

# Promoting Mental Wellbeing: Young Adults' Experience on TikTok during the COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown in Nigeria

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## Abstract

From the last quarter of 2019, the world witnessed the emergence of the COVID -19 virus that shook it to its knees, and Nigeria is not an exception. While countries were struggling with strategies on how to manage the virus, the lockdown option became paramount. During the period of the lockdown in Nigeria, most persons, especially young people, could not visit places of their choice. Hence, social media became their source of solace. This study examines the experiences of young adults in using TikTok to minimise the negative effect of isolation during the COVID-19 lockdown in Nigeria. The authors interviewed ten young persons between the ages of 19 to 31. A thematic analysis of the

interviews using Braun and Clark (2006) steps for conducting thematic analysis revealed four overarching themes that describe the participants' experiences on TikTok during the lockdown. Prominent among the themes, the study uncovered how TikTok short videos excelled in impacting the research participants therapeutically; easing boredom, and impacting positively on their mental health. The present study suggests that TikTok short videos could be a phenomenon that could be adopted by individuals or even health professionals, especially psychotherapists in managing or treating patients in similar situations like the COVID-19 compulsory lockdown.

**Keywords:** social media, TikTok, short videos, isolation, COVID -19.

## Promoção do bem-estar mental: experiência de jovens adultos no TikTok durante o confinamento pandémico do COVID-19 na Nigéria

### Resumo

A partir do último trimestre de 2019, o mundo testemunhou o surgimento do vírus COVID -19 que o atingiu brutalmente, e a Nigéria não foi uma exceção. Enquanto os países lutavam para encontrar estratégias para controlar o

vírus, a opção de confinamento tornou-se fundamental. Durante o período de confinamento na Nigéria, a maioria das pessoas, especialmente os jovens, não puderam visitar os lugares que quisessem. Consequentemente,

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te, os média sociais tornaram-se a sua fonte de consolo. Este estudo examina as experiências de jovens adultos na utilização do TikTok para minimizar o efeito negativo do isolamento durante o bloqueio COVID -19 na Nigéria. Foram entrevistados dez jovens com idades entre 19 e 31 anos. Uma análise temática das entrevistas usando as etapas de Braun e Clark (2006) para conduzir a análise temática revelou quatro temas abrangentes que descrevem as experiências dos participantes no TikTok durante o bloqueio. Proeminen-

te entre os temas, o estudo revelou como os vídeos curtos do TikTok se destacaram em impactar terapêuticamente os participantes da pesquisa, aliviar o tédio e impactar positivamente na sua saúde mental. O presente estudo sugere que os vídeos curtos do TikTok podem ser um fenómeno que pode ser adotado por indivíduos ou mesmo por profissionais de saúde, especialmente psicoterapeutas no manuseamento ou tratamento de pacientes em situações semelhantes, como o confinamento obrigatório do COVID -19.

**Palavras-chave:** média sociais, TikTok, vídeos curtos, isolamento, COVID -19.

### INTRODUCTION

The use of social media has had a considerable effect on our personal and professional lives. Today, social media is being appropriated and domesticated in different areas of human endeavours, influencing the way we communicate, stay connected, and transmit information (Udenze, 2021; Udenze & Ugoala, 2019). The unique characteristics of social media offer benefits to many youths compared to other communications media; their public nature, speed, and accessibility contribute to users' social development and knowledge (Wells & Mitchell, 2008). A recently introduced social media platform known as TikTok is currently popular among young people. TikTok is a mobile video creation and sharing application established in 2014 under a first name known as Musical.ly. The app has spawned into the most downloaded Apple iOS video app among adolescents between the ages 13 - 18, comprising half of the 500 million monthly users (Cheng & Dong, 2018).

Zhu et al. (2019), write that TikTok, a is micro-video sharing social media that permits users to create short videos that last for some seconds, and then share it with a wider TikTok community. Compared to other social media platforms, TikTok has more than 500 million active users, with more than 1 billion downloads (Wearesocial, 2019). TikTok affords a simple user interface for creating videos, with users being able to insert their preferred music choices and special effects into their recorded video (Yang et al., 2019). Currently, the app has seized the attention of young audi-

ences around the globe, especially at this moment of the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides, TikTok has surpassed Instagram as the third most downloaded social network in the world, only behind WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger (Mariele, 2019).

