

Nexus between TikTok and Gender Stereotypes: A Qualitative Content Analysis

Abstract

This research examines Pakistani-produced materials on TikTok's reinforcement of gendered norms through performative and visual techniques. The aim was to investigate how gender roles are created and normalized on the virtual content space of TikTok. The main research question of this study was how TikTok content shapes the construction and enforcement of gender stereotypes in Pakistan. The research employed a qualitative design, with purposive sampling used to identify 10 TikTok creators with high online visibility and gendered themes in their videos. A representative video from each creator was chosen and analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis. The constructionist approach permitted both surface and latent meaning. Outcomes were that stereotypical narratives were algorithmically privileged, resistant narratives not. The research concludes that hegemonic gender roles are reproduced on TikTok in Pakistan under the entertainment cover.

Keywords: *TikTok, Gender Stereotypes, Qualitative Content Analysis, Digital Performances, Masculinity and Femininity, Thematic Analysis*

INTRODUCTION

With more than 1 billion users globally, TikTok has become a significant platform and a global sensation that influences cultural values, particularly among young people who have incorporated social media into their everyday lives. Yet studies are increasingly demonstrating that, far from being an equal playing field for self-expression, TikTok tends to promote conventional gender roles in both content production and algorithmic prominence. Nouri et al. (2024) conducted a computational content analysis of TikTok and found that gendered stereotypes are embedded in popular content, in which women are stereotyped into beauty, emotional, or domesticity-defined roles, relative to men, who are increasingly associated with humor, assertiveness, and muscularity. The researchers further explain how these are not simply markers of offline gender norms but are constructed and disseminated by TikTok's recommendation algorithm, which privileges deeply engaging but all too frequently stereotypical performances (Nouri et al., 2024; Koivula et al., 2024).

Maryam Jahangir

Graduate of Department of Gender Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore
E-mail: jahangirmaryam3@gmail.com

Ms. Saba Lodhi

Lecturer, Department of Gender Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore
E-mail: saba.dgs@pu.edu.pk

In addition, the reproduction of gender norms on TikTok is intricately linked to other media constructions and user engagement. Guzman (2022) observes that while the platform offers maximal visibility to marginalized voices, it secretly compensates for conformity to hegemonic gender norms through viral trends and influencer culture. The algorithmic logic of the platform would be biased towards promoting content that follows the dominant gender scripts, relegating counter-stereotypical narratives to the background.

The algorithm that helps creators find their online audience and build community also plays a significant role in reinforcing gender stereotypes and norms (Matlach et al., 2025). Such dynamics indicate that TikTok is both a gendered performance site and a stereotype repetition site. Therefore, it is imperative to examine how such representations are enacted in local milieus like Pakistan.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the acceleration of online environments and the widespread availability of information, significant inequalities persist in how various social groups move and communicate online. Specifically, the reinforcement of social media messages as validating exaggerated stereotypes regarding gender has prompted an inquiry into whether online environments reinforce or subvert established norms. Though platforms such as TikTok provide voice and freedom of expression to marginalized users, they can also be used as forums upon which traditional gender roles are taken over in the name of entertainment. This paradox is even more egregious in societies like Pakistan, where sociocultural culture itself is gender restricted. Existing research has shown the influence of media on shaping perception, but there is little empirical work examining how these processes occur in newer algorithmic forms like TikTok. The absence of local studies on gender representation and the perpetuation of stereotypes within new media creates a knowledge gap in understanding the socio-cultural influence of viral media. This study thus aims to examine the extent to which TikTok content in Pakistan reinforces or challenges gender stereotypes, and how it affects social development and gender equality in the digital world.

Objective of the study

The robust objective of the study was:

To find out the representation of gender roles in popular Pakistani TikTok videos.

Significance of the study

In an era where the public perception is created through digital platforms, it is necessary to dive deep into the influence created by the most popular and widely used digital platform, a global sensation, TikTok. While previous studies have examined the impact of TikTok across different dimensions in Western societies, there remains a lack of such research in South Asian countries, especially Pakistan. With a focus on how the creators are reinforcing gender stereotypes, this study will fill the gap and create the basis for content moderation in Pakistan.

