



TikTok Appearance Standard Trends on College Students' Self-Image in the Digital Era: A Bibliometric Analysis

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| <p>Article History: Submitted/Received October 01, 2025 First Revised November 10, 2025 Accepted November 25, 2025 First Available online December 10, 2025 Publication Date December 15, 2025</p> <p>Keyword: Tiktok, Self-image, Student, Bibliometric analysis, Performance standards</p> | <p><i>The development of visual-based social media, particularly on the TikTok app, indicates that new appearance standards can influence the self-image of students in the digital age. TikTok is not only a source of entertainment but also a means of shaping self-perception through visual content, algorithms, recommendations, and repetitive aesthetic trends. This study aims to analyze the development of research on the impact of TikTok appearance standards on student self-image through a bibliometric analysis. The method used was descriptive bibliometrics, with four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. The search was conducted using the keywords appearance standards, body image, university student, and TikTok in the Scopus database. The results of the study show that publications relevant to this topic are concentrated in 2025, indicating an increase in academic attention to the impact of TikTok on students' self-image. Citation trends show a growing scientific contribution, although the number is still limited. Mapping the focus of research using VOSviewer shows that issues of body image, digital beauty standards, and psychological aspects such as anxiety and self-esteem are dominant themes. In addition, the novelty of this research is demonstrated by the shift in focus from social media in general to TikTok as an algorithm-based visual platform. This study confirms that TikTok plays a significant role in shaping students' appearance standards and self-image, thus requiring a more critical and wise approach to digital media literacy in the use of social media among students.</i></p> <p>© 2025</p> |

1. INTRODUCTION

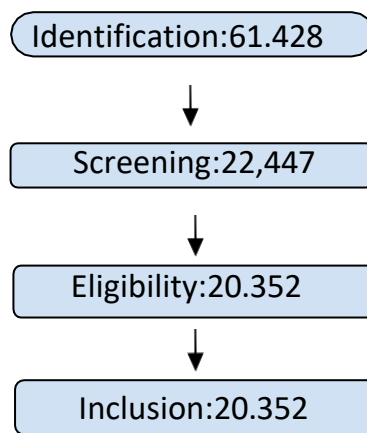
The development of digital technology has transformed the way people communicate and obtain information, particularly through the internet, which allows for the rapid dissemination of information without the constraints of space and time. This change has resulted in an information society that relies heavily on digital access in various aspects of life, particularly education and employment. Generation Z is the primary driver in shaping new information consumption patterns, using digital media for entertainment, social relationships, and daily information. They utilize social media to build relationships, develop self-image, express feelings, and seek entertainment (Suwana et al., 2020). Among the various digital platforms used, TikTok is now increasingly popular due to its short, fast, and creative content format, as well as its ease of consumption. Despite this, according to research data, the platform is still considered a rarely used platform. This shift in media choice is supported by TikTok's dynamic features, personalized algorithms, and ease of content production, making TikTok increasingly relevant as a source of entertainment and information.

However, the influence of emerging trends in appearance standards on students' self-image remains under-researched, particularly from a social and psychological perspective. TikTok is a combination of the popular musically.ly app in the United States in 2014 and Douyin from China, released by ByteDance in 2016. In 2018, TikTok was born due to the acquisition of musically.ly by ByteDance in 2017. TikTok's user base immediately soared and expanded its global reach. This marked the rapid spread of the app as a global platform with a broad user base. Various groups, from celebrities to ordinary users, actively create creative content in the form of short videos, dance challenges, viral trends, and educational content. Innovative features such as the For You Page and algorithm-based recommendation system have led to the emergence of a dynamic new digital culture. In Indonesia, TikTok began to become popular in 2018 and now has the second largest user base in the world after the United States.

This study aims to uncover the social development experienced by students using the TikTok app, particularly to understand how appearance standards on TikTok can impact their self-image and social interactions. This study can assist relevant institutions and students in exploring the positive and negative impacts of social media and provide a basis for healthy and wise social media use by students.

This article can serve as a resource for academics and other researchers to develop further studies on social media, user behavior, and its impact on self-identity.

