

# Public Perception of the TikTok Application (A Qualitative Descriptive Study of the TikTok Application on Teenagers in Surakarta)

Rio Aldi Permana<sup>1\*</sup>, Renty Yuniarti<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Komunikasi Interstudi, Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: <sup>1)</sup> [rioaldipermanao77@gmail.com](mailto:rioaldipermanao77@gmail.com)

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## Abstract

The rapid development of social media has significantly transformed communication, making it easier, faster, and more accessible for users. This evolution has prompted social media platform providers to continuously innovate, creating diverse applications that serve as intermediaries for communication. One of the most prominent platforms today is TikTok, which has gained immense popularity globally, particularly among teenagers in Indonesia. Given its widespread usage, it is crucial to understand how adolescents perceive this social media application, and whether their perceptions are predominantly positive or negative. This study aims to explore public perceptions of TikTok among teenagers in Surakarta, focusing on the impact of social media content on adolescent psychological development. A qualitative research design with a descriptive approach is employed to capture the nuanced attitudes, opinions, and experiences of the participants. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and literature review to provide a comprehensive understanding of adolescents' responses to the TikTok platform. The findings indicate that teenagers are particularly sensitive to negative content on TikTok, which can have detrimental effects on their psychological and emotional development, including issues related to self-esteem, behavior, and social interactions. While TikTok also offers opportunities for creativity and social engagement, negative influences appear more pronounced among adolescent users. This research contributes to the understanding of social media's psychological impact on teenagers and provides insights for parents, educators, and policymakers to develop strategies that mitigate harmful effects while promoting positive use of digital platforms.

**Keywords:** Communication, Perception, Social Media, TikTok

## 1. Introduction

The existence of increasingly sophisticated internet technology has created a different and new digital era, enabling it to become a facilitator in conveying various forms of perception among the cyber community without difficult restrictions and discrimination based on space and culture, because its development and flow occur rapidly and widely, making it sometimes difficult to control (Wazis & Mangli, 2017). With the advent of digital media, elements such as culture, beliefs, principles, opinions, worldviews, attitudes, ideas, organisations, and other elements can be easily conveyed comprehensively to everyone in the virtual world in a relatively short time. From these elements, humans can experience significant changes in communication behaviour, resulting in actions in response to life becoming bound and controlled by social or digital media. As a result, internet social media is not merely an intermediary that humans need to communicate more easily, but has become a primary function and even a primary necessity of human life today, where its use is often excessive and the messages conveyed through social media can also influence human actions and perceptions (Wazis & Mangli, 2017). In addition, social media has also changed communication patterns, which are no longer limited to one



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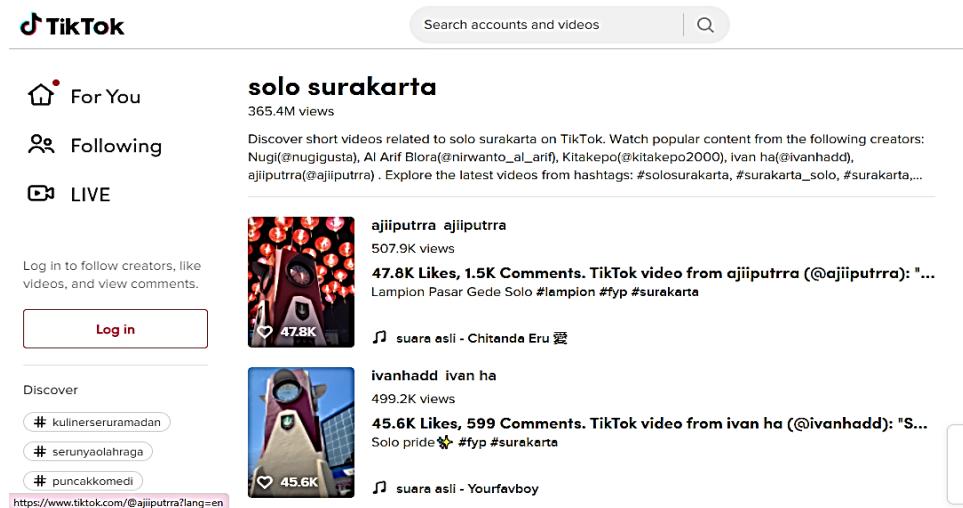
side of the organisation, but can be used privately and with the same freedom of rights (Hendrarto & Ruliana, 2019).