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study explores young adults use of TikTok and its impact in minimising the negative effect of isolation; loneliness during the COVID -19 pandemic lockdown. Specifically, the secondary objectives of this are:

- To ascertain to what extent the participants have rediscovered themselves during the lockdown.
- To determine whether the participants were able to manage their TikTok accounts amidst other social media accounts during the pandemic.
- To investigate whether the participants were able to expand their network of online/offline friends during the pandemic.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Examining Tiktok

TikTok is a short video creation and sharing app owned by a Chinese firm called ByteDance. The app is popularly known as Douyin in China it was launched in 2016. After its merger with musical.ly, a similar app, it re-debuted in 2018 (Klug, 2020). On TikTok, users can create, post and share 15 seconds to one-minute videos with the community. These short videos can be viewed by anyone with an account or access to the direct video link (Klug, 2020). In contrast to similar social media platforms like Vine, TikTok allows users to add attributes such as stickers, text, or visual effects to videos (Lu & Lu, 2019). Creating videos on TikTok is predominantly based on musical snippets, often popular songs, and users lip-syncing the lyrics and performing to the music (Anderson, 2020). Besides, when users add matching hashtags, users create collections of thousands of videos related to a song snippet or sound (Anderson, 2020).

TikTok videos often involve incorporating filters and other characteristics offered by the app. For instance, the speed manipulation attribute allows users to slow down

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the music track or speed up the video recording to better sync moves, gestures, and lip-syncing to the music and to precisely edit the video (Bresnick, 2019). Overall, the features of TikTok encourage users to create, remix and join so-called challenges by using hashtags that are associated with challenges (Bresnick, 2019). The app's unique feature, "duets", allows users to initiate a side-by-side split-screen video and react to it, almost in the form of call and response (Bresnick, 2019).

A widespread practice on TikTok is the creation of performances by users through contextual knowledge, transforming a line of lyrics into a new statement, meme, or viral phenomenon. This is usually done by adding text elements and emojis in the video or hashtags in the video caption to create the targeted context (Klug, 2020). Strapagiel (2019) states that TikTok popularised "Old Town Road" by Lil Nas X and has been noted as the first example of a viral TikTok meme becoming a chart-topping hit. Bresnick, (2019) and Anderson, (2020) suggest that the app could be described as an exploratory audiovisual avenue for users rather than a social media platform that engender connection.

As a core algorithm-driven app, this part helps the app to determine which videos the users see (Anderson, 2020). Unlike other apps, for instance, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and Tumblr that present feeds for scrolling, TikTok presents one video at a time, and the user must swipe up for the next video (Anderson, 2020). The app is downloadable in the Apple, Android and Amazon app stores. While there is a way to view videos and a button to upload a video, there is no search function, and many of the features appear to be limited (Anderson, 2020). It is possible to view and search on the app without having an account, but as with all social media apps, an account is required for full engagement. When creating an account, the potential user is asked to choose their interests from a list that includes animals, comedy, food, sports, beauty and style, art, gaming and science and education (Anderson, 2020). As of January 2020, the app had around 800 million users, with its most monthly downloads ever (113 million) in February 2020 most likely favoured by COVID-19 related social distancing and the compulsory social isolation (Klug, 2020). According to Xu et al. (2019), women are the largest users of TikTok, and most of its subscribers are young people.

### **Short Videos and Isolation**

The utilisation of social media in health is not new (Heldman et al., 2019; Deng et al., 2019); besides, social media has been widely adopted by patients, and healthcare

professionals, with a plethora of studies reporting its usefulness in patient empowerment, health promotion, patient- physician relationship building, and public health surveillance (Tengilimoglu et al., 2017; Richter et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2018). However, one of the crucial questions raised by scholars is whether young people's presence in the cyberspace help them have a sense of belonging and mitigates the loneliness that young adults often experience (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011; Przybylski et al., 2013; Dzogang et al., 2017).