2. METHODS



This study employed a descriptive bibliometric analysis method involving four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. In the identification stage, researchers conducted a search using keywords relevant to the research topic, including appearance standards, body image, university student, and TikTok, in available databases. This search process yielded 61,428 documents deemed potentially relevant to the research topic. The next stage was screening. In this stage, researchers screened all documents based on specific criteria, including the keyword appearing in the article title. Based on these criteria, 22,447 documents qualified for the next stage.

The next stage was eligibility, which assessed the suitability of documents based on the language of publication. In this stage, researchers only included publications in English, resulting in 20,352 documents deemed eligible. All documents that passed the eligibility stage were then included in the inclusion stage. Thus, a total of 20,352 documents were deemed to meet all criteria for further analysis in this study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section will discuss trends in the number of publications, citations, and research focus related to the influence of TikTok content on students' self-image. The publication findings show that all articles relevant to this research topic were published in 2025. Although the publication period spans only one year, this pattern suggests that the study of student self-image and the role of TikTok content began to receive more significant attention in the scientific literature during that year. The trend in publications reflects a renewed interest in the phenomenon of social media development and its implications for student psychology, particularly in the context of appearance standards and self-image formation in the digital age.

Furthermore, the trend in citations provides an indication of the extent to which these articles received recognition or were used as references by other researchers. Based on the

citation data in Table 1, articles published in 2025 received a total of 4 citations, with an h-index and g-index of 2 each. Although this number is not significant, this finding indicates that articles published in that year still contributed to the development of research related to self-image and social media. This increase in citations also indicates that research on the influence of TikTok content is beginning to be seen as relevant by the academic community, particularly in understanding how visual exposure and digital trends influence students' self-perceptions.

Finally, the research focus found in the 2025 publications illustrates that issues of self-image, appearance standards, and social pressures from digital media are emerging areas of study. All publications published that year focused on how visual content on TikTok shapes students' perceptions, self-confidence, and self-evaluations, both positively and negatively. Thus, although the number of publications is small, the research published in 2025 provides an important baseline and opens the door for further research on the relationship between social media and students' psychological health.

3.1 Publication Number Trends

After conducting a search through journals in Scopus using the keywords appearance standards, body image, university student, and TikTok which were accessed on December 4, 2025, 22,674 published documents were found, as can be seen in image 1.

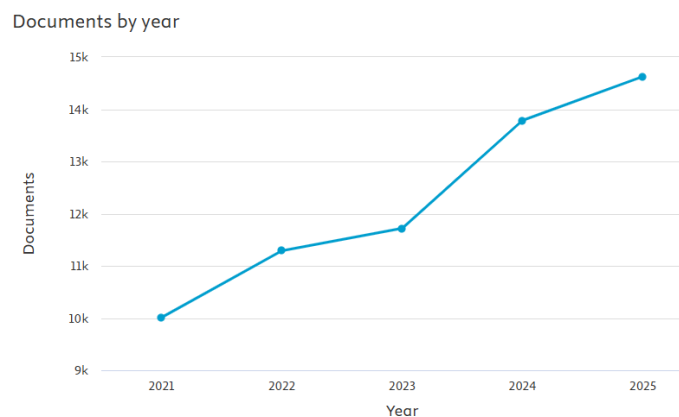


Figure 1. Publication Trends (2021-2025)

In addition to finding the number of articles, the authors also highlighted the development of writing related to the influence of TikTok content on students' self-image. The graph above shows an increase in the number of publications over the past five years. The period from 2021 to 2022 saw the largest increase compared to other years, at 31.9%, indicating that this topic is attracting research interest.