From this explanation, it can be said that digital social media communication is important for humans. Without communication, a person would be considered socially inept. The increasingly innovative developments in communication technology make it important for humans (Nasrullah, 2018). In today's digital communication era, blogs, Wikipedia, and social networks in the form of social media are the most common and frequently used by people around the world, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Skype, Instagram, TikTok, and others. However, in this study, the author will focus on one social media platform, namely the TikTok application.

Currently, digital social media activities are attracting widespread attention, particularly among the general public, through the TikTok social media platform. TikTok is a video platform with music on the Chinese social network that was launched in September 2016 by Zhang Yiming, the founder of Toutiao (Puspita, 2020). The application provides its users with the ability to create and develop ideas for short music videos, allowing them to become creators and even editors themselves. TikTok is currently an application platform with a fairly high usage rate (Puspita, 2020). Video-based social applications have attracted the attention of many people, especially among teenagers. This is evident from the fact that in August last year, it had 600 million users worldwide, with 92.2 million users in Indonesia. This made TikTok the best application of 2021 on the Play Store. Based on the above explanation, the author chose TikTok for this study because it is an application that has a large number of users and is currently in high demand among the public.

Furthermore, the reason why the author chose teenagers as the subject of this study is based on a report from the South China Morning Post (SCMP) quoted by the author on 27 February 2021 at [www.alenia.id](http://www.alenia.id), which concluded that TikTok app users are children under the age of 16. This data indicates that TikTok app users are children in their teenage years, although the use of the TikTok app by teenagers does not obscure the fact that a percentage of its users are also adults and parents. Then, based on the opinion of an expert, it is mentioned that adolescents have a transitional phase that they experience and can influence the next stage of development, where this transitional period can lead to an adolescent crisis characterised by negative or deviant behaviour (Andaresta, 2022). Therefore, adolescence is an important age in the transition or shift to adulthood. If their intake of information and viewing habits are well controlled by providing them with appropriate content through social media, this will certainly have a significant influence in shaping their mindset in adulthood. Adolescence is a period when young people are easily influenced through hearing, sight, and experience. Therefore, TikTok content can have a positive or negative impact on adolescent behaviour, especially their religious behaviour.

In this study, the author limited the scope to adolescents who are TikTok users in Surakarta City because the statistical data on adolescents in Surakarta City in the adolescent age range (13-18 years) shows a population of around 81,057 people, obtained from the Central Statistics Agency's data table on the population by age group and gender in Surakarta City. where the comparison with other age groups does not show a significant population imbalance. Based on the author's observations prior to conducting the research, the use of social media, especially the TikTok application, among adolescents in Surakarta City appears to be increasing significantly, as seen from the behaviour of adolescents themselves, both in their daily activities, which are inseparable from the use of TikTok social media via mobile phones or computers regardless of time, even when they are at places of worship, playgrounds, at home, and at school, teenagers use TikTok social media simply to view or create content.



**Figure 1. Observation of Surakarta City TikTok Contents**

In addition, this was reinforced by the emergence of hashtags and several videos about Surakarta that were widely viewed and used as content in videos and uploaded to TikTok accounts as shown in Figure 1. This gained attention, as evidenced by the number of views exceeding 369 million times and being featured on the official website of the TikTok account, prompting the author to conduct further research on how TikTok -Tok has developed and its impact on society, as well as understanding how people perceive the TikTok application on social media, as cited by the author on 30 March 2022 at [www.tiktok.com](http://www.tiktok.com). This understanding reveals that all digital social media activities on TikTok whether by content creators or viewers shape perceptions of the platform's positive or negative impacts among its audiences.