Since its launch in 2018, fewer studies have been carried out on the social media platform, TikTok. While there are a few studies on TikTok, there are a few scholars who have examined why TikTok has become popular (Xu et al., 2019) and the impact of short video apps on social isolation (Baecker et al., 2014; Zamir et al., 2018). The impact of TikTok videos in mitigating the negative impact of isolation amidst the COVID -19 pandemic is, however, arguably under-researched. Studies have explored the motivation to engage and participate in user- generated-content on social media. Consequently, the Uses and Gratification theory (UGT) argues that every platform is unique and independent, thus, TikTok needs to be studied independently to fully understand its workings in this regard (Phua et al., 2017). Besides the apparent gap of literature on TikTok, it is evident that there are inadequate studies on the influence of short videos during the COVID -19 pandemic. Hence, these gaps present the opportunity for the researcher to investigate the platform.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The current study is driven by Katz and Blumler's (1973) Uses and Gratification Theory, which explains how and why people seek and consume a particular media to satisfy their needs. The theory is a reaction to the conventional mass media research emphasizing the sender and the message (Oliver & Nabi, n.d.).The UGT disagrees with other media effect theories such as the Magic Bullet Theory that questions what media do to people: the passive audience approach. Instead, the UGT focuses on the active approach; what people do with media? The audience has power over their media consumption and assumes an active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives (Peirce, 2007). Unlike other theoretical perspectives, the UGT holds that media content consumers are in charge of choosing media that meet their desires and needs to achieve gratification.

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In other words, this theory has a user/audience-centred approach. This explains why the participants of this study actively used TikTok for their needs and gratification during the lockdown period in Nigeria. Furthermore, the theory opines that media is a pervasive product, and the audiences are the consumers of the same product. With the advent of social media, this assertion is widespread, and media products could be found almost on every device, both mobile and immobile. Hence, because of social media's common availability, the study population used the platform during social isolation to mitigate boredom and made other striking discoveries about themselves. The Uses and Gratification theory is mostly dependent on *why* active audiences make certain decisions based on their expectations and desires. Besides, Perse (2014) argues that studies have revealed that audience gratifications can be derived from at least three different sources:

- Media content.
- Exposure to the media.
- The social context in which one is exposed to the media.

### METHOD/PROCEDURE

The current study adopted a qualitative perspective; precisely, thematic analysis was employed in analysing the interviews. Thematic analysis is an approach used for identifying codes, patterns or themes in a qualitative study. Qualitative methods are incredibly diverse, complex and nuanced (Holloway & Todres, 2003), and thematic analysis is a fundamental method for qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is not tied to a particular epistemological or theoretical orientation (Braun & Clarke, 2006); this reason makes the method very flexible and easily adaptable. The foregoing assertion is one of the reasons this study adopted thematic analysis as its method.

This study purposively adopted ten young adults that are using TikTok during the COVID -19 lockdown as its population. The reason for this population is because, reflexively, the main author, a young male adult, equally got immersed in TikTok during the pandemic; he has the knowledge and experience of using the app. Scholars (Peshkin, 1988; Eisner, 1999) have affirmed that it is critical to be aware of our subjective selves and the role that the reflexivity self plays in research because being aware is better than assuming we can be rid of our personal views. Being aware of

the subjective-self entails knowing the qualities that will enhance the current study as well as the belief the researcher has about using TikTok amidst the pandemic. The authors believe that these attributes and their firm understanding and knowledge of using TikTok put them in the right position to conduct the current study. In pointing out their reflexive self in this study, the authors intend to “see what counts,” as Eisner (1999) argues that the ability to see what counts is what differentiates a novice from an expert. The author carried out the study with an open mind rather than being confined to only seeing what they think should be in the study. By using the app during the pandemic, the researchers gained insights into the experiences of young adults use of TikTok rather than to allow their biases to interfere with what they see.

