RESEARCH ARTICLE

TIKTOK USAGE, SELF-CONCEPT CLARITY AND ONLINE SELF-PRESENTATION AMONG UAE STUDENTS

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ARTICLE INFO	**ABSTRACT**

A considerable body of evidence highlights the profound effects of internet addiction on the younger generation. It has been observed that TikTok influences the self-concept of studentsby shaping their self-images. The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between internet addiction, online self-presentation and self-concept clarity among UAE undergraduates. 592 students with age 18-30 years recruited from Fatima College of Health Sciences completed online questionnaires for Internet Addiction Test (IAT; Pawlikowski, Altstötter-Gleich, & Brand, 2013); Presentation of Online Self Scale (POSS; Fullwood, James, & Chen-Wilson, 2016) andSelf-Concept Clarity Scale (SCCS; Campbell *et al*.,1996). Results indicated a significant positive correlation between internet addiction and online self-presentation (r=.508; p<0.01) self-concept clarity (r=.443; p<.0.01) and its subscales. The outcomes and future implications are discussed based on the findings.

INTRODUCTION

TikTok is one of the most current Social Network Apps (SNAs) that allow users to publish, edit, and upload short films and grew in popularity among teenagers, adolescents specifically those in their mid-twenties i.e; teens likely to target millennials and Gen Y those born between 1982 and 2000 (Ghozali *et al*., 2022).Application owned by Byte Dance company seeks to inspire creativity and bring delight to users. It is a typical user-generated content or network, with content provided by users rather than the organization. The software, which is accessed through cell phone, allows users to create short lip-sync, films, gaming, DIY, culinary, and dance clips in 3-15 or 60 seconds (TikTok - Real Short Videos, 2020) popularity grew since its inception as evident by over 2.6 billion downloads for TikTok app (Bhandari & Bimo.,2022) and it continues to gain popularity and a lot of people are engaging in short video composition, which ultimately leads to the creation of TikTok videos (Guo, 2022) increases amount of time spent on social networking is increasing among adolescents (Hernández-Serrano *et al*., 2022) leads to Internet addictions conceptualised as the loss of control over Internet use (Young, 1998; Billieux, 2012)creates host of physical and mental health and social adaptation problems in everyday life, such as decreased sleep quality, decreased academic performance, interpersonal tension and many other negative effects (Jain, 2015)for instance, TikTok has an impact on self-

concept through presentation or self-image (Ghozali *et al*., 2022) young generation needs to build a self-concept clarity to avoid being distracted with copying personality away from their reality (Petre ,2021). Self-concept referred to the total of one's knowledge and understanding of his or herself; thoughts and feelings about themselves; an internally consistent, and temporally stable self (Mishra, S., 2016; Fullwood *et al*.,2016). It is a notable fact that the growing popularity of the internet provides an outlet for self-expression and adolescents can present their online selves in multiple ways. Self-Concept Clarity (SCC) refers to an individual's ability to understand themselves clearly and confidently, as well as their ability to remain consistent internally over time (Guest, 2022). In addition, SCC plays a crucial role in developing a strong sense of self and identity among young adults and adolescents (Yang *et al*., 2021). Fullwood and colleagues (2016) believed that little is known about how self-concept clarity relates to web-based behaviours, and there exists a discrepancy between offline and online self-presentations (Strimbu, 2019). The world of the internet is a social laboratory that allows people to experiment with different ways of presenting themselves (Fullwood *et al*., 2016) and TikTok, users have the opportunity to present themselves in various ways and receive online reactions to these presentations. The detrimental impacts of TikTok addiction on university students' mental health have been noticed (Zahra, 2022) leading to negative coping styles, poorer interpersonal relationships, and augmented levels of anxiety and depression (Liu *et al*., 2017).

However, few studies have examined the relationships between TikTok addictions, self-concept clarity and online self-presentations among UAE graduates.

The present study aimed to investigate:

To what extent does TikTok usage link with self-concepts and its domains and online self-presentation among UAE graduates

It was hypothesised that:

- There would be a significant relationship exists betweenTikTok addiction and online self-presentations among UAE graduate students.
- There would be a significant relationship exists between TikTok addiction and subscales for online self-presentation among UAE graduate students.
- There would be a significant relationship exists between TikTok addiction and self-concept among UAE graduatestudents.

MATERIALS

Participants: 592 students from Fatima College of Health Sciences- UAE with an age range from 18-30 years were recruited using random sampling techniques from different faculties of Fatima College of Heath Sciences via an online survey.

Instruments

The following instruments were used in the study:

Consent and Demographic Information Form: The author's self-developed form contains basic details of the study (purpose, voluntary mode of participation, anonymity and rights to leave study) and demographic information (age, gender, faculty).

Internet Addiction Test IAT: (Pawlikowski, Altstötter-Gleich, & Brand, 2013): TikTok addiction was measured by the IAT, which comprises 12 items, some items are modified to suit the needs of the study. Cronbach alpha of scale for the present study is found to be α=.896, p <. 01.

Presentation of Online Self Scale (POSS; Fullwood, James, & Chen-Wilson, 2016): It contains 21 items, scale demonstrates good psychometric properties. It has four subscales of Ideal self, multiple selves, consistent self and online presentation preference. Alpha reliability of the overall scale for the present study is found to be α=.887 at *p*<.01.

Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCCS: Campbell *et al*.,1996): It contains 12 items, scale demonstrates good psychometric properties. The alpha reliability of the scale for the present study is found to be α=.912 at *p*<.01.

Procedure: Researchers have priorly sought Institutional review Board (IRB) approval from FCHS-Abu Dhabi campus, After the approval of the study proposal, the survey has distributed through email using Google form. Responses were collected over 20 days (1st – 20th March 2023), After collecting the quantitative data, it proceeds to data analysis.