Given this background, this study addresses a central research question: How do teenagers in Surakarta perceive the TikTok application? A subsidiary question examines the impact of social media activities and communication patterns between TikTok content creators and their audiences. Theoretically, the research is expected to contribute to the development of knowledge in the field of communication science, especially mass media communication related to the use of the TikTok application. Practically, this research is intended to provide input and references for solving problems related to the object of study. In addition, the practical benefits include serving as a reference or literature for STIKOM INTERSTUDI students in general and Broadcasting Study Programme students in particular, offering researchers an opportunity to develop theoretical knowledge through scientific interpretation and compare theory with real conditions regarding teenagers' perceptions of TikTok in Surakarta, and providing adolescents, especially current or potential TikTok users, with information and considerations about the benefits of social media, particularly the TikTok application.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Recent Research to Past Research

Thesis by Vionita Anjani, 'Public Perception of the TikTok Application (A Quantitative Descriptive Study of the TikTok Application among Communication Science Students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of North Sumatra, 2015 and 2016 Cohorts)' (Anjani, 2019). This study used a quantitative descriptive research model, where the results of this study showed that research on public perception of the TikTok application indicated that the majority of respondents who were communication science students agreed that the TikTok application -Tok has a negative influence on its users based on the results of the questionnaire distributed by the researcher (Anjani, 2019)

The difference between previous scientific works and the author's subject of discussion lies in the different methods of thinking used by researchers, where the researcher used a descriptive qualitative method while the previous works used a descriptive quantitative method (Anjani, 2019). In addition, the researcher focused on the subject of research on teenagers in Solo, while previous studies focused on the subject of research among students majoring in Communication Science at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Usu Stambuk 2015 and 2016 (Anjani, 2019).

Thesis by Alhas (2010), "The Perception of the Makassar Community Towards the Tribun Timur Online Media as a Source of Information". This study used a qualitative descriptive research model and interviews, with the final results showing that Tribun Timur as a source of information for the people of Makassar was considered very capable of meeting all their information and news needs (Alhas, 2010).

The difference between this scientific work and what the author researched lies in the focus of the research. The researcher wanted to focus on the community's perception of the TikTok application among teenagers, whereas previous research focused on the community's perception of the online media Tribun Timur with the Makassar community as the subject. Communication involves a process of symbolic interaction, both verbal and non-verbal, which are interrelated. Communication aims to create a relationship between two people who are communicating (Suherman, 2020). According to Berger and Chaffee, it can be concluded that the basic theory of communication is conceptualised with three principles: 1) casual necessity, 2) practical necessity, and 3) logical necessity (Daryanto, 2014). Communication has several effects that arise due to the exchange of information, whether one-way or two-way. These effects are cognitive effects, affective effects, and behavioural effects (Fitriansyah, 2015).

## 2.2. Media Theory in Mass Communication

Media theory emphasises how different communication media differ not only in terms of content but also in how they are constructed and conveyed through the mind and senses. They distinguish media by the most well-known cognitive process, which is the channel as a dominant force that must be understood in order to know how the media can influence society and culture. Media theory focuses on the character of the media, not just what is displayed or transmitted, or how information is received, but also on the media as part of a message that has an impact on every individual and society, and the media today mostly carries a sensory ratio that influences perception (Bennett, 2005).

Denis McQuail, in his book Mass Communication Theory, states that this theory is one of the earliest pieces of evidence regarding the role of the media in nation building. This theory holds the view that the media can play a role in modernisation by introducing Western values at the expense of traditional values and the loss of local cultural authenticity. In short, it can be understood that the values introduced are capitalist values and therefore the process of imperialism is carried out deliberately and systematically.

According to Breiner, mass communication is a message communicated through mass media, whether print or electronic, whereby mass communication takes place interposed, meaning that there is no direct contact between the source of the message or the sender and the recipient of the message, because the message is conveyed through the mass media (Dyatmika, 2020). Meanwhile, according to McQuail, mass communication theory is: 1) mass communication has properties and characteristics that can reach a wide and relatively large audience, 2) mass communication or public communication can have anyone as its message recipient, so the message conveyed is general in nature, 3) through mass communication, a person's popularity can be elevated (McQuail, 2010). In addition, people who communicate in complex public forums or groups may incur significant costs (Tambunan, 2018).

There are elements of mass communication, namely the who element (the source or person communicating), the message element, the channel or media element, the receiver or audience

element, and the effect or consequence element (Umar, 2000). The functions of mass communication include several aspects, among them supervision, interpretation, linkage, and entertainment. Then there are effects that can arise from the existence of mass communication. First, the effect of the presence of mass media can occur in economic and social aspects, the loss of discomfort, and can evoke certain feelings. Second, the effects of messages, such as cognitive, affective, and behavioural (Dyatmika, 2020). Mass communication also has negative impacts on users who are unable to filter information properly, leading them towards negative influences. However, there are also positive aspects for users who are able to absorb information wisely (Novianti, 2021).