Due to the difficulty of meeting face-to-face amidst the COVID -19 pandemic, a majority of the interviewees opted for a technology-mediated interview, thereby, making the researcher adopt computer technology to conduct the interviews. The author employed the use of email, WhatsApp messenger, and telephone calls in carrying the interviews with the ten interviewees (5 males, 5 females) that are resident in five different states in Nigeria, Abuja, Anambra, Delta, Enugu, and Benue state. The ages of the interviewees range from 19 to 31. Adler and Adler (1998) argues that six to twelve interviewees are ideal when studying a population that is difficult to access. The present study adopted ten interviewees because the respondents were challenging to locate due to the lockdown, and the novelty of TikTok also made the research population scarce. However, the quality of the analysis and the dignity, and time invested in analysing interviews are fundamental rather than quantity (Baker & Edward, 2012), and qualitative research is built on a convincing analytical narrative that is based on richness, complexity and details rather than on statistical logics.

One major pitfall of technology-mediated interviews is the inability of the researchers to thoroughly study the body movements of the participants- the kinetics of interviews. However, the responses from, especially, the WhatsApp messenger interviews revealed how some of the interviewees used emojis to express their feelings. For ethical concerns, the study did not use the real names of the participants; instead, it used code names; for instance, “interviewee 1.”

For the purpose of clarity, the study followed Braun & Clarke (2006), steps for conducting a thematic analysis. Hence, the data for the study was analysed following the laid down steps:

**Familiarising with the data:** the researchers immersed themselves in the data by repeatedly reading the interviews in order to grasp a deeper sense of it. Besides,

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the data was collected through interactive means; the author began the analysis with some prior knowledge of the data and some inceptive initial analytic interests and insights. During this stage, the author took notes and made ideas for possible coding.

**Generate initial codes:** This stage was initiated after the researchers have read and got familiarised with the data, and have generated an opening list of ideas about what is interesting the data. The researchers started producing initial codes from the data at this phase. The researchers are concerned with addressing the research objective and analysed the data with this in mind. The researchers coded each segment of data that captured something interesting about the research objective. The interview text was coded gradually. Hence, doing a more inductive analysis, the study used line-by-line coding to code every single line. Open coding was employed; that means there were no pre-set codes; the codes were developed and modified through the coding process. The coding reduced the abundant interview transcript into a manageable piece. There are different ways to code, but the coding was done manually, using pens and different colour of highlighters to make through the transcript. It is pertinent to state that the coding process and procedure is an integral part of data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994), as researchers are organising data into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005). Nonetheless, the coded data is different from the units of analysis, that is, the themes which are (often) broader. The themes, which was developed in the next stage, are where the interpretative analysis of the data happens, and in relation to which arguments about the phenomenon being examined are made (Boyatzis, 1998).

Boyatzis (1998), states two approaches or levels to conducting thematic analysis- the semantic level and latent level. A thematic analysis usually focuses mainly on one level, and in some cases both. With a semantic perspective, the themes are identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data, and the researchers were not searching for anything beyond what a respondent said or what is written. While the latent approach goes beyond the explicit or semantic meaning to interpreting hidden insights in what a participant said or a text. For the present study, the authors focused explicitly on the semantic level in the analysis of the interview.

**Search for themes:** This stage re-focuses the analysis on a broader level of themes, rather than codes. It entails the sorting of the different codes into prospective themes and aggregating all the necessary coded data extracts within the identified themes. Precisely, the researchers analysed the codes, and considered how different codes combined to form an overarching theme. As Braun and Clarke (2006) argue, there are no laid down routes or rules about what makes a theme. A theme is essentially



characterised by its significance. For instance, we had several codes that are related to healing, therapeutic, and relieving effects of TikTok. These codes were merged into an original theme called “The Therapy of TikTok”. At the end of this phase, with a collection of themes, or sub-themes, and all excerpts of interviews that have been coded in relation to them becomes evident. At this point, we start to have a sense of the significance of individual themes in relation to the study. The themes for this study were predominately descriptive, i.e. they described patterns in the data relevant to the current study’s research objective.

