

THE IMPACT OF TOXIC BEAUTY CONTENT ON TIKTOK ON THE SELF-ESTEEM OF GENERATIONS Z AND ALPHA

GIULIA UNGVARI

Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca

giulia.ungvari@stud.ubbcluj.ro

ORCID: 0009-0000-6198-4216

IOANA RUSU

Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca

ioana.lepadatu@ubbcluj.ro

ORCID: 0009-0000-8190-7349

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Abstract: Since the young people of Generation Z and Generation Alpha have had access to social media early in their lives and represent a large percentage of TikTok users, they are exposed daily to beauty trends and toxic beauty standards that can be found in this environment. Since TikTok is the platform where a multitude of new insecurities related to physical appearance are born, the content found on it can negatively influence young people's perception of their own physical appearance. We gathered the data for this paper from a content analysis on the TikTok platform, which focused on trends and the behavior of users and content creators. This study will investigate the links between problematic beauty content on the TikTok platform and low self-esteem among the people of Generation Z and Alpha, as well as how the findings can affect their purchasing behavior. The paper will focus both on the negative psychological effects that this type of content can have on young people and on the trends that most often promote 'problematic' ideas and through which, inevitably, content creators or companies try to sell products that improve physical appearance.

Keywords: *TikTok beauty trends; Gen Z; Gen Alpha; beauty standards; self-esteem;*

Introduction

As TikTok is one of the most popular social networks currently, it creates the perfect environment for people to come up with trends that have a considerable impact on a large number of people. Many of these trends are beauty-related and may seem harmless, but they can negatively affect young people both mentally and physically. Young people of Generations Z and Alpha are often exposed to beauty content on this platform that promotes toxic beauty trends or standards. This exposure has caused many young people to become dissatisfied with their physical

appearance and addicted to online validation (Rounsefell et al., 2020). Recognizing these issues, many content creators and even brands have begun to take advantage of young people's dissatisfaction by trying to sell them "solutions." In this study, problematic content refers to content that presents possible risks to people's mental or physical health—a type of content that could be slightly controversial.

As the TikTok platform creates an environment that allows people to share everything they want about themselves with others, it's not surprising that a lot of them also share their insecurities. Consequently, a multitude of new physical appearance-related insecurities emerged on TikTok. From thin lips to thick calves, from the large distance between the nose and upper lip to eyes with downward-sloping outer corners, TikTok provides a platform for every new insecurity that users create and which, in most cases, would not have been noticed before its appearance on TikTok.

The label "unattractive" may seem harmless, but it can harm young people's mental and physical health. Studies discuss the existence of problems related to how young people perceive themselves in terms of physical appearance after being exposed to such content (Borgen & Domoff, 2022), but also about the more dangerous consequences that this exposure can generate, such as resorting to cosmetic procedures (Yoon & Kim, 2020; Eshiet, 2020), even at an early age. This type of content reinforces and perpetuates the beauty standards imposed by society, giving positive attention to those who fit into them and negative attention to those who do not. Therefore, the following research questions are formulated:

RQ1: What do the beauty standards look like for TikTok users from Generation Z and Alpha?

RQ3: Which beauty practices are promoted inside beauty trends on TikTok?

The research method used in this paper was the content analysis. This method analyzed 50 TikTok videos presenting problematic content that could potentially negatively impact viewers. The videos were selected from YouTube videos that discussed this type of trend and the potentially negative impact they could have on others. Although the study managed to obtain information on how this type of content influences young people's perception of their appearance and how it can influence them to consider various beauty procedures, it does not analyze these types of reactions in the long term and cannot concretely demonstrate that, after prolonged exposure to these videos, young people's behaviors can change, especially in a negative way.

2. Self-esteem in Gen Z & Alpha and social media

Generation Z is a generation that faces various difficulties when it comes to mental health and psychological well-being in general (Twenge, 2017). One of the main factors that can lead to these problems, in addition to the constant social pressure this generation has to live under, