

TikTok as an Avenue into Teachers Coping Mechanisms Amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

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Maricar C. Tegero*maricarcaadantegero@gmail.com**Leyte Normal University, Tacloban City, 6500, Philippines*

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Novette Rolandé A. Madera*novetter_madera@lnu.edu.ph**Leyte Normal University, Tacloban City, 6500, Philippines*

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Leonard C. Picao*leonard.picao@lnu.edu.ph**Leyte Normal University, Tacloban City, 6500, Philippines*

Abstract

TikTok has grown in popularity around the world, particularly among teachers who use the app to watch and create TikTok videos. This platform can host almost any type of TikTok content, including lip-sync, drama, comedy, talent, dance videos, music videos, and educational videos, which teachers used as a coping mechanism and to relieve stress that had skyrocketed. This research paper aimed to shed light on the use of the mobile application TikTok, and it concluded that the use of the application had a positive impact on the users, specifically teachers, during the COVID-19 Pandemic. A single case study was used. This case study investigates the phenomenon of how TikTok serves to cope with stress for teachers. The researchers conducted the study in one of the state universities in Eastern Visayas, and the participants are fifteen (15) college teachers from the chosen university. Purposive sampling was also utilized to collect data. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data gathered from a semi-structured interview conducted through an in-depth interview.

The three main themes identified during the analysis were (1) Variation of TikTok contents, (2) TikTok Content Motivation, and (3) TikTok as a Coping Mechanism. In turn, each theme has sub-themes that have been classified and summarized in the study with relevant quotes from participants. According to the study's findings, majority teachers viewed and participated using the TikTok application as their stress reliever for workload pressure and boredom in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic. This study suggests that more research be done into the use of the TikTok app as a stress reliever, an appealing activity, and an impactful physical activity for teachers.

Key words: *Tiktok, Case Study, Qualitative Research, COVID-19, Coping Mechanism for Teachers*

1. Introduction

TikTok has emerged as a key platform for teachers to connect and share their experiences during a turbulent period marked by a global pandemic, forced lockdowns, and educational institutions going "digital by default." Although little is known about the specifics of TikTok's appeal among teachers, these digital practices have been widely praised for providing teachers with an outlet during a challenging time (Hurtung, et.al., 2022). Evidence has shown significant increases in the prevalence of mental issues like anxiety, depression, and psychological distress (Husky et al., 2020; Al Omari et al., 2020), as well as physical

exhaustion symptoms like tiredness, headaches, insomnia, fatigue, and muscle pain during the mandatory lockdown period (Branquinho, et al., 2020; Majumdar et al., 2020).

This phenomenal growth is undoubtedly due in part to the current situation. The content on the platform is entertaining, relatable, and presented in an easy-to-digest format, making it ideal for locked-down viewing. The app's ease of use and accessibility make it suitable for everyone. The platform's content is light-hearted, relevant, and easy to consume, making it ideal for lockdown viewing. The app's ease of use and accessibility make it ideal for everybody (Jeffries, 2020).

One of the ways people feel connected and relatable in these uneasy times is through challenges on the web, which are constantly on the increase and see so many people participate. The viral app has found a way to appeal to people of all ages, with viral hacks, cooking competitions, lip-syncs, and even workout videos (Times of India, 2020). The recent Covid-19 pandemic (World Health Organization, 2019) has added to the stress and workloads of university faculty and staff who were already struggling to balance teaching, research, and service obligations, let alone work-life balance (Houston, Meyer, and Paewai 2006; Houlden and Veletsianos 2020). Moreover, TikTok has the potential to reduce our daily stressors by providing a distraction from our problems and obligations. "It can be a way to take a break and re-energize before returning to life. Using TikTok for entertainment, education, or social purposes, it will help reset priorities (Thomas, 2020).

Researchers want to learn more about how this application has influenced and assisted people in using it as a coping mechanism, so studying TikTok is deemed necessary to fill these research gaps. Because the TikTok application is ineptly explained to the general public, particularly teachers, researchers investigated and comprehend it. Even though the TikTok app is popular during this pandemic, it is not very informative and lacks information on how it can assist teachers and others. This paper investigates how TikTok can be used by teachers as a stress reliever and coping mechanism during this pandemic. The TikTok also has been introduced to the participants, which serve as an aid in determining whether there is a link between the teachers' stress reliever and their ability to create TikTok content.

B. Domain of Inquiry

According to the study's stated purpose and frame of reference, the research will investigate how an understanding of the underlying motivations for TikTok challenge participation can be used on TikTok by asking the following research questions:

1. In times of pandemic, what TikTok contents are teachers interested in?
2. What motivates the teachers to take part in creating TikTok videos amidst the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. How does TikTok serves as a coping mechanism on the part of the teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. Methodology

Research Design

This research used a qualitative case study design. A qualitative case study, as defined by Merriam (1998), is a detailed, in-depth description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit. Because this study is about how TikTok influences teachers who use it as a coping mechanism, a single case study was utilized in this research. Using a single case study approach, the researchers were able to gain a more in-depth and complete understanding of the subject and phenomena.

Research Setting

This research was carried out at one of the state universities in Eastern Visayas. Furthermore, the researchers chose to conduct the study in order to learn more about how TikTok Trends affect teachers' coping mechanisms. Furthermore, only teachers who create TikTok Videos at the specific institution were able to participate.

Research Participants

The study's participants are twelve (12) teachers from the chosen university. The participants were chosen on purpose by the researchers based on the following criteria: 1) He or she has a TikTok account; 2) He or she is currently active in creating TikTok Videos; and 3) He or she is willing to share information relevant to the study's problem.

Data Collection Procedure

The main research instrument in this study was an interview schedule that highlights teachers' participation in creating TikTok Contents as a coping mechanism during the pandemic. Data was collected in steps, with participants providing relevant information through use of semi-structured, informal, and conversational interviews. This interview technique made them feel at ease and at ease when answering the questions. Standard protocols for evaluating observation objects and indicators were used to analyse the data.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the virtual interviews was analysed using an appropriate tool. Thematic analysis was used because the present study seeks to investigate how TikTok serves as a channel for teachers to use as a coping mechanism during a pandemic. The first step in thematic analysis was transcription of the recorded audio after the interview. While transcribing, key patterns from the interview were noted. The coding process, which involved rereading the transcripts and identifying repeated ideas, was the second step. The final step involved searching for patterns and connections. Following the coding of the data, the research began to look for the most common responses to questions, identifying data or patterns that could aid in answering the research questions. The patterns and themes were used by the researchers to interpret what was said. These interpretations or understandings became the study's findings. The data saturation method was used in the data analysis, which means that once there was enough information to replicate the study and the ability to obtain additional new information, the researchers stopped analysing the data.

Ethical Consideration

Trust, time conflict, and privacy were all considered as potential risks in this study. The researchers ensured that the participants answered all the questions honestly and confidentially, with no doubts or hesitations, during the interview, which was scheduled by both the researchers and the participants. The potential benefit was gained by the participants through self-reflection and a sense of satisfaction in sharing information, as well as being comfortable discussing the necessary data with a friendly and objective person, which increased knowledge about themselves or their conditions.

3. Findings

The research findings presented are analyzed based on data sources relevant to the research questions, such as semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, responses to interview questions frequently addressed more than one theme. The interview data described where they appeared to fit in those circumstances most rationally.

Theme 1: TikTok Content Variation

The different TikTok variations that the teachers are creating, and executing are highlighted in this theme. Some of the participants' responses to this claim are as follows:

"I am mostly interested in K-POP TikTok trends."-P2

"I am very much interested when it comes to cooking videos, fashion, uhm travel, and couple videos on TikTok."-P10

"I am more interested in transitioning. Like you start with a bare face and then go out in a glamorous look, and aside from that, of course, dancing."-P5

In 2021, Schellewald viewed TikTok as a communicative environment made up of transitory video clips. Theorized as communally shared modes of expression or platform-specific languages, fleeting and temporary short clips were connected by their underlying communicative structures. It was postulated that they constitute shared cultural contexts. They provide a backdrop for meaningful self-expression and the making of sense of others and separateness. TikTok creates a representation of reality through the lens of its specific communicative forms, a representation of reality mediated through the algorithmic content feed connecting a single user to the broader cultural dynamics unfolding on TikTok.