**Review themes:** At stage four, the researchers refined, modify and developed the preliminary themes that were created in stage three. At this juncture, it was clear that some themes are not really fitted. For instance, separate themes were collapsed into one. In doing this, the researchers considered Patton’s (1990) dual criteria for judging categories, that is, internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. The authors were able to achieve a reasonable degree of coherence within themes, and each theme is distinct from the other. Also, the researchers garnered all the data that is relevant to each theme. To achieve this, the authors used the ‘cut and paste’ function in Microsoft Word.

**Name and define themes:** Haven got a satisfactory thematic map of the data, the authors defined and further refined the themes that were presented analysis, and these themes were analysed within the data set. By “defined” and “refined”, the authors identified the import of what each theme is about, and determined what aspect of the data each theme captures. The researchers tried to maintain simple themes. Getting a theme to say or do too much might cause it to be diverse or complex. The authors achieved this by going to and fro the collated data extracts for each theme and organising them into a distinct and coherent account with an accompanying narrative. Overall, the essence of naming and defining themes is to identify the essence of what each theme is about (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

**Writing the report:** As with the tradition with research, the end of every study produces some sort of report. In this study, the authors’ report of the analysis provides sufficient pieces of evidence of the themes within the data set. They chose vivid instances that capture the essence of the point they demonstrated, without unnecessary complexity. The analytic narrative went beyond the description of the data to arguments in relation to the research objectives.

## **RESULTS**

After the analysis of data, the study uncovered four overarching themes- “The Therapy of TikTok”, “Expanded Networks”, “Novel Discovery”, and “Epiphany-Striking Realisation”. This section of the paper discusses these themes in detail.

### **The Therapy of TikTok**

The most overarching pattern/theme found after the analysis of the interviews is the therapeutic impact of TikTok short videos. A predominant number of the interviewees pointed out that amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, TikTok became a healing and relieving partner. In the words of interviewee 5, ... *TikTok videos have really help me a lot during this coronavirus period, at least watching the videos make me relax and think less.....* Another interviewee; number 9, states that *I don't know what would have become of me if not for TikTok. When I make videos I am surprised by the numbers likes and comments I received, and these likes and comments go a long way in making me happy despite the depressing effect of the COVID -19 virus on me....* Again, interviewee

7 further pinpoints the therapeutic impact of TikTok videos, precisely, on mental health. *“Staying at home is a very difficult work, and mentally, I was not stable at all. I am always thinking about my studies, friends at school, and church. In fact it is crazy, but discovery TikTok was my saviour I must tell... the videos are so funny and creative, it helped me so much, and I must tell you, I got my senses back to a great deal.*

This particular finding is central to the main objective of this study. As mentioned earlier, a significant number of the interviewees pointed out the healing impact of TikTok videos. In another words, we could say that the interviewee found a virtual therapist that enabled them to manage the negative effect of isolation during the COVID -19 pandemic. Despite the argument of other studies (Tiggeman & Slater, 2013; Sampasa-Kanyinga & Lewis, 2015; Glazzard & Stones, 2019) that social media could impact negatively on the mental health of young people, this finding on the contrary found that in certain situations, especially, as we have seen in the current situation of COVID-19, social media, and precisely, TikTok could be a great therapist, helping young people to minimise the negative effect of isolation.

## Expanded Networks

Amid the isolation, the interviews attested that they expanded their networks. What this means is that the interviews disclosed that through the discovery of TikTok, a new network of social media, they were able to make more friends both online and offline. Interviewee 2 asserted thus: *...with the boredom of the isolation I was able to establish some level of friendship through TikTok, though I don't know most of them personally, we bonded during the COVID isolation period...* In similar term, interviewee 8 explained how he made both online and offline friend. *...discovery TikTok is a plus for me, and I found that some of my old secondary classmates were on it. ...to my surprise I stumbled on someone that looks like me, and the resemblance is so huge, and today we are good friends.* Interviewee 6 reiterated how she has made more friends online and purposely searched through TikTok to see if he can find the short videos of her offline friends. *... It has really added to the numbers of social media platform I am currently on, and the number of connections I have... I intentionally asked some of my friends if they are on TikTok, and if they say yes, I go and check out their videos to really see what they are posting.*

Some of the statements by the interviewees corroborated some of the arguments (Ellison et al., 2007; Brandtzaeg & Heim, 2009) that people use social network sites to search for new friends, and also consolidate on existing friendships. The use of TikTok short videos during the COVID-19 pandemic pushed the interviews to make new friends online, also search and consolidate their existing friendship.

## Novel Discovery

Amidst the COVID -19 lockdown, a significant number of the interviewees indicated that they discovered TikTok during the period just like Klug (2020), argued that the short video app became famous as a result of the COVID-19 related social distancing and the compulsory lockdown. Interviewee 10 said. *...saw a TikTok video for the first time on Twitter when Donjazzy was making some funny joke... and I decided to explore it myself, very hilarious thing...* In the words of interviewee 1, *“The corona thing made me know what TikTok is... I was just seeing videos, especially on Instagram, and the way the video are made are so exciting and creative.* Interviewee 5 further described how the app became his favourite when he explored it. *...this app is the bomb*

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*at the moment, though I have been on TikTok since late January but the lockdown period made my discovered more things about it.* At some point in the text of the analysis, other interviewees expressed their excitement at the discovery of TikTok. This excitement may be related to the negative effect of the lockdown, for instance, boredom.

Currently, the short video industry is booming, and TikTok plays a pivotal role in the Internet industry. The reason for the increasing popularity of TikTok is that it has a variety of personal marketing modalities, and its algorithm technology engenders its booming usage (Xu et al., 2019). Besides, the COVID -19 pandemic and its antecedents have further popularised the app, making it one of the most downloaded during the lockdown (Yanitsa, 2020; Most Popular Lockdown Apps, 2020).

### Epiphany- Striking Realization

Aside from other themes as discussed above, the analysis of data revealed that the participants of the study experienced moments of striking discoveries of their talents. During the period of the lockdown, it is safe to say that many of the participants may have experienced boredom. However, their experiences of idleness and boredom lead them to discover TikTok, and through the creation of 15 minutes TikTok videos, *epiphanic* episodes were unearthed. These words were the words of interviewee 3: ... *my videos have become very popular among my network and in fact these videos I made during this COVID period as made me to discover some hidden talent about me. I could be a comedian, you know!* In the same light, interviewee 10 revealed how the likes and comments he gets made him feel like a mini-celebrity. *The comments and likes are big, and they are very encouraging... I am a COVID -19 mini-celebrity now... maybe I will take this thing to another level, and finally make some money from these videos... I never believe I can have many followers on TikTok as I have at the moment, and the followership is equally adding up on my other social media handles like Instagram and Twitter... I see myself becoming an influencer if I keep up the numbers.* The preceding thought was the thought of interviewee 4, a female interviewee.

The above theme strengthens the argument (Akram & Kumar, 2017; Udenze & Oshionebo, 2020) about the positive effect of social media on society. Precisely, on the importance of short videos on social media, this finding aligns with Liu et al., (2019) argument on the importance of short social media videos, especially when they are packed with extensive entertainment features. This significant finding is due

to the participants utilisation of the artistic attributes of TikTok. As mentioned earlier, TikTok allows users to add attributes such as stickers, text, or visual effects to videos, and creating videos on TikTok is predominantly based on musical snippets, often popular songs, and users' lip- syncing the lyrics and performing to the music (Lu and Lu, 2019; Anderson, 2020).

## DISCUSSION

This study attempts to explore how young adults use TikTok in minimising the negative effect of isolation; loneliness during the COVID -19 pandemic lockdown in Nigeria. Consequently, the findings of this study are discussed, and new ideas on this subject are revealed.