This research will demand readers' attention to increase the visibility of counter-narrative content creators by distributing their content through educational and promotional campaigns. The research calls for transparency and changes to TikTok's algorithmic curation to provide

adequate visibility to diverse, non-stereotypical content. The research also sheds light on the importance of educating Pakistani TikTok influencers in gender representation, stereotype awareness, and inclusive content creation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The world was never the same after the 1980s, when the internet was introduced. Now, at least 3.5 billion people are online out of the total 7.7 billion (the number has now risen to over 8.22 billion), meaning the social media platforms are used by every one in three persons, the number being too large to just ignore the fact that social media is not influencing and affecting our lives as well as the society around us. Among all social media platforms, TikTok is the most talked about, with its distinctive format of short, engaging videos (Rejeb et al., 2024).

Dean (2025) reports that TikTok's growth is unique among platforms, as it took just 3 or 4 years to achieve the growth that Instagram and Facebook struggled to achieve for nearly a decade. The app reached the global peak during COVID-19 when social distancing measures were in place (Feldkamp, 2021). TikTok has received 2.18 billion monthly visits as of March 2025, with 700 million unique visits per month. If we look at the age of TikTok users, 55% are under 30, while the largest group, 37%, is aged 18 to 24. Duarte (2025) also categorized users by age and sex, and the most considerable portion of users was male, aged 24 to 35 (19.1%). Instagram has more users than TikTok, but the average time spent on both apps is approximately the same, indicating TikTok is more "sticky" and has a large number of regular users (Moulton, 2025).

TikTok has grown to play a central role in shaping social discourse online across different societal domains. Scholars emphasize it as a vital space for studying social movements, given its ability to give voice to people, especially youth, in unique and creative ways (Ionescu & Licu, 2023). TikTok shapes broader social narratives by enabling users to bond with like-minded people through shared symbols and cultural markers, fostering intentional collective identification (Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2019). While marginalized communities use creative, unique content on TikTok to resist dominant norms, they often face limited reach due to reduced algorithmic visibility or content moderation (Ungless et al., 2024; Matlach et al., 2025). Gender stereotypes can be defined as the differences associated with both male and female due to their gender, which can and cannot be true, mainly originating from humans' evolved physical sex differences, like women's reproductive ability and men's physical strength (Ellemers, 2018).

"Women are from Venus, men are from Mars" is a phrase often used to suggest that women and men differ so much that it would not be wrong to say they are from two different planets, separated by millions of miles (Ellemers, 2017). Some scholars argue that there has been no change in gender stereotypes, as its support rests on solid theoretical foundations and on its inherent nature as a social interpretation (Priyashantha et al., 2021).

Even in the late 20th century, when the feminist movement gained momentum, especially during the second wave of feminism, the mainstream discourse consistently resisted any systematic change; instead, it rebranded gender stereotypes under the guise of empowerment

(Gill, 2007). With the advancement of digital media, these stereotypes have not disappeared; instead, they now take a different form in algorithmic amplification and influencer culture (Fraser, 2022). In the media, men and women have been stereotypically portrayed in rigid roles, often binary, men as strong, independent, and protectors, while women are portrayed as fragile, dependent, and caregivers (Wen et al., 2024). On digital platforms like TikTok and Instagram, the influencer culture acts as a catalyst as well as a mirror for these dynamics: influencers create such content that is traditionally appropriate, meaning which resonates with audience expectations, and algorithmic boosts, very carefully shaping norms through repetition and visibility (Gill, 2017; Dwivedi et al., 2023; Nouri et al., 2024). Content analysis of TikTok reveals how deeply embedded gender norms are reproduced, negotiated, and sometimes challenged within its fast-paced digital ecosystem. Gender performativity also draws on visual cues, voiceovers, and viral trends, where users curate their identities strategically to align with what the algorithm amplifies.