In a study conducted by Hou Liqian in 2018, he stated that the most common content types in short video apps were categorized into three groups. The first is education, which entails teaching users how to improve abilities such as cooking, conversing in foreign languages, and knowing what to expect when visiting specific locations. The second category is entertainment, which includes videos designed to amuse viewers, such as parody videos and dancing. The third component is promotion, which includes activities such as marketing cosmetics to audiences and encouraging them to buy, which is fundamentally an online commercial activity. This might take the form of transition videos in which a user demonstrates the visual difference between a natural look and a face covered in cosmetics. These three types of videos make up the fundamental content of short video applications.

It was stressed that teachers usually spend time watching and executing a variety of TikTok contents, depending on their preferred content. Furthermore, they create videos to alleviate tension and to enhance their dancing, singing, acting, and other skills. Getting involved in some TikTok content also serves as a means of exercise and physical activity for them. It improves their overall health and physical fitness. As a result, they frequently take part variety of TikTok contents.

Theme 2: TikTok Content Motivations

The second theme depicts the motivations of the participants for using and creating TikTok videos. Some of the participants' responses relative to the theme are as follows:

"First, it is for entertainment because there are times that we are super busy when it comes to our work. So, to aid the stress you feel after work, I visit to the TikTok app. In that way, the stress in my mind diverts to other things by using the application."-P5

"It is my way of escaping from the reality that I have a lot of things to do for work."-P7

"Like considering the situation now, like we have limit access to entertainments, I am not really into going out with people. I find satisfaction using TikTok application."-P3

Though TikTok, according to the study, serves as a stress reliever for people dealing with the pandemic. The transition to online learning has occurred on an unprecedented scale and pace in the context of the COVID-19

pandemic. It goes without saying that TikTok application is brimming with talented creators who can keep you entertained for hours without becoming bored. Cauberghe et., al. (2020) stated that not only was social media used for entertainment, humor, and occupying boredom, but also as a method for young people to cope with mental health issues and lack of identity. This shows that the Tik Tok application is not just for entertainment and popularity but also to help individuals cope with their stress. Nabi et al. (2017) found that media use is a primary coping strategy for people facing health or academic stress, and individuals under high stress are likely to turn to media for relaxation and recovery (Anderson et al., 1996; Reinecke and Eden, 2016).

On the other hand, Tik Tok also considered as a way of communication in people around social media platforms. According to Mulyana, 2014, when we communicate, we can get information and survive. Communication has two functions. First, for self-sustainability, self-protection, and standing out of others; and the second, for survival within society and fostering good relations in the community. The way of communicating through Tik Tok is not like a social network; it is about how the user of the app transmits information and messages through a video.

The study found that the TikTok application aided teachers in dealing with the stress of the new educational system. This tool helped them not only with their emotional stress, but also with their mental and physical well-being. In this period of uncertainty, it became their escape from anxiety, overthinking, and pressure. Significantly, the TikTok app has a significant positive impact on teachers. While using this video sharing social media app, they were stress-free, calm, and happy. Teachers are expected to know their limits and practice self-control to avoid addiction. Teachers can still have time for social interactions with their families, friends, and so on.

Theme 3: TikTok as a Coping Mechanism

The study highlighted TikTok Challenge as a Pandemic Coping Mechanism as an explanatory type of case study shown in the data. Connecting online are the only individuals to ease secure during a pandemic like this, when most people are cut off from the rest of the world, and social media is helping to act as a bridge. Individuals' mental and emotional health continue to be adversely impacted as they spend more time online and avoid in-person social engagement in the near future. Despite the negativity, most students find solace, and TikTok is a component of modern society that brings people together and provides entertainment (Ecker, 2021).

