



## Research Article

# Tik Tok Ban in Nepal: Reactions of the public

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## ABSTRACT



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TikTok was the most popular social media app in Nepal and a major source of income for content creators, artists, influencers, and users. The government of Nepal made the decision to ban TikTok on November 13, 2023, stating it was disrupting social harmony in the country, which brought anger to the TikTok users. This research critically considers how the TikTok ban has been met with reactions from the public. This qualitative content analysis approach will look for a deep exploration of the emotional, professional, and creative dimensions of public experiences. Hence, the study's main finding is to shed light on how the TikTok ban has affected the public and to know their opinions on it. In conclusion, the findings of this study shed light on the consequences of the TikTok ban in Nepal and people's reactions to it, emphasizing the need to find a solution and to make strict rules and regulations for social media.

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## 1. Introduction

Social media is playing an important role in people's lives. Through social media, we connect with people all around the world, and it is an interactive medium for the information giver and taker. (Bohn 2021). The era of communication changed after the invention of the World Wide Web in 1990 (Rogers 2019). The history of the Internet began in Nepal in 1994, when the Mercantile Office system began an email system, and the news media also started an online version (Acharya, 2009). Social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, are popular in Nepal.

Tik Tok was launched in 2017 and has since gained popularity (Khadgi, 2019). TikTok was famous among young, middle-aged, and older people. TikTok is a major source of income for many. By advertising the product, TikTok users earned so much money (Pahari, 2023). Most people's work was to sit in, advertise products and organizations, and earn money, whereas for many people, it was a source of information, entertainment, and a medium to show off their talent and get opportunities on big platforms (Pongratte et al., 2023).

The According to the Internet Service Providers Association, there are 2.2 million Tik Tok users in Nepal (Sharma, 2023). However, on November 13, 2023, the government of Nepal banned TikTok, citing it to disrupt social harmony. Globally, more than nine countries have banned TikTok, including Afghanistan, Australia, Belgium, Canada, and India (Navlakha, 2023). Minister for Communications and Information Technology of Nepal, Rekha Sharma, said that the government decided to ban TikTok in Nepal as it disrupts social

harmony in Nepal (Giri, 2023). After TikTok was banned in Nepal, protests were seen in Kathmandu, and the people's opinions were that the government had cut off their sources of income and entertainment media. There were two viewpoints on this issue among the public: many were angry with the government's decision, and others supported the government's decision. The public also questioned the government about its control over freedom of expression in a democracy. Virtual private network (VPN) apps that make use of location based TikTok have been installed by the majority of TikTok users (Prasain, 2023).

TikTok served as a useful platform for singers and musicians to market their music, and it also helped the songs get more views. Many people started doing online business from home, selling clothes and food, and teaching English classes and makeups. With TikTok, users are not only earning money but also earning fame and showing their talent. Some of the famous names of TikTok users who have many followers are Amrita Gurung, Eva Giri, Oriparinepal, Coolboyyyyy, and Digital Lawyer. (Online Khabar, 2024).

## 2. Research Purpose

TikTok was a very popular app in Nepal before the government decided to ban it. People used to earn money and show off their talent, and it became a medium for people to obtain opportunities for the big platform. The purpose of this research was to determine the reactions of users after the government banned TikTok in Nepal.

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### 3. Research Questions

The Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Rekha Sharma, said that the reason behind the TikTok ban is that it disrupts social harmony and family relations in Nepal (Gupta, 2023). There was a flow of opinions among people regarding these issues. This study focuses on two questions.

1. What were the reactions of people after TikTok was banned?
2. What solutions or alternatives do they find to continue with TikTok in the future?

### 4. Literature Review

Few research studies and articles have been found on this topic. TikTok was a very popular app in Nepal, as it was the entertainment medium for people to show their talent and see others talent. It was the platform for many shy people who wanted to do something but dared to show it to others. Side by side, it was the place where many users earned money and through which many people started their online businesses. Most of the famous online businesses on TikTok were in clothing, makeup, pickles, and so on. TikTok has both positive and negative effects on Nepali society. During the time of COVID-19, the TikTok platform helped people minimize their stress and share their opinions with others. Whereas its negative effect is that unethical information and false content are increasing through this.

TikTok has changed the direction and strategies of marketing the brand in Nepal. Famous TikTok users who have millions of followers are being hired for the publicity of the brand and organisations, and through this app, people buy that product as well (Shakya, 2023). The most advertisements seen on TikTok in the latest days are about the consultancy, fashion, and makeup.

TikTok users in the Maitighar Mandala, Kathmandu, Nepal, organised demonstrations against the government's moves to ban TikTok. Demonstrators carried the placards written Revoke the TikTok ban to raise their anger after it was banned (Khatri, 2023).

### 5. Benefits and drawbacks of TikTok

TikTok provides a platform for people to show their talent and skills to a large audience around the world. It provides entertainment for people, like dancing and singing comedy videos. It is a medium for people to share and connect with larger audiences around the world with the same interests (Guryn, 2020). TikTok serves as a platform for educational content, informative content, life hacks, cooking recipes, and many more things (Baker, 2021).

TikTok has been under criticism for privacy-related issues, such as collecting data methods, security flaws, and possible threats connected to sharing private material and information on the app. Customers' productivity, mental health, and general well-being might be adversely affected by TikTok's addictive nature and never-ending scrolling mechanism, which can result in excessive screen time, distraction, and procrastination. TikTok users, especially the younger and more susceptible ones, may experience poor self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, and comparison due to the platform's emphasis on popularity competitions, body image, and beauty standards (Zetoune, 2023).

### 6. Regulation or Prohibition

After TikTok was banned, there was and still is a debate between two opinions among the people. TikTok users believe the government's attempt to ban TikTok is against democracy as their right to expression has been violated. Article 17(2)(a) of the Constitution of Nepal explicitly safeguards this fundamental

right, asserting that every citizen possesses the freedom of expression (Koirala, 2023). Every individual has the right to express their thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and ideas without fear of censorship, restraint, or persecution by the government or other authorities. Whereas, some say, it was disrupting social harmony and lots of fake news and viral activity were increasing, so it was the best decision of the government.

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology has said that it is difficult to regulate the TikTok due to technical aspects of the language, as most of the content in the TikTok is in Nepali (Dhakal, 2023). Political leaders in Nepal also raised questions over the government's ban on TikTok. Political leaders such as General Secretary of the Nepali Congress Gagan Kumar Thapa, Another General Secretary of the Nepali Congress Bishwo Prakash Sharma, and Nepali Journalists and Civil Rights activists also question the government's move towards democracy (Bhattacharya, 2023).

### 7. Method

This study employed a qualitative content analysis methodology to analyze user comments retrieved through simple random sampling. Data collection occurred after the government's ban on TikTok on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Two YouTube programs were selected for analysis: "Dhamalako Hamala," an interview-based program renowned in Nepal, and a podcast hosted by Bishwa Limbu. The programs were chosen based on views and comments. Selection criteria dictated that only programs garnering over 500 comments were considered. "Dhamalako Hamala" amassed 3,051 comments, while the podcast accumulated 640 comments. From each program, 250 comments were selected, resulting in a total of 500 comments analyzed in this research. The study also focused on discerning the sentiment expressed within the comments, delineating both positive and negative tones of language.

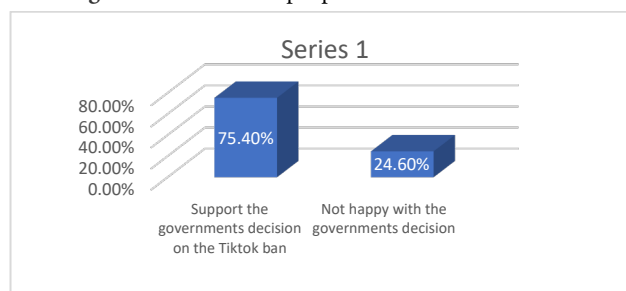
### 8. Limitations of the study

The data in this research were collected from two YouTube programs, that is, the interview and the podcast, and only the comments were studied, believing that the comments were from different categories of people.

### 9. Results

The government's decision to ban TikTok was very quick. People were not thinking it would happen. Reactions of people to the TikTok ban have been collected after the government decided to ban TikTok in Nepal. 75.40% of people who commented on the two programs believe that TikTok is disrupting cultural harmony and increasing violence through this platform. Many commenters were also thinking about its negative impact on the children and thanked the Nepali government for these steps. Whereas 24.60% of people commented that the attempt by the government was hilarious, as they were not able to monitor the app, so the government banned it. They even commented that the government should punish those people who are spreading and making disrespectful content.

Figure 1: Reactions of people to the TikTok ban



**Table 1: Happy comments from the public**

| N | Happy Comments                  |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Best decision of the government |
| 2 | Full support for the government |
| 3 | It should be closed forever     |
| 4 | Best news ever                  |
| 5 | Appreciative decision           |

**Table 2: Negative comments from the Public**

| N | Negative Comments                                    |
|---|--|
| 1 | Government's failure not to monitor social media app |
| 2 | Regulating rules should be there                     |
| 3 | The problem is with peoples mind not TikTok          |
| 4 | Not necessary to ban                                 |
| 5 | Punish them who have not created good content.       |

The suggestions from the commentors who are not happy with the decision raised the question to the government: has it hindered their right to expression as they were learning new knowledge and information from the platform? Talking about the tone of language they used, 75.40% of people were happy about the government's move to ban TikTok, and they were thanking the government for this move, whereas those who were not happy about this decision wrote in an aggressive way. They were expressing their anger that the government should regulate and make different rules and regulations for TikTok than to ban that app. And a monitoring system should be there to regulate the contents.

## 10. Discussion

This paper tried to know the reactions of the public to the TikTok ban in Nepal. There are millions of TikTok users in Nepal, and due to this, the reactions of the public, whether they are supportive or not, were important to know. The task was very challenging to find as the reactions were collected from the two different programs on YouTube.

Importantly, the findings show that many people are happy with the government's decision and the TikTok ban in Nepal. They take it as normal that the government has the right to control the app if it is spreading false information and disrupting its contents. Those people who are happy with the decision of the government believe that through this app, fake information and vulgarity are increasing, which is not good for the people and society.

Secondly, those people who are not happy with the government's decision reacted by saying that their right to express themselves and their freedom to use social media apps have been controlled by the government. They believe that the government's behaviour is not good, as they think the government should make acts, rules, and regulations to control the disrupting contents rather than ban the app. They also support the idea that, due to this app, people are earning money, which is good. They suggested that the government should tighten TikTok Live and limit gift giving.

## 11. Conclusion and Recommendations

To conclude, this is a small study that tried to find Nepali people's views and opinions on the TikTok ban in Nepal. This content analysis study also provided reasons why people are supporting the government's decision and what the views of

people who are not satisfied with the decision of the government are.

Till date, February 19, 2024, TikTok is banned in Nepal, but TikTok sent a letter to the Government of Nepal on November 11, 2024, stating they are ready to follow Nepal's law and to promote educational content (Online khabar, 2024).

So, this study concludes that people are satisfied with the TikTok ban, and they believe that TikTok is disrupting social harmony, crime, and vulgarity, which is affecting people and society. The suggestion to the government would be to make an act through which it can regulate and monitor social media, not only for TikTok but also for Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

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