### **2.3. The Concept of Digital Media**

The way to understand the digital transformation of new media is through the concept of convergence, a term widely used in academic literature on new media. The definition of media convergence is the combination of three aspects: computers (digital media and information technology), communication (equipment networks and habits), and content (media and information). Taking a multi-perspective and interdisciplinary approach, media convergence can be understood as a process in four dimensions:

- 1) Social: the emergence of social media that promotes the dissemination of content and peer-to-peer communication, as well as the distribution of user-generated content on a large scale.
- 2) Technology: the combination of computers, communication, and content around digital media platforms.
- 3) Textual: the reuse and recombination of media into what is called the 'transmedia' model.
- 4) Industry: media involvement in the digital media space and the emergence of digital-based companies.

These four dimensions can be supplemented by two key elements: the rise of user-created content, which combines content creators and consumers, and convergence policies, as rules created for previous media types must be reconsidered for related content and media formats (Veronika, 2018).

### **2.4. Adolescents**

Adolescents are individuals who are developing and maturing emotionally, physically, and psychologically. Individuals in this phase are beginning to search for their identity (Jannah, 2017). According to Hurlock, adolescence has several stages, such as the first stage from ages 13 to 17 and the late adolescent stage from ages 17 to 18. The above stages have different characteristics because in late adolescence, individuals have reached a transitional stage of development that is closer to adulthood. Adolescence is a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, marked by different biological and psychological developmental characteristics (Hidayati & Farid, 2016).

Adolescents have several specific characteristics in their development: 1) adolescents are beginning to be able to express their opinions about their habits and rights, which can lead to conflicts, usually distancing adolescents from their families; 2) adolescents are more easily influenced than when they were children. This results in the influence of parents becoming weaker. 3) Adolescents begin to experience physical changes, including sexual development. Sexual feelings that begin to appear can have a slightly strange effect and cause frustration for these adolescents. 4) Adolescents will develop excessive self-confidence (overconfidence), which is accompanied by unstable emotions, making it difficult for them to accept input or guidance from their parents (Saputro, 2018). Adolescents have aspects of development, namely, the initial development aspect is more critical than subsequent development, the adolescent development pattern aspect has predictable characteristics, and there are individual differences in development (Gainau, 2015).

## 2.5. The Concept of Perception

Perception is the first assessment that arises in a person's mind regarding an object. If someone makes a good impression when first meeting, then the perception given will also be good. In addition, perception is a series of complex processes obtained by interpreting sensory information (Jalinur & Nelisa, 2015). Perception occurs due to a process based on a certain point of view. Ecological Perception Theory emphasises that a comprehensive approach is necessary so that the pattern provides a person with information which is then grouped and interpreted to produce an understanding (Hadi, 2020). Perception is an active process of selecting, interpreting and organising people, objects, events, activities and situations. There are three main interrelated processes, namely: selecting, organising and interpreting. All three influence each other; in every communication or perception activity we do, we will interpret and organise what we pay attention to. Therefore, perception is important in communication (Yasir, 2020).

## 2.6. Perception Process

The perception process can occur in three stages, namely sensory stimulus occurs, this stimulus is recorded, this stimulus is interpreted and then reviewed or evaluated. Then there are processes that influence perception, such as:

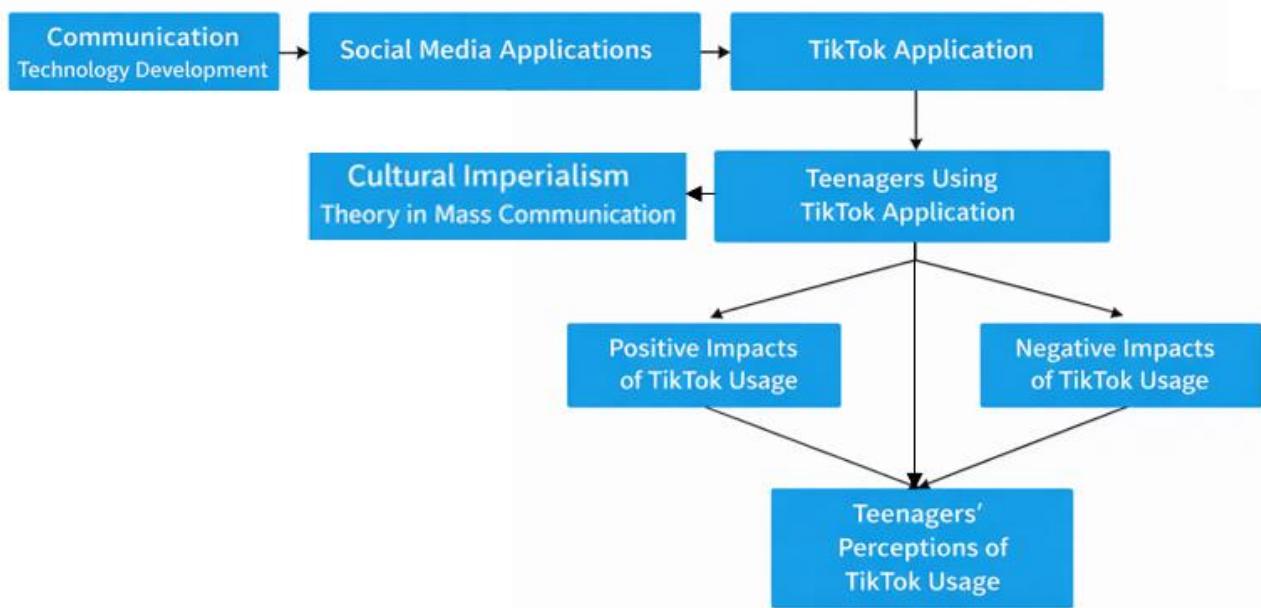
- 1) Consistency refers to the tendency to feel what allows us to achieve psychological balance or comfort between various attitudes and the relationships between them.
- 2) Implicit personality theory refers to an individual's belief about their own personality and how it influences their perception of others.
- 3) Perspectual accentuation makes us see what we expect and what we want to see.
- 4) Primacy and recency refer to the relative influence of stimuli as a result of the order in which they appear. If the first to appear has a greater influence, we experience the primacy effect. If the one that appears later has a greater influence, we experience the recency effect.
- 5) Self-fulfilling prophecies occur naturally if you make a prediction or formulate a belief that becomes reality because you made the prediction and acted as if the prediction or estimate were true.
- 6) Stereotypes refer to the tendency to develop and maintain fixed and unchanging perceptions about a group of people and to use these perceptions to evaluate members of that group, ignoring their unique individual characteristics (Hamilton et al., 2014).

## 3. Methods

The research method has several basic stages for data analysis and collection, aimed at answering the problems encountered or the main issues raised in the research.

### 3.1. Framework of thought

Based on the theoretical foundation presented earlier, the author's rationale for analysing using a deductive framework is a process of thinking from general to specific situations in accordance with existing evidence (Fife & Gossner, 2024). The author created a framework so that this research could proceed conceptually. The following is the research framework using a chart in Figure 2:

**Figure 2. Conceptual framework**

### 3.2. Qualitative Approach Method

A qualitative approach aimed at gaining a general understanding of the reality of social media as perceived by participants. This information is not predetermined, but is obtained after analysing the reality of social media on the TikTok application, which is the focus of this study. The qualitative research approach is a research method that aims to understand phenomena such as the experiences of research subjects, for example their behaviour, perceptions, motivations, actions, and so on, in a comprehensive manner through descriptions in words and language within a specific natural context, using various scientific methods (Ali, 2016).

The method used is phenomenology. The purpose of the phenomenological method is to study how phenomena are experienced in consciousness, thought, and action, such as whether they are valued or accepted aesthetically (Furchan, 2005).

### 3.3. Research Informants

There are several data collection methods that authors can use to gather data and more detailed information to be processed in various ways, namely:

#### 1) Interviews

Interviews are necessary as a data collection technique that can be used by writers if the data needs to be researched and a preliminary study is required to identify the issues to be researched. They can also be used to gain a deeper understanding of the respondents.

#### 2) Observation

The observation used is non-participant observation, where the researcher is not directly involved and only acts as an independent observer.

#### 3) Literature Study

This study utilises the literature review method (library research) to gather data from sources such as reference books, journals, and articles related to the research.