The participants of the study reported some positive impact of subscribing to TikTok short videos during the period. A significant number of the interviewees aver that the time they spent on TikTok positively impacted on their mental health, and it also mitigated boredom, thereby reducing the negative effect of the compulsory isolation. As a participant rightly responded, "discovering TikTok was my saviour..." Despite being subscribed to other social media platforms, the present study found that the participants used TikTok to increase the volume of their online and offline networks- friends. There was a sudden of realisation of hidden talents by the interviewees as they used TikTok during the pandemic. A considerable number of interviewees in the present study reiterated how they could possibly create careers like stand-up comedians, brand influencers, and even become celebrities.

However, in spite of the findings by other scholars (Tiggeman & Slater, 2013; Sampasa- Kanyinga & Lewis, 2015; Glazzard & Stones, 2019) that social media could impact negatively on the mental health of young people, the findings of the current study are on the contrary. Instead, in a specific situation, especially, as we have seen in the current situation of COVID -19, social media, and precisely, TikTok is a healer, helping young people to curtail the negative impact of compulsory isolation. This finding strengthens the belief the social media can indeed be a source of managing our mental health. The COVID -19 lockdown came with many negative effects, and we can imagine the pressure that may be exacted on our mental health if we are to stay in compulsory isolation without any form of entertainment or cyber-interaction. The novel discovery and utilisation of TikTok short videos enabled the participants of the present study to man-

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age their mental health and further rediscover themselves. Due to the funny features of TikTok videos, as found by this study, the authors claims that TikTok short videos could be a phenomenon that could be adopted by health professionals, especially psychotherapists in managing or treating patients.

Further, another implication of the present study is, through the discovering and use of TikTok short videos during the lockdown, this study argues that social media may be an avenue that could assist young people in discovery and harnessing their hidden talents. Despite the findings (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014; Singh et al., 2017; Lad, 2017) that social media has impacted negatively on young people endeavours like academic, business, entertainment etc. Studies have shown that young people are the most users of social media sites, and from this finding, it is safe to argue that social media platforms are not necessarily bad, but the use to which individuals, particularly young people put it to makes it bad or good to the individual. While TikTok helped the participants of the present study to mitigate the negative effect of the lockdown during the COVID -19 pandemic, the same app also helped the participants to discover hidden, but marketable talents about themselves.

### **LIMITATIONS/DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES**

TikTok is a new phenomenon that has witnessed a booming rise among social media users, especially young people. This research is a step toward understanding the therapeutic impact of TikTok on young adults amidst the COVID -19 lockdown. Hence, this study contributes to the dearth of literature on TikTok studies, and the use of social media by young people in minimising the negative effect of isolation, especially on their health. Nonetheless, the author draws attention to some of the limitations of the study.

While qualitative research methods are flexible and are ideal for garnering an in-depth understanding of attitudes and experiences, future studies may employ a quantitative approach. One advantage of quantitative methods is its utilisation of a large sample size. Besides, future studies could use mixed methods or what other scholars call triangulation. Despite the arguments that young people often use social media, and TikTok is not an exception, as we have seen in the body of this paper, and even as the present study has explored, further studies should investigate the utilisation of the app by older people. Future studies could equally explore age differences in

the usage of the app. The utilisation of social media in the health and related sectors cannot be underestimated, and as a funny and creative short video app, future studies could seek to ascertain how health professionals may be using the app to further health issues.

## CONCLUSION

Although social media has challenged human endeavours, forcing us to incorporate them into our daily lives, but the outbreak of the COVID -19 pandemic has made the world to further appreciate the existence of Web 2.0. We are aware of how institutions and organisations reverted to purely online administration, and the present study which sought to investigate how the short video app, TikTok helped young adults to manage the negative effect of the COVID -19 lockdown found some positive impact of the app on their health during the lockdown. Importantly, the results of the present study, which is a considerable contribution to knowledge in the limited literature on TikTok studies is that the short video app helped the interviewees to manage the devastating impact of the lockdown by improving their mental health and further helped rediscovered themselves. However, future investigations are necessary to validate the conclusions that are drawn from this study, and the data of this study suggest that we still have a huge vacuum to cover as it pertains to TikTok and health-related studies.

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