The trend in the number of citations related to research on the influence of TikTok content on students' self-image from 2025 is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Citation Trends Table

| Year | TP | TC | NCP | H | G |
|------|----|----|-----|---|---|
| 2025 | 10 | 4 | - | 2 | 2 |

TP: Total Publication; TC: Total Citation; NCP: Number Citation Paper; H: H-Index; G: G-Index

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that all citation indicators only appeared in 2025 because that year was the only period in which articles relevant to the research topic, namely the influence of TikTok content on students' self-image, were found. In 2025, there were 10 total publications (TP) recorded with a total of 4 citations (TC). Meanwhile, the h-index and g-index values were each at 2, indicating that although the number of publications was not large, these articles still made a significant academic contribution and were cited by several other researchers. This condition illustrates that the topic of students' self-image and the influence of TikTok began to receive clearer scientific attention in 2025, while also indicating that research on this issue was starting to develop and showed potential for continued research in the following years. Table 2 presents the top four studies based on the number of citations in 2025.

3.2 Publications with the Most Citations

Table 2. Most Citation Publication

| Author | Title | Journal Name | Citation |
|--|---|-----------------|----------|
| Mohammed N. Abdelaziz, Ahmed R. A. Moustafa, Hajer Azzam, Anwar M. Bshar, Ismail S. Ismail & Omnia Yousry Elhadidy | Association between beauty standards shaped by social media and body dysmorphia among Egyptian medical students | Nature Research | 3 |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| Zhangyu Yang, Hansen Li, Mingyue Yin, Mingyang Zhang, Zhaoqian Li, Li Huang, Xing Zhang & María del Mar Cepero González | The Impacts of Physical Activity on Domain- Specific Shirt Video Usage Behaviors Among University Students | BioMed Centr al Ltd. | 3 |
| H. Rosenberg, Y. Hollander, C. B. Gordon, R. Rotem, A. Horev | Evaluating The Quality of TikTok Videos o n Vitiligo: A Cross- Sectional Study | International Journal of Dermatology | 2 |
| A. Schmitt, M. Frenser, T. Fisher | Tendencies of Eating Disordered Behaviours in Male Content Creators: A Social Media Analysis | Journal of Eating Disorders | 1 |

One article highlighting the trend of collaboration in the context of social media and health was written by Rosenberg, Holland, Gordon, Rotem, and Horev (2025) in the International Journal of Dermatology, entitled "Evaluating the Quality of TikTok Videos on Vitiligo: A Cross-Sectional Study." This study has become widely cited because it examines collaboration between medical professionals, content creators, and digital platforms in disseminating health information. The results showed that TikTok videos created through collaboration between medical and non-medical professionals tended to have better information quality, higher engagement rates, and broader reach than content created individually. These findings confirm that collaboration is a crucial strategy in health education in the digital age, particularly in increasing public literacy through social media.

The second widely cited study in this review is the study by Zhangyu Yang, Hansen Li, Mingyue Yin, Mingyang Zhang, Zhaoqian Li, Li Huang, Xing Zhang, and María del Mar Cepero González, published by BioMed Central Ltd. entitled "The Impacts of Physical Activity on

Domain-Specific Short Video Usage Behaviors Among University Students." This study examines the relationship between students' physical activity and domain-specific short video usage behavior. The results show that the level of physical activity has a significant influence on short video media usage patterns, both in terms of usage duration, type of content consumed, and students' digital behavior tendencies. These findings confirm that physical activity not only impacts physical health but also influences digital media usage behavior among university students, making it important in the study of the interaction between a healthy lifestyle and digital culture.

3.3 Trends in International Research Collaboration

Image 2 illustrates international research collaboration on the influence of TikTok content on students' self-image. The image shows circles representing countries that have contributed scientific publications on the topic. The threshold used was a minimum of two papers, meaning only countries with at least two publications were included in the analysis.



Figure 2. International Relations

Figure 2 demonstrates inter-country collaboration, as evidenced by the links or relationships between the country circles in the image. These relationships reflect the research collaborations occurring between researchers from different countries in studying the influence of TikTok content on student self-image. Image 2 shows eight clusters distinguished by the color of the circles: red, orange, light blue, light purple, yellow, green, and dark purple. These regions or clusters indicate that there are groups of countries with a higher level of collaboration among themselves in the field of research on the influence of TikTok content on student self-image.