The data collection technique employed by the author is the interview technique, which yielded three key informants and two supporting informants:

#### a. Key Informants

Key informants are individuals or parties who possess the information required for the research. The criteria for selecting key informants are based on:

- 1) Informants who have theoretical or academic knowledge about the object being studied or who are knowledgeable about developments in communication science, particularly digital social media.
- 2) Informants who are deemed capable of providing additional relevant information and answering the main questions raised in the research (Bungin, 2007).

In this study, the author determined the source or key informant from one source, namely a representative from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology in the Jakarta Regional Sub-Department as a representative who was considered capable of being the main informant related to the research object.

b. Supporting Informants

Supporting informants are also useful as supporting data that the author already has from the previous key informants. The criteria for supporting informants are based on:

- 1) Active users of the TikTok application.
- 2) The length of time teenagers have been using the TikTok application.
- 3) The number of followers on a TikTok account and the number of videos uploaded by teenagers to their TikTok accounts, because the more followers and videos, the more active the teenager is as a user of the TikTok application.
- 4) Age range (13-18) years old;
- 5) Gender differences. The researcher believes that males and females have different thoughts and purposes in using the TikTok application.

In this study, the author determined the sources or supporting informants from one source, namely with a comparison of 1 (one) male teenager and 2 (two) female teenagers residing in Surakarta City. The basis for this comparison was seen from the statistical results of the number of residents in the teenage age range, as shown in the Figure 3 below.

POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT					
Kelompok Umur Age Groups	Jenis Kelamin/Sex			Jumlah Total	Sumber/Sources
	Laki-Laki Male	Perempuan Female	(i)		
(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)
0-4	17 758	17 107		34 865	Hasil Perhitungan Umur dan Data Administratif dan SP2020 (September) / The Result of Smoothing Single Year of Age from Administrative Data and the 2020 Population Census (September)
5-9	18 280	17 884		36 164	
10-14	20 187	19 149		39 336	
15-19	21 200	20 516		41 716	
20-24	20 638	20 444		41 082	
25-29	19 983	19 590		39 573	
30-34	19 246	18 803		38 049	
35-39	19 913	19 865		39 778	
40-44	20 038	20 383		40 421	
45-49	18 297	18 958		37 255	
50-54	16 818	18 118		34 936	
55-59	14 282	16 189		30 471	
60-64	11 909	13 749		25 658	
65-69	9 065	10 993		20 058	
70-74	5 015	6 176		11 191	
75+	4 414	7 397		11 811	
Kota Surakarta	257 043	265 321		522 364	

Sumber/Sources: Hasil Perhitungan Umur dan Data Administratif dan SP2020 (September) / The Result of Smoothing Single Year of Age from Administrative Data and the 2020 Population Census (September)

54 Surakarta Municipality in Figures 2021

**Figure 3. Number of residents in the teenage age range**  
Source: Central Statistics Agency Surakarta City

It can be seen that this research is qualitative in nature, involving data in the form of symbols such as interpretations and responses that are not in the form of spoken words (Amirin, 1995). Or, in interpretation, it is defined as a method of data collection through interviews and observation (Moleong, 2016).

According to Bondan and Taylor, a qualitative approach is a process that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words or sentences from the object, person, or source being studied. Descriptive qualitative research involves explaining the research subject, and this type of research is based on the fundamental question 'how'. In this study, the descriptive qualitative method makes it easier for the author to examine how adolescents perceive the use of the TikTok application among adolescents.

Meanwhile, the objects to be studied are included in the descriptive qualitative research type. This is also known as pseudo-qualitative research, meaning that it is a scientific design that cannot be said to be fully qualitative (deductive), especially in terms of the data theory used (Bungin, 2007). Descriptive research describes how the research object currently corresponds to the facts of the problem. This research is a way of revealing problems or circumstances based on the findings (Sukardi, 2004).

### **3.4. Research Object**

The subjects of this study consisted of adolescents in Surakarta within a certain age range, and a number of in-depth interviews were conducted with these adolescents regarding their use of the TikTok application as active users.

### **3.5. Data Sources**

The data sources consist of several sets of observations made on an event, data, incident, or previous research related to the existing problem formulation, through primary and supporting data sources. Primary data or main data obtained directly from the primary data source or the main variable discussed in the research is in the form of unofficial data or documents. It will then be used for analysis after data processing (Ali, 2016). The primary data sources in this journal come from interviews with teenagers who use the TikTok application within a certain age range. Meanwhile, secondary data refers to data obtained from secondary sources in accordance with the data required by the author (Bungin, 2007). Secondary data sources come from literature on research variables, encyclopaedias, journals, the internet, etc (Moleong, 2016).