Through these patterns, not only is the persistence of binary gender roles evident, but also the commercialization of gender expression through brand partnerships and influencer content (Wen et al., 2024). Traditional gender scripts, in which women are associated with emotional expression, consumption, and beauty, and men with projecting dominance, humor, or independence, are often perpetuated by influencers' content, thereby shaping followers' perceptions of what is socially aspirational or acceptable (Rowley et al., 2023). Boeker and Urman (2022) use the term "eco chambers" to describe how users are shown content based on their watch time, likes, and follows, significantly influencing content recommendations and exposing users to more stereotypical content.

Caballero & Gravagna (2023) further explain how to fit gendered marketing strategies. Influencers often strategically adapt their content to fit gendered marketing strategies, strengthening consumerist ideals tied to masculinity and femininity. In Pakistan, TikTok also plays a role in reinforcing gender stereotypes through algorithmic curation and platform affordance, and contesting through hashtag activism and stereotypical movements. It is found through counter-analyses that the types of content created on this platform are distributed in a binary manner by both genders; female creators adapt global beauty trends, fashion, and domestic-life snippets within conservative frameworks. In contrast, male creators focus on humor, fitness, or assertive personas, leading algorithms to amplify binary gender performances and marginalize non-conforming expressions (Xue et al., 2021; Afsheen & Ahmed, 2021; Nouri et al., 2024).

Through short videos, broader hashtag activism in Pakistan, such as #MeToo and #MeraJismMeriMarzi, extends to TikTok, blending humor, personal testimony, and symbolic imagery to mobilize awareness and solidarity despite critiques of "slacktivism" (Zia & Syedah, 2021). The majority of the existing literature often overlooks fluid, intersectional, or locally situated gender performances by focusing solely on Western-centric frameworks and static binaries (Abidin, 2021). Thus, the research question to focus on in this study was: how does TikTok content influence the construction and reinforcement of gender stereotypes in Pakistan?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

While working within the interpretivist paradigm, which emphasizes that reality is subjective, context-dependent, and socially constructed, this research used a qualitative design employing qualitative content analysis to explore in depth how the selected content creators construct and reinforce gender stereotypes through their content (Krippendorff, 2018).

Population of the study

In a qualitative study, the term population refers to all the groups of cases and individuals to whom the study findings can be related (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this research, the population consists of Pakistani content creators on TikTok whose content is quite famous among the common people, and their content implicitly or explicitly constructs or reinforces gender stereotypes.

Sampling design

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select content creators directly. A total of 10 content creators were selected, with a gender-balanced sample of five male and five female content creators (Palinkas et al., 2015). Factors such as content relevance, follower base, and thematic richness were also considered when selecting the sample.

Inclusion Criteria

The researcher searched for popular TikTok accounts relevant to the study; a minimum of 50k followers was set as the inclusion criterion, and public accounts were selected. Then the researcher studied each account and selected 1 video from each account that was recently uploaded and relevant to the study's objectives.

Data Collection Method

Following Kozinets' (2020) recommendations for conducting qualitative research in digital and social media contexts, all selected TikTok videos were systematically saved within the application and reviewed multiple times to ensure their relevance, consistency, and analytical suitability for the study. Then, using a gender lens, each video was studied to examine how it constructed or reinforced gender stereotypes through verbal and visual cues.

Analytical Procedure

The study used thematic analysis, a foundational method in qualitative research to identify, analyze, and report patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach enabled the researcher to organize and interpret the data in a manner that reveals both surface-level meanings and deeper, latent structures of significance. The researchers used an inductive approach, allowing themes to emerge from the collected data rather than imposing pre-existing theoretical frameworks (Thomas, 2006). This ensured that the analysis remained grounded in the participants' expressions and the contextual meanings of their content. Both the explicit content and its underlying messages were studied using the constructionist approach. The findings were situated within a broader cultural context and gender norms.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was ensured in the research process to meet academic and professional standards for the study. The research was based on publicly available TikTok videos, so there was no interaction with participants, and thus informed consent from content creators was not required (Beninger, 2017). However, respect for privacy and anonymity was ensured by concealing usernames, personal details, or any identifiable information of TikTok users featured in the video. The real names have been replaced with neutral identifiers (e.g., Creator M1, Creator F2, etc.). Confidentiality, respect for the subjects, and responsible use of digital data governed the study. It included publicly available content, and care was taken to ensure that the analysis would not be used in a manner that would hurt, ridicule, or otherwise misrepresent any individual or group, unless otherwise intended. Additionally, the researcher maintained academic honesty and transparency throughout the process, accurately representing all sources of information and avoiding plagiarism. All secondary materials were cited correctly in accordance with the APA 7th edition referencing style.

