


# Chapter 5


## Children's Rights in the Digital Space: Legal and Ethical Considerations

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### ABSTRACT

*The rapid expansion of social media has sparked growing concern about safeguarding children's rights online. This study examines TikTok's impact on minors, with a focus on data privacy, consent, and exposure to inappropriate content. Using a custom dataset—TikTok-YouthEngage2024—comprising 5,000 public short videos, interaction data, and anonymized metadata sorted by age group, we evaluated compliance with children's digital rights. A Legal-Ethical Compliance Scoring (LECS) method was developed, integrating NLP, image analysis, and policy-alignment tools to assess content against key articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Results show that 28.4% of the content may breach standards related to data*

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*use or age-inappropriate exposure, while 15.7% of interactions suggest algorithmic targeting misaligned with children's developmental needs. Only 41.2% of videos involving minors showed signs of informed consent. These findings highlight the pressing need for stronger regulation and ethical design to protect young users online.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The digital landscape, particularly social media platforms like TikTok (Balat et al., 2024) (Parera et al., 2025), has become an integral part of children's lives. With over 1 billion active users globally (Statista, 2024), TikTok's pervasive reach poses unique challenges to the protection of children's rights in the digital space. Legal frameworks and ethical guidelines designed to safeguard minors, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Shejuti, 2023), face increasing pressure as technology evolves. Specifically, concerns about children's privacy, data security, informed consent, and exposure to harmful content have raised alarms across legal and ethical domains.

To address these issues, this study employs a multi-method approach leveraging natural language processing (NLP) (Bhardwaj et al., 2024), image recognition algorithms (Dhawan et al., 2025), and data privacy analysis to assess TikTok's compliance with children's rights. The approach introduces a novel Legal-Ethical Compliance Scoring (LECS) Method to quantitatively evaluate TikTok's practices in real time. By analyzing a dataset, "TikTok-YouthEngage2024," (Huttayavilaiphan, 2024) (Surabhi et al., 2022) (Thakur et al., 2024) (Triantafyllopoulos et al., 2022) (Shejuti, 2023) (Balat et al., 2024) containing 5,000 short-form videos and user engagement metrics from minors aged 13 to 17, we aim to understand the extent to which TikTok adheres to international children's rights regulations.

Recent cases, such as FTC vs. TikTok (2023) (Cervi et al., 2025) (Nagata et al., 2025), have highlighted significant concerns about children's data privacy, with TikTok fined \$6 million for violating COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act). Similarly, a 2024 study by the European Commission found that 32% of children in the EU reported exposure to inappropriate content on social media, a statistic that has only intensified with platforms like TikTok. These cases underscore the urgency of evaluating whether TikTok's platform design respects children's rights and aligns with legal mandates.

Figure 1 illustrates the systematic approach undertaken to assess children's rights protections on TikTok. It begins by acknowledging the growing concerns about safeguarding children's rights within rapidly expanding digital platforms (Mascari et al., 2025) (Nahar et al., 2023). The study focuses specifically on TikTok, analyzing issues related to data privacy, informed consent, and exposure to harmful content.

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