For example, the hashtag challenge feature allows users to instantly participate in ongoing trends, without requiring high technical skills. On the other hand, the duet and stitch features encourage responsive forms of communication between users, forming chains of interactions that indicate a culture of co-creation in content. However, this convenience also opens up opportunities for participation in risky or dangerous challenges, especially when the challenge goes viral and involves extreme elements.

Thus, the participation of teenagers in social media challenges cannot be separated from how the architecture of platforms such as TikTok is designed to accelerate the spread of content, and encourage social engagement through high interactivity. This dynamic places social media not only as a communication tool, but also as a social space that actively shapes the collective behavior patterns of teenagers.

Interpersonal Communication of Adolescents in the Era of Social Media

Basic interpersonal communication skills for adolescents, such as initiating, maintaining, and responding to conversations, still play an important role in the context of modern social interactions, including in the digital space. A study conducted by Poll et al. (2025) shows that these skills are not only relevant in face-to-face interactions, but also form the foundation for forms of online communication that are currently developing. Although social media has changed the medium of communication to be text-based and visual, basic principles of communication such as empathy, clarity of message, and even the ability to understand social context remain essential elements in the success of digital interactions.

In practice, adolescents who have good interpersonal competence tend to be better able to navigate the dynamics of communication on social media platforms. They can respond to comments in an appropriate manner, maintain virtual social relationships, and convey emotions through digital symbols such as emojis and GIFs contextually and politely. This shows that digital communication is not an entity that is completely separate from conventional communication, but rather a

form of adaptation that requires mastery of basic social skills.

Furthermore, the ability to adapt communication styles to certain digital audiences or contexts also plays a role in shaping adolescents' self-image and social reputation on social media. Therefore, strengthening interpersonal communication skills needs to be part of comprehensive digital literacy, in order to equip teenagers with skills that are not only technical, but also social and emotional in establishing relationships in cyberspace.

5. CONCLUSION

This literature review reveals that TikTok platforms play a multifaceted role in shaping adolescent communication patterns, identity formation, and psychological well-being. Adolescents engage in various communication styles on TikTok, including emotional expression, parasocial bagian relationships, collaborative participation, humor-based interactions, and symbolic visual messaging. These patterns highlight how social media acts as both a space for emotional support and self-expression, as well as a platform susceptible to risks such as addictive behaviors and uncritical acceptance of persuasive content. The digital communication ecosystem is further influenced by algorithmic designs and network structures that amplify content dissemination and social engagement. Importantly, despite the shift to digital media, foundational interpersonal skills such as empathy and clarity remain crucial for successful online interactions and identity negotiation. Overall, social media platforms like TikTok are not merely communication tools but dynamic social spaces that actively shape adolescent behavior, and self-concept.

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