**Toxic TikTok**

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September 02, 2021

Its been five years since TikTok entered the lives of the new generation—the millennials—and became the new social media sensation.

Over the years the entertainment aspect of this app has been overshadowed by the much talked about toxic impact. In this social media application, users can create fifteen to sixty seconds of short video clips that involve lip syncing, comedy, acting and talent with the background tunes that are available.

Initially it seemed like a platform for people’s creative expression. Free of cost, easy to use and the comic relief provided by the videos cannot be challenged. Many young men and women started gaining popularity as TikTok stars with their acting skills. An entire parallel entertainment industry emerged with this app but it has lately started coming under criticism and with the latest Ayesha Akram incident, the entire narrative is focused on the negative impact of TikTok.

I strongly disagree with this. The app isn’t toxic, it is the excessive use and how it is changing the personality of those who are addicted to it so to speak. If you look at the process here its very simple. Many unknown talented nobodies start using this to make videos and express their creative sides. As they get feedback and gain popularity and end up earning through a space they enjoy, they are addicted—so to speak—to this medium. Now they have fans and at the end of the day their lives have become meaningful and they have become visible to themselves and others.

[Greek tennis star Tsitsipas qualifies for US Open 3rd round](https://nation.com.pk/03-Sep-2021/greek-tennis-star-tsitsipas-qualifies-for-us-open-3rd-round)

How it might be bringing out the negative traits in people and its misuse; an element of bullying and harassment is because it’s a free unregulated space.

But first lets try to understand why the new generation is so drawn to it. In a country like Pakistan with its millions of unemployed young men and women, with minimal and average education, financially disempowered and no place for free entertainment or healthy community activities, the only motivation or what brings them happiness is their mobile phones. And within those phones is a world of social media where suddenly they can connect to the entire world with a top up of Rs500 or less.

If you think about it, so many psychological needs are being met through social media including TikTok. With the stark difference existing between the haves’ and have nots’ in our society, there is a sense of equality that is present through social media as people from all classes are present there and interact with each other. The judgment around financial status dissipates and people connect at another level. Also, we don’t have any acting academies or talent schools and not everyone can get an opportunity like the ‘chaye wala’ to make something of their lives.

[WhatsApp gets record $267 million fine for breaching EU data law](https://nation.com.pk/03-Sep-2021/whatsapp-gets-record-dollar-267-million-fine-for-breaching-eu-data-law)

So what’s the choice for them? Sure, TikTok might be classified as an addiction but I would say it’s a better addiction than drugs. These young people full of potential and talent and hope and hardly any opportunities have all the right to seek their potential too don’t they?

So when our esteemed government makes statements about the use of mobile phones and its usage, do something about helping these youngsters to sublimate their potential productively. Make them play grounds, open up sports academies, introduce them to free theatres and parks and community clubs and have sincere teachers and mentors for them.

Every human being wants to do the best for them and its an innate need to strive for success in life. Even the criticism around the negative use of these apps in terms of access to vulgar stuff isn’t justified. Why? Because when they will spend unlimited hours hooked to their phone screens, the good and bad so to speak, will both pop up on their screens. Why is there such contempt towards a TikTok star who wants to meet his or her fans but valid for a TV actor—even a newbie—to do the same. In a way that speaks to the class difference doesn’t it?

[FM Qureshi, Austrian counterpart express satisfaction over bilateral engagement](https://nation.com.pk/02-Sep-2021/fm-qureshi-austrian-counterpart-express-satisfaction-over-bilateral-engagement)

As a therapist, even when I work with someone with a drug addiction, rather than just shaming and blaming the drug, my first step is to understand what the addiction helps with and it is avoidance of pain. So before calling this app toxic or looking at its users with contempt, give them productive alternates and see the same users behaving differently.