The following are some of the participants' viewpoints:

"Yes, because as I have said, it relieves stress, and it helps you lose your focus from your problems because it diverts your attention away from it."-P1

"Uhm, of course, we have a lot of stressors in our environment but with the aid of TikTok, it somehow lessens the burden. Especially us teachers, we have lots of work to accomplish given the nature of our profession including other things like accommodating the concerns of our students. And sometimes, we get stressed with disobedient students, so I divert my attention towards accessing TikTok in order to lighten up my mood."-P8

"Yeah, that's it. Let's say, for example, I read every day so after I finish reading and I have extra time especially when I am very stressed, that is the moment when I engage myself in watching TikTok videos or TikTok trends."-P5

TikTok can be advantageous to people's mental health as they seek opportunities to do during the coronavirus outbreak since creating and posting content can have a significant impact on mental health, especially if it's entertaining and engaging. The habit component can also benefit anyone. Having a goal to work towards, such as the famous TikTok dances and fitness challenges, may be a fun and effective way to remain in touch with people on social media (Jeffries, 2020). It became even more important in the lives of young people throughout the pandemic, as youth under lockdown turned to TikTok to pass the time (Easter, 2020; Willingham, 2020), socialize, and share their daily activities, including their online learning activities (Crellin & Haasch, 2020).

During the COVID-19 lockdown, social media apps were used for a number of purposes, demonstrating their adaptability. Social media was used to help young people cope with mental health issues and a lack of identity, as well as for enjoyment, humor, and boredom filling (Cauberghe et. al., 2020). TikTok's and other social media platforms' usage soared during this time as TikTok, users create dances, remixes, and covers of pre-existing material, highlighting the convergence and remediation of existing media genres (Tankovska, 2021).

Finally, researchers discovered that TikTok is a practical way to take a break from work while remaining productive and motivated for the tasks at hand. TikTok also allows teachers to fully immerse themselves in the present moment. The app acts as a stress reliever, removing the day's stresses and anxieties. This type of mobility serves as a break from the teaching workspace.

TikTok Challenge as a defense mechanism for teachers serves as a way to unwind during times of academic pressure and pandemic. Teachers are going through a rough adjustment period as a result of the pandemic's immediate shift of physical classes into virtual classes. As a result, the study found that students face academic challenges that have a negative impact on their mental health. Teachers began to divert their attention to TikTok in order to relieve stress. The platform allows them to move and dance, which relieves stress, energizes them, and motivates them to continue their workplace tasks.

4. Conclusion

TikTok plays an important role in the lives of the majority of people throughout the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is beyond anything we may have ever encountered. Many people take issue, and reports of acute stress, anxiety, and burnout are on the rise. Even because many of us explore a better normal amid the chaos, experts suggest that many people are passing the time by watching TikTok videos and participating in trendy social media initiatives. TikTok is a useful tool for many teachers. The TikTok application has helped teachers cope with their stress in the new normal educational system. It has assisted them in maintaining psychological stability and reducing stress, which has hampered their ability to achieve their life goals. In a nutshell, TikTok is a fun, engaging, and addictive application that has seen a surge in popularity in recent months. TikTok has the potential to become the next big marketing and social networking platform. It remains to be seen, however, how the app's designers will capitalize on this potential and maintain the app's current popularity. Overall, TikTok is a great platform for making and watching entertaining videos, as well as meeting new people. It also allows users to learn and discover new things and opportunities, such as volunteering or interning. TikTok, like all things, can be undesirable if not used properly.

5. Recommendations

The study's findings and discussion lead the researchers to make the following recommendations for future research. First, teachers, must create or organize an activity that provides proper knowledge on how to effectively manage their time by using the Tiktok App as their mode of teaching strategies or tools that will

help them feel more relaxed rather than stressed due to the workload in school. Second, TikTok should maintain and improve their service to users so that they can enjoy more of their features, which will serve everyone's intentions of being stress-free and entertained. TikTok should implement a time management system so that when a user's online time is exceeded, an alert window appears automatically to ensure healthy browsing and avoid indulging. Third, Future researchers should conduct additional research on how creating TikTok can serve as a way for teachers to relieve stress during a pandemic, and use this research as a framework for new research.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank all the study participants for their sincere and honest responses, which were immensely helpful in completing this paper. In addition, thanks to the anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful suggestions and careful reading of this research work.

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