### **3.6. Data Collection Techniques**

This scientific journal uses various data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, and documentation. Interviews are a form of data collection in the form of question and answer sessions and face-to-face meetings between data collectors and data sources. The interviewees are users of the TikTok application who actively use the application every day and are teenagers in the Surakarta City area (Suryani, 2016). With interview qualifications:

- 1) Teenagers in Surakarta City
- 2) Aged 13–18 years old
- 3) Female or male
- 4) Active users of new internet media (TikTok application)
- 5) Have access to the internet with personal facilities
- 6) Actively use social media every day.

Observation refers to a method or means of obtaining data required for scientific work by conducting direct observation, whereby observation is carried out by observing teenagers who use the

TikTok application through direct structured interviews (Bungin, 2007). Documentation is one method of data collection used in analysing data or a document created by a person about the subject.

In analysing data, descriptive analysis is used to present and analyse facts in an orderly and systematic manner so that they can be easily understood (Sutrisno, 2000). Using deductive analysis as a method to examine data from general to specific is easy. The results of using this theory will usually take the form of conclusions in the form of the author's pro or con responses, doubts, criticisms, or even refutations regarding the object being studied (Purhantara, 2010).

### 3.7. Data Confirmation Techniques

- 1) Credibility: In qualitative research, data can be considered credible if there is a correlation between what the author reports and what actually happened in the research object.
- 2) Transferability: In qualitative research, the value of transferability depends on the reader and the extent to which the research results can be applied to specific social contexts and situations.
- 3) Dependability: Dependability is a data confirmation technique whereby the author can reflect the entire research process in the research results.
- 4) Confirmability: Confirmability in qualitative research is better understood as the concept of transparency in the process of presenting data and describing observation results (Augina, 2020)

### 3.8. Research Location and Time

This research was conducted in the Karesidenan Surakarta or Greater Solo area during January 2022.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Application of Mass Communication Media Theory and Concepts to the Tik-Tok Application

After conducting several interviews with informants and examining mass communication theory, it is evident that the TikTok application is a practical manifestation of media theory in mass communication, which encompasses several criteria. From the results of observations and interviews conducted by the author with one key informant and two supporting informants regarding the public's perception of the TikTok application among teenagers in Surakarta City, the author categorised them into two sub-sections, namely according to the concept of mass communication and media theory regarding the implementation of concepts and theories in the TikTok application.

#### 4.1.1. Application of Mass Communication Concepts in the TikTok Application

The TikTok application is a digital social media-based application that can be accessed by the public through electronic devices such as mobile phones. This is a form of mass communication, which is known to be interposed. This is found in the TikTok application, where there is no direct contact between the source of information and the recipient of the message, or in this case, the TikTok application user.

The TikTok application has also shown that its reach is broad or general, where the content or videos in it can be viewed or accessed by anyone, even internationally. From the aspects described above, it can be seen that the TikTok application has a role or implementation of the Mass Communication Theory itself, both in terms of its definition and characteristics.

In terms of characteristics, which are divided into three parts that the author will discuss one by one, mass communication has properties and characteristics that can reach a wide and relatively large audience. Of course, the application in the TikTok app has a wide reach, even worldwide, with no spatial or time differences within the app, where all users can freely access all features and content concepts

according to their preferences. Mass communication or public communication can be received by anyone, so the messages conveyed are general in nature. The application in the TikTok app explains that the information or messages conveyed in each video displayed can be accessed by all users of all ages and is distributed publicly and globally, so it is indisputable that the information conveyed in TikTok can be quickly accepted by the public at the same time. Through mass communication, an individual's popularity can rise, which has clearly been realised in the TikTok application because nowadays, artists, often referred to as TikTok artists, are frequently known and emerging. Of course, the effect of someone making a video and publishing or uploading it to the application is that it can be seen by many people and become the centre of attention. It is not un-common for TikTok to become a means of earning money through the video content they upload.