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-28).

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the demographics profile of participants, 592 undergraduate students from age 18 years to 30 years with 92.1% Single, 7.3% Married and 0.7% Divorced. Out of 525 UAE population, 51 Arab, 4 Western and 12 belonged to other Nationalities.

Table 2 shows the positive and significant correlation among variables and acceptable ranges for alpha reliabilities.

Table 1 Demographic Profile (N=592)

Participant	Frequency(f)	% ages
Age (Years)		
18-21	*477*	*80*
22-25	*105*	*17.7*
26-30	*10*	*1.68*
Marital Status		
Married	*43*	*7.3*
Single	*545*	*92.1*
Divorced	*4*	*.7*
Nationality		
UAE	*525*	*88.7*
Arab	*51*	*8.6*
Western	*4*	*.7*
Other Nationality	*12*	*2.0*

Table 2. Relationships between TikTok Addiction, Self-concept clarity, Presentation of Online Self Scale and its subscales and Alpha Reliabilities (N=592)

Variables	ID	SCC	OSP	IS-ScI	MS-SCII	CS-SCIII	OSP-Sc IV
ID	--	.443**	.508**	.492**	.431**	.280**	.352**
SCC		---	.758**	.721**	.706**	.384**	.474**
OSP			---	.937**	.858**	.622**	.671**
IS-Sc-1				---	.733**	.513**	.521**
MS, Sc-II					---	.312**	.511**
CS, SC-III						-----	.305**
OSP, SC IV							-----
Alpha Reliabilities α	.896	.912	.887	.803	.870	.475	.391
No of Items	12	12	21	9	5	4	3

Note: Internet Addiction = ID, Self-Concept Clarity= SCC, Online self-presentation= OSP, Ideal self-= IS, Multiple self =MS, Consistent self =CS, Online self-preference=OSP, Sub scale-SC   *p*<.01**

DISCUSSION

The focus of this study was to investigate the linkages between TikTok addiction, self-concept clarity and online self-presentation among university graduates. Outcomes showed positive and significant relationships among study variables.The study explains how extended TikTok usage influences self-concept clarity and online self-presentation behaviours among female undergraduate students. self-concept clarity involves an individual's ability to understand themselves in a clear, confident, and consistent manner over time (Guest, 2022). Correlational analysis shows the significance of TikTok addiction with the construct of self-concept clarity. The correlation matrix table shows a strong correlation between TikTok addictions measured via the Internet addiction scale and self-concept, suggesting that most Internet addicts use TikTok and are addicted to it. Individuals with lower self-concept clarity preferred online self-presentation to offline self-presentation. Whereas, with significance concerning subscales of self-concept clarity and internet addictions, it reveals that online selves tended to be

idealized, more diverse, and inconsistent with their offline selves. This is similar to Fulwood *et al.*, 2016 study, which explains why adolescents with low self-concept clarity may be happier presenting themselves online because they have access to much greater flexibility when it comes to self-presentation options and won't be constrained as they might be offline. It could be argued that the most effective way to gain favour with others if one is unsure about how one wants to be viewed by them is to choose a self-presentation that is popular and likely to win them over. The sense of self-identity can make a person more confident and enable them to express themselves more authentically, both online and offline (Fullwood *et al.*, 2016). It is apparent that a clear understanding is essential of one's values, beliefs, and personality traits makes it easier for one to communicate these aspects of oneself. To summarize, when a person is secure in who they are, they are less likely to feel under pressure to fit in or get favoured by adopting a false person or conforming to society's standards.

In case of poor self-concept clarity, people with low self-esteem are also more likely to experience feelings of unsatisfaction, which may lead them to consider adopting another identity. According to a study by (Amoda *et al.*, 2022) 48.8% of teens feel insecure or inferior when looking at other people's accomplishments on TikTok. Internet resources must be used responsibly by young people and support must be sought if negative implications arise. The presentation of an ideal self may additionally be the typical mode of self-presentation for those with low self-concept clarity. Following the responses to the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) questionnaire, those who were internet addicts who spent considerable amounts of time on TikTok combined with low self-concept clarity were more likely to present multiple versions of themselves online. It's possible that experimenting with various online versions of themselves requires more time and effort than the ordinary user would typically put forth. This is particularly valid for those who are more self-conscious and preoccupied with how other people view them. People who don't have strong self-concepts may be naturally more likely to look to others for recognition and encouragement. Individuals with insecurity and self-doubt may be more inclined to spend time on social media, like TikTok, where they can receive praise and feel validated. This can provide a sense of approval and self-worth. To understand social media attachment and addiction, researchers need to study self-presentation on social media (Chen, 2019). A significant positive correlation between internet addiction and online self-presentations infers that individuals with lower self-concept clarity preferred online self-presentation to offline self-presentation. Furthermore, their online selves tended to be idealized, more diverse, and inconsistent with their offline selves. According to Zuo & Wang (2019), people on TikTok reflect on themselves and understand who they are by recognizing others, what they think, and how they appear. Through interaction with other users, they validate and complement their self-representation and identity.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study highlighted an important and rather underexplored area of research in the UAE context. However, the results need to be generalised with caution because of the limited geographical representation of participants as they solely focused on UAE undergraduates recruited from only one Educational institute in UAE, gender differences were not considered for constructs. The study merits further explorations consideration of students across different emirates of UAE utilisation of qualitative constructs and the gender-balanced ratio of participants and in-depth investigations of related variables for TikTok usage alongside other variables, such as personality, self-concept, body image satisfaction, or dissatisfaction (Amoda *et al.*, 2022) in UAE cultural contexts.

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