Limitations

Although the study presents notable findings on the reinforcement of gender stereotypes on TikTok in Pakistan, it has limitations. Due to a time constraint, a longitudinal study was not possible, which would have yielded better results given the changing trends on TikTok. The study was restricted to TikTok, with no other social media platforms that construct gender narratives. While efforts were made to ensure objectivity, the coding process in thematic analysis inherently involves some degree of researcher interpretation.

Delimitations

The research only sampled content creators and excluded audience voices, which would have helped achieve a better understanding of the construction or interpretation of such content. The anonymity of TikTok's algorithm posed a barrier to measuring how platform dynamics influence content visibility and engagement. The study was restricted to TikTok, with no other social media platforms that construct gender narratives.

Data Analysis

The first stage of thematic analysis was to immerse intensely and repeatedly in the dataset. As per Braun and Clarke (2006), the first step was to develop an integrated understanding of the content, tone, and underlying messages in the selected TikTok videos. Familiarization commenced by watching each video several times in its natural TikTok setting. Visual cues (i.e., appearance, wardrobe, filters) were noted, as were verbal and textual content (speech, subtitles, hashtags), soundtracks, and background noise. Having been familiarized with the dataset, the next step was to create initial codes for all the videos. Coding was completed manually to remain close to the data and to permit inductive insights to emerge organically. The codes generated in the second phase are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The initial coding of the content

Video No.	Creator & Video Description	Gender	Initial Codes Identified
1	Creator F1 – 'Get You a Girl Who Can Do Both' (soft to desi look transformation)	Female	Hyper-feminization, aesthetic duality, male-gaze framing, algorithmic visibility
2	Creator F2 – 'Wife forgets to make breakfast.'	Female	Domesticity as female duty, emotional labor expectation, good wife trope, gendered responsibility
3	Creator F3 – 'Cringy girlfriend skit.'	Female	Attention-seeking female stereotype, emotional dependency, infantilization, performative cuteness
4	Creator F4 – 'udh di phiran lip-syncing.'	Female	Romanticized vulnerability, visual spectacle, male-centric emotional framing, sexualized femininity
5	Creator F5 – 'Laal Pari transformation.'	Female	Hyper-feminization, beauty as value, sexualized choreography, beauty filters and desirability
6	Creator M1 – 'Bachi check kar.'	Male	Objectification of women, normalized male bonding over female bodies, gaze-driven humor
7	Creator M2 – 'lip-syncing car video.'	Male	Wealth = masculinity, male entitlement, women as prizes, performative coolness
8	Creator M3 – 'Phupho on Eid'	Male	Jealous woman trope, female conflict, toxic in-laws stereotype, generational female pettiness
9	Creator M4 – 'post-marriage tone shift.'	Male	Ideal vs. real woman binary, emotional volatility stereotype, performative pre-marriage femininity
10	Creator M5 – 'Ghost girl joke.'	Male	Sexualization of women, even in absurd contexts, emotional shallowness in masculinity, and the trivialization of fear

In the third step, the initial codes from the ten selected TikTok videos were examined, aggregated, and grouped into broader candidate themes. Through the process, the dataset's trends were determined, whereby various codes logically fit into the categories' conceptual or contextual importance. Once the themes were determined, the fourth stage was a stage of close reading, interpretation, and testing of these themes against coded data and the dataset as a whole. These themes can be shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Finalized themes with associated Coding