More detailed and clearer information regarding inter-country research collaboration in the context of the influence of TikTok content on student self-image can be seen in Image 3. This image provides more detailed and detailed mapping of inter-country relationships, levels of collaboration, and the clusters formed within these research collaborations. This information can provide a deeper understanding of the patterns of inter-country research collaboration on the influence of TikTok content on student self-image.

| Selected | Country | Documents | Citations | Total link strength |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | bangladesh | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | canada | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | greece | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | india | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | mexico | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | united kingdom | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | australia | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | china | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | ireland | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | israel | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | spain | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | united states | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | belgium | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | egypt | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | germany | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | slovakia | 1 | 0 | 0 |

Figure 3. Bibliographic Coupling of Countries

Based on the data in the bibliographic coupling table between countries, it is clear that several countries have diverse contributions to research collaboration. China has the highest number of documents and citations, with 2 publications and a total of 3 citations, along with a total link strength of 5, indicating a fairly strong level of research connectivity. Countries such as Bangladesh, Canada, Greece, India, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Australia, Ireland, Israel, Spain, the United States, Belgium, Egypt, Germany, and Slovakia each contributed 1 document. Although most of these countries have low citations, or some have no citations at all, the total link strength displayed confirms the existence of collaborative relationships between countries, especially those with a score of 5. This indicates that despite the low number of publications, international collaborative networks are still well-established and provide insight into the direction and interest of research in various countries.

3.5. Focus or Research Pattern

The focus of the research related to the influence of TikTok content on students' self-image can be seen in Image 4. The novelty of the research can be seen in Image 5. The image displayed uses the help of the Vosviewer application with a threshold of 2. This means that the displayed keyword has been used by at least 2 different documents.

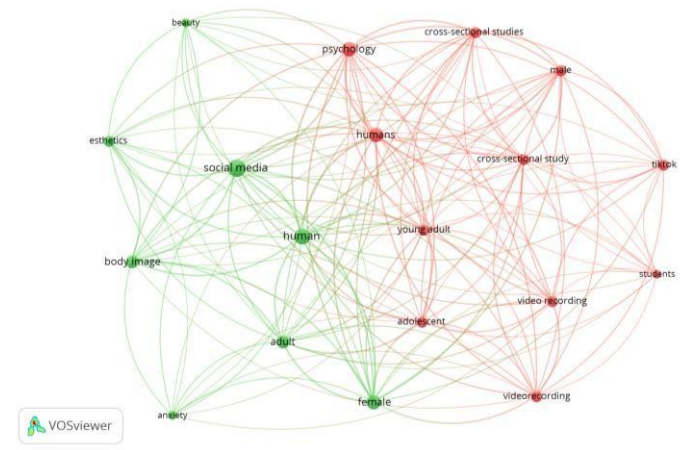


Figure 4. Research Focus or Pattern

Figure 4 demonstrates the interrelationship between various keywords in research on social media, particularly TikTok, and their relationship to psychological aspects and user demographic characteristics. This visualization shows two main clusters, indicated by different colors. The green area is dominated by concepts such as body image, social media, beauty, aesthetics, anxiety, female, and adult. This cluster of keywords demonstrates that numerous studies have identified social media as a significant factor shaping individuals' perceptions of their bodies, aesthetic standards, and beauty. The strong association between the term "body image" and the elements of anxiety and beauty emphasizes that aesthetic pressures and social comparisons occurring on digital platforms are important concerns in these studies, particularly among women who tend to be more sensitive to physical appearance issues.

Meanwhile, the red area demonstrates a different but interconnected research focus. Keywords such as TikTok, students, adolescent, young adult, male, cross-sectional study, video recording, and psychology demonstrate that research on TikTok has been extensively conducted among adolescents and young adults, as well as the student population who actively use the platform. The use of video-based content, a key characteristic of TikTok, has raised academic attention regarding how the format, style, and exposure of videos can influence users' psychological well-being. The dominance of the keyword "cross-sectional study" indicates that a quantitative research approach with a cross-sectional design is the most widely used method to analyze this phenomenon.