#### **4.1.2. Application of Media Theory to the TikTok App**

The implementation of the TikTok application in media theory is actually quite simple and clear in the media theory that I have previously explained, namely that media is a message conveyed through thoughts, feelings, and cognition that is directly communicated by someone in the form of video content on TikTok and then received, viewed, and felt by its users, thereby producing an output in the form of direct or indirect effects that are positive or negative in nature, thus creating a perception among the wider community as users of the TikTok application. TikTok.

#### **4.2. The Impact of TikTok Digital Media on Teenagers in Surakarta City**

Based on the results of observations and interviews, the author will divide the impact on teenagers as users of the TikTok application in Surakarta City into two categories. The first is the positive impact of the TikTok application on teenagers in Surakarta City, as seen from the information that teenagers can receive about several things. In an interview with a teenager named Ayumi, she replied that through the video content on TikTok, she can obtain information related to current trends in the world without fear of falling behind her friends when they communicate. In addition, through TikTok, which is able to transfer information quickly, TikTok can also be a place for teenagers to freely explore their interests in their favourite fields. Even through the TikTok application, a teenager with good popularity and many followers can use it as a place to make money at a young age.

Furthermore, there are certainly many negative impacts of using the TikTok application on teenagers, such as a lack of attention in dividing their time between what should be spent on studying and focusing on their education and playing with their friends, but instead they use it to surf and view content on TikTok. In addition, due to the widespread and free distribution of information on the TikTok app, video content on TikTok includes content that should only be viewed by certain age groups, and teenagers and children should not be viewing it. However, because they cannot filter or select videos according to their age, they will intentionally or unintentionally view content that is not appropriate for their age group.

Based on the above explanation, it can be concluded that the impact of the TikTok digital communication media application on teenagers in Surakarta City is specifically more negative than positive, as indicated by the results of the researcher's interviews with several teenagers residing in Surakarta City. most of them, who are teenagers and students, consider the TikTok application or digital social media to be a primary means of socialising, and sometimes this causes them to neglect their main duty as students, which is to use their study time to surf social media, especially the TikTok application.

#### **4.3. Public perception of the TikTok application among teenagers in Surakarta**

Digital social media has a tendency to be ready in the sense that it is known that digital social media must have information stability, where when users access a social media platform, it can provide

the information quickly and in a timely manner. Meanwhile, from the perspective of users, especially teenagers, the nature of digital social media is one of the important reasons they access social media, especially the TikTok application.

The TikTok social media platform has implemented the concept of interpersonal communication, where there is no direct contact between users and content providers, or it can be said to be one-way communication. Teenagers' perception of the TikTok application is that it provides up-to-date information that is important for teenagers in socialising with their environment. However, according to them as teenagers/users of the TikTok application, its features are still lacking compared to other social media applications in supporting the delivery of information intended for its users.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the description presented in the previous chapter, as well as the results of data analysis from primary and secondary informants, the conclusions of the study entitled Public Perceptions of the TikTok Application (A Qualitative Descriptive Study of the TikTok Application among Adolescents in Surakarta), it is known that the public perception of the existence of communication platforms provides convenience and has a positive impact on society, especially teenagers in Surakarta City. However, the emergence of the TikTok application certainly also has a negative impact on users, especially teenagers who require special attention in their use of social media. Furthermore, the TikTok application is the latest communication platform that provides its users with easy access to various things such as entertainment, information, and the latest news quickly and effectively through videos, which is a form of implementation of the one-way communication theory concept where users act as direct recipients of information from content providers without any direct contact.

Based on the results of the research and direct online observations conducted by the author, conclusions were drawn in the form of a brief summary of the overall discussion, followed by several suggestions. For teenagers who use the TikTok application, it is recommended that they maintain balance in using TikTok without neglecting their primary responsibilities, such as studying. Teenagers are also encouraged to use TikTok as a medium to further develop their skills and talents as a future generation that can support their aspirations. In addition, they should demonstrate positive abilities and creativity to counter negative stereotypes often associated with teenagers who use social media, particularly TikTok.

For future researchers focusing on teenage audiences, it is suggested that they develop a deeper and more thorough understanding of the research issues and focus in order to produce higher-quality scientific work. Researchers are also encouraged to apply media theory and mass communication concepts as analytical approaches when engaging with expert informants during the data collection process. Finally, future researchers should build confidence and be able to present and defend their findings through strong, scientific arguments.

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