Finalized Theme	Representative Codes
Performative Femininity and Beauty Standards	Hyper-feminization, Beauty filters, Visual desirability, Aesthetic transformation
Romantic Emotional Labor and Gendered Sentimentality	Soft-spoken pre-marriage ideal, Emotional dependency, Romantic longing, Emotional expressiveness
Masculine Entitlement and Objectification	Male gaze, Objectifying humor, Sexualization, Male bonding over female bodies
Domesticity as Female Obligation	Good wife trope, Household labor, Emotional burden, Conflict with in-laws
Transformation Tropes and Ideal-Real Binary	Pre-marriage vs post-marriage behavior, Emotional volatility, Behavioral shift trope, Soft to loud contrast

In the next phase, all the themes from Phase 4 were described in full detail and assigned a brief, conceptually centered label that captured their meaning. It meant moving away from description to determine the edges, scope, and significance of each theme. In Braun and Clarke (2006), theme definitions were restricted to encompass both semantic content (what is literally represented) and latent meaning (what ideologies or cultural messages lie behind the scenes).

Performative Femininity and Beauty Standards

Women are portrayed as valuable when they conform to idealized beauty norms through glamor, filters, and styling.

Romantic Emotional Labor and Gendered Sentimentality

Women are depicted as emotionally dependent and defined by their attachment to romantic relationships.

Masculine Entitlement and Objectification

Men are shown objectifying women casually, reinforcing entitlement, and normalizing sexist humor.

Domesticity as Female Obligation

Women are framed as naturally responsible for household duties and emotional caregiving.

Transformation Tropes and the Ideal-Real Binary

Women are idealized before marriage and mocked for assertiveness after, reinforcing a binary between the “ideal” and “real” woman.

This final step of thematic analysis aggregates the five themes uncovered after conducting an inductive content analysis of 10 carefully selected TikTok videos by Pakistani male and female creators.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Performative Femininity and Beauty Standards

Female TikTok users, Creators F1 and F5, are excellent examples of how women's online worth is tied to visual attractiveness and adherence to conventional standards of beauty through transformation and makeover videos.

Creator F1's "get you a girl who can do both" brings together a bare-faced, do-it-yourself look with a heavily styled, orthodox shalwar kameez and makeup, employing music drops, beauty filters, and text overlays to create femininity as a performance display for the audience's gaze.

Creator F5's work is all about quick reversals of beauty and dance numbers, usually to "item songs." In one, she migrates from pajama-like looks to a tightly fitted garment, with sensual, choreographed dance steps that accentuate body lines and a sexed-up performance, as characteristic signs of desirable womanhood.

These videos make-up, styling, and sexed-up self-presentation common as a demand for desirability in keeping with Gill's (2007) criticism of post-feminism, where "empowerment" is commodified in reduced ideals of beauty and women's self-esteem becomes reliant on appearance, fueled by TikTok's algorithmic pushes of subtle, high-engagement-appearing imagery.

Theme 2: Romantic Emotional Labor and Gendered Sentimentality

Women influencers, Creator F3 and Creator F4, will likely produce content reinforcing gendered emotion stereotypes.

Creator F3 employs excessive "girly" acting—shrill tones, hammy movements, and man-spasms—in order to depict women as emotionally fragile and in need of male validation. In her 17 June 2025 skit, a woman over-the-top whines to get a man's attention before ultimately reinforcing the stereotype that women's emotions are for male validation.

Creator F4 is all glamorous imagery and romantic lyrics, like a 15-second drama reenacting desire in an electric-blue outfit. As dialogue-free as narrative-free, the video places femininity in the place of adornment and constitutes it by romantic desire.

Both conform to Ellemers' (2018) gendered emotionality thesis, positioning women in sentimental and relational positions while standardizing male emotional detachment.

Theme 3: Masculine Entitlement and Objectification

The three male TikTok influencers @ahsanshafqat, @hussaintareen, and @alihassanmehdi use humor to solidify patriarchal norms and objectify women.

Creator M1's clip catches a group of men at a wedding playfully "scouting out" a woman, ending respect and consent for blind public objectification in the name of innocuous laughter.

Creator M2's posts project masculine privilege, imagining himself in lavish surroundings as a desirable, powerful man who asserts female attention as a trophy that confirms his worth.

Creator M5's skit humorously shifts from fear to excitement when a ghost is revealed to be a girl, sexualizing the scenario and reducing women to sources of male pleasure.

Collectively, these examples illustrate how TikTok humor masks and perpetuates male dominance, entitlement, and gendered objectification within Pakistani society. TikTok creators Creator F2 and Creator M3 use humor to reinforce traditional gender roles and stereotypes about women in family settings.

Theme 4: Domesticity as Female Obligation

Creator F2's sketch (directed by the creator's wife) depicts an irate wife because her husband left for work without having had his breakfast, compensating for it later by serving him a special dinner. The sketch affirms the idea that the primary role of a wife is to anticipate and provide her husband's requirements.

Creator M3's skit is one in which he plays a nosy "phupho" (maternal aunt) busybody who causes disturbances in domestic peace during Eid, portraying elder or spinster women relatives as catty, nosy, and confrontational by nature.

Both videos illustrate social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012), portraying women as the natural nurturers, managers of emotions, and initiators of domestic conflict—thus illustrating strait-laced, patriarchal ideals of womanhood.

Theme 5: Transformation Tropes and the Ideal-Real Binary

Creator M4's "pre- vs post-marriage tone shift" skit humorously contrasts a fiancée's soft, polite demeanor before marrying with her loud, angry tone afterward. While framed as light comedy, it reinforces stereotypes that ideal women are gentle and compliant pre-marriage, and that assertive or emotional behavior post-marriage is undesirable. By projecting this trend out of context, the video documents patriarchal unease with women's independence and emotionalization, extending wider internet patterns (Fraser, 2022; Nouri et al., 2024) that normalize and solidify restrictive behavior codes for women.

The results of the research reveal categorization according to thematic analysis and the gender of content generators, i.e., Female TikTokers focused on bodily beauty, emotional portrayal, and domestic duty; usually showcased through "hyper-feminine" filters, makeup overhauls, and performative fashion sense. Moreover, videos stressed more negative romantic longing and emotional dependency norms, as well as household domesticity, which were either idealized or framed as women's inherent duty.

In comparison to female TikTokers, male TikTokers represented men's entitlement to objectify women humorously or aggressively. Furthermore, male TikTokers stressed masculinity by displaying affluence, dominance in romance, or patronizing female behaviors. They employed satire or performance (i.e., cross-dressing) to reinforce negative female

stereotypes (i.e., nosiness, aggressiveness). Among the common themes was using patterns of change (narrowly defined as in pre- and post-wedding conduct), which kept projecting women as being unreliable or unstable.

The study examined how Pakistani content creators play a role in the construction and reinforcement of gender stereotypes through their content. Throughout the research, gendered performance was observed in the selected content: female creators foregrounded emotionality, beauty, and domestic themes, while male creators depicted themselves as dominant, assertive, and humorously authoritative. These patterns not only show individual creativity or uniqueness but also reflect the broader, entrenched societal norms.

The findings are in line with the general literature and theoretical paradigms used in the study, as the feminist theory (Gill, 2007) states that TikTok beauty and empowerment model affirms that even so-called "liberated" femininity is structured through patriarchal discourses. The Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012) states that the recurring gendered assignment of emotional and household labor to women and coercive and objectifying work to men testifies to the continued significance of gendered division of labor, now extended to virtual environments like TikTok.

These results are consistent with previous research (e.g., Boeker & Urman, 2022; Rowley et al., 2023) that demonstrates influencer culture and platform affordances work to reinforce and echo society-level norms. Although earlier studies identify niches of resistance (e.g., hashtag activism), they are small in scale and scope compared to mainstream narratives. A few creators were observed challenging these gender norms and stereotypes through humorous and ironic performances, but these remained limited in scope and had only symbolic value. So, challenging existing patterns exists at the margins, but dominant norms remain unchanged.

While interpreting the results, one thing has become crystal clear: TikTok does not serve solely as a creative medium; its sole purpose is not entertainment, but also acts as a cultural mirror that normalizes gender dichotomies through repetition and visibility. This repetition of gendered imagery, whether through humor, language, costume, or body language, contributes to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes, which does not seem as controversial or harmful, but in ways that seem familiar, entertaining, and socially acceptable.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Content Moderation Guidelines

Collaborate with policymakers and content platforms to implement ethical content moderation that recognizes and restricts gender-stereotypical or damaging depictions.

Promotion of Counter-Narratives

Increase the visibility of counter-narrative content creators by distributing their content through educational and promotional campaigns.

Influencer Workshops

Educate Pakistani TikTok influencers on gender representation, awareness of stereotypes, and inclusive content creation.

CONCLUSION

Much of Pakistani TikTok content actively works in favor of hegemonic gender norms by making highly performative and visual use of language. Women content creators are appreciated and brought to visibility when they adhere to idealized representations of beauty, emotional expressiveness, and the romanticization of home and family—indicating that their online worth is contingent on traditional femininity. Conversely, male creators become popular through the performance of comedy, violence, displays of excess, and the feminization of objects, validating a hypermasculine subjectivity based on privilege and power. Most successful TikTok stereotypes, especially transformation videos and the "ideal vs. real woman" trope, continue to promote binary gender stereotypes and imply greater cultural unease with women's autonomy and aggressiveness. Although specific creators try to resist such norms through counter-narratives and resistance content, its visibility is regularly stifled by algorithmic favoring of conventional, high-engagement representations. In the end, gender performance and construction on TikTok are anything but random; they are strongly determined by platform algorithms, audience expectations, and broad sociocultural sentiment in Pakistan, a testament to the platform's strength as both a site of reproduction and a potential subverter of gender norms.

REFERENCES:

- Abidin, C. (2021). Mapping Internet Celebrity on TikTok: Exploring Attention Economies and Visibility Labours. *Cultural Science Journal*, 13(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.5334/csci.155>
- Afsheen, S., & Ahmed, S. (2021). Role of TikTok in social acceptability and improved socio-economic status (SES) of transgender and transsexual in Pakistan. *Journal of Media Studies*, 36(1), 151–163. <http://journals.pu.edu.pk/journals/index.php/jms/index>
- Beninger, K. (2017). Social media research ethics: Traditional and emerging issues. In Sloan, L., & Quan-Haase, A. (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods* (pp. 57–73). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473983847.n5>
- Boeker, M., & Urman, A. (2022). An Empirical Investigation of Personalization Factors on TikTok. *Proceedings of the ACM Web Conference 2022*, 2298–2309. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3485447.3512102>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Caballero, C., & Gravagna, G. (2023). Performing Gender on TikTok: Between Playfulness and Stereotype. *Social Sciences*, 4(1), 8. <https://www.mdpi.com/2673-5172/4/1/8>

- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Dean, B. (2025, March). TikTok statistics you need to know in 2025. Backlinko. <https://backlinko.com/tiktok-users>
- Duarte, F. (2025, May 7). TikTok User Age, Gender, & Demographics (2025). Exploding Topics. <https://explodingtopics.com/blog/tiktok-demographics>
- Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Rana, N. P., Kumar, V., & Baabdullah, A. M. (2023). Algorithmic bias in social media platforms: A review and agenda for responsible use. *Management Decision*. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/MD-04-2024-0884/full/html>
- Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (2012). Social role theory. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 458–476). Sage Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446249222.n49>
- Ellemers, N. (2018). Gender Stereotypes. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 69(1), 275–298. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-122216-011719>
- Feldkamp, Jana. (2021). The Rise of TikTok: The Evolution of a Social Media Platform During COVID-19. 10.1007/978-3-030-66611-8_6.
- Fraser, M. (2022). *Bypassing Algorithms, Reinforcing Stereotypes: Social Media and Gendered Visibility* [Master's thesis, Murdoch University]. https://researchportal.murdoch.edu.au/esploro/outputs/graduate/Bypassing-Algorithms-Reinforcing-Stereotypes-Social-Media/991005723866807891?institution=61MUN_INST
- Gill, R. (2007). Postfeminist media culture: Elements of a sensibility. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10(2), 147–166. Retrieved from https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/22715/ssoar-eurjcultstud-2007-2-gill-postfeminist_media_culture.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1
- Gill, R. (2017). *Gender and the Media* (2nd ed.). Polity Press. [Available via Google Books: <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=DAC-DwAAQBAJ>]
- Guzman, A. (2022). *TIKTOK AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE: EXAMINING THE STRUCTURE OF ONLINE DISCOURSE*. <https://digital.library.txst.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/0afe922a-4302-4b9d-b09c-c616a9de41ce/content>

- Influencer Marketing Hub. (2025). *What Is TikTok? – Everything you need to know in 2025*. Retrieved June 11, 2025, from <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-tiktok/>
- Ionescu, C. G., & Licu, M. (2023). Are TikTok Algorithms Influencing Users' Self-Perceived Identities and Personal Values? A Mini Review. *Social Sciences, 12*(8), 465. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12080465>
- Kozinets, R. V. (2020). *Netnography: The Essential Guide to Qualitative Social Media Research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Literat, I., & Kligler-Vilenchik, N. (2019). Youth collective political expression on social media: The role of affordances and memetic dimensions for voicing political views. *New Media & Society, 21*(9), 146144481983757. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819837571>
- Matlach, P.-C., Castillo, A., Drath, C., & Hevesi, E. F. (2025). Recommending hate: How TikTok's search engine algorithms reproduce societal bias. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/How-Tiktoks-Search-Engine-Algorithms-Reproduce-Societal-Bias.pdf>
- Moulton, C. (2025, January 16). *TikTok shows dominance among young Americans amid looming US ban, new Northeastern research reveals*. Northeastern Global News. <https://news.northeastern.edu/2025/01/16/tiktok-user-demographics-research/>
- Nouri, M., Jafarpour, A., & Mirzaei, T. (2024). Gender stereotypes on TikTok: A computational content analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology, 15*, 1375983. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1375983>
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 42*(5), 533–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Priyashantha, K. G., De Alwis, A. C., & Welmilla, I. (2021). Three Perspectives on Changing Gender Stereotypes. *FIIB Business Review, 12*(2), 120–131. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23197145211049604>
- Rejeb, A., Rejeb, K., Appolloni, A., Treiblmaier, H., & Iranmanesh, M. (2024). Mapping the scholarly landscape of TikTok (Douyin): A bibliometric exploration of research topics and trends. *Digital Business, 4*(1), 100075. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.digbus.2024.100075>

- Rowley, J., Keegan, B. J., & Reynolds, J. (2023). Influencers and gender performance: Exploring identity construction on TikTok. University of Gloucestershire Repository. <https://eprints.glos.ac.uk/11628/>
- Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(2), 237–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748>
- Ungless, E. L., Markl, N., & Ross, B. (2024). Experiences of censorship on TikTok across marginalized identities. Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM). <https://doi.org/10.1609/icwsm.v18i1.31259>
- Wen, L., Wang, Y., & Li, H. (2024). Performing Gender on TikTok: Content Patterns, Stereotypes, and Social Media Influence. *Media, Culture & Society*. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/17480485241259836>
- Xue, J., Chen, J., Hu, R., & Wang, X. (2021). Gender stereotyping in short video apps: A content analysis of TikTok. *Media and Communication*, 9(2), 247–257. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v9i2.3813>
- Zia, A., & Syedah, A. (2021). Hashtag activism and gender discourse in Pakistan: A critical analysis of #MeToo and #MeraJismMeriMarzi. *Journal of Media Studies*, 36(1), 1–18.