The interconnectedness between the two clusters is evident through terms such as psychology, human, female, and young adult, which establish a link between social media in general and the TikTok platform specifically. This interconnected pattern demonstrates that TikTok is viewed not only as a video-sharing platform but also as a digital environment with significant psychosocial impacts on its users. The link between TikTok and body image

Another novelty lies in the simultaneous integration of psychological, social, and technological aspects. This research does not merely address body image or mental health separately, but rather positions TikTok as a digital environment that actively shapes users' self-perceptions, behaviors, and emotional responses.

Thus, based on the VOSviewer map, this group's article offers novel contributions by:

1. Focusing on TikTok as the main object of study, not just as part of general social media.
2. Highlight the relationship between algorithms, visual content, and the formation of digital beauty standards.
3. Linking these impacts directly to the psychological conditions of adolescents and young adults.
4. These findings strengthen the research's position as a recent development in the study of social media, body image, and psychological well-being in the digital age.

3.6 Research Implications

Based on the results of bibliometric analysis, research focus mapping, and identification of novelties using VOSviewer, this study demonstrates that the study of the influence of TikTok content on college students' self-image has undergone a significant shift in focus. TikTok is no longer positioned simply as a part of general social media, but rather as an algorithm-based visual platform that plays an active role in shaping students' appearance standards, self-perception, and psychological well-being. These findings provide theoretical implications that studies of self-image in the digital era need to consider platform-specific characteristics, including algorithmic mechanisms and the dominance of visual content.

Further theoretical implications are evident in the strong connection between TikTok and psychological aspects such as anxiety, body dysmorphia, and self-esteem, as demonstrated in the research novelty mapping. This confirms that TikTok's influence on college students is not only social but also psychological. Therefore, further research is needed to integrate perspectives from psychology, digital communication, and technology in analyzing the impact of social media on the self-image and well-being of young users.

From a practical perspective, the results of this study have implications for higher education institutions and students in responding to the development of digital visual culture. The research findings can serve as a basis for universities to develop digital media literacy that focuses on understanding algorithms, critiquing digital beauty standards, and using social media in a healthy and responsible manner. For students, this study provides an understanding that the appearance standards developing on TikTok are digital constructs that need to be addressed critically to prevent negative impacts on self-image and psychological health.

Furthermore, the implications of this research are also relevant to the use of digital media as an educational tool, such as through tutorial content on YouTube and other video

platforms. The findings can serve as a reference in developing educational content that not only conveys information but also fosters critical awareness of the psychosocial impacts of visual media. Thus, these implications directly lead to the conclusion that research on TikTok and student self-image is an important, relevant, and sustainable study in addressing the dynamics of digital media in the modern era.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the study of TikTok's appearance standards and its impact on students' self-image is a relatively new area of research, but it is showing significant growth. Based on bibliometric analysis data, publications and citations published in 2025 reflect increasing academic attention to the role of visual-based social media in shaping students' self-perceptions and psychological well-being in the digital age. Research focus mapping results indicate that body image, TikTok, students, and psychology are dominant themes in existing studies. These findings confirm that TikTok functions not only as an entertainment medium but also as a digital social space that contributes to the formation of appearance standards and self-image in students, particularly among adolescents and young adults. The predominance of cross-sectional research designs in previous publications also indicates that studies on this topic still have room for development in terms of methodological approaches.

Analysis of international research collaborations shows that, although the number of publications remains limited, international collaborative networks have begun to form. This indicates the potential for strengthening cross-national and interdisciplinary research to broaden perspectives and improve the quality of studies on the influence of social media on students' self-image. Furthermore, the novelty of research identified through VOSviewer mapping indicates a shift in focus from general social media studies to TikTok as an algorithm-based visual platform. TikTok's association with psychological aspects such as anxiety, body dissatisfaction, and self-esteem underscores the importance of understanding the platform's characteristics and the mechanisms by which visual content shapes digital beauty standards.

Overall, this research confirms that examining the influence of TikTok content on students' self-image has strong academic and practical relevance. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for further research, the development of digital media literacy in higher education settings, and efforts to encourage more critical and responsible social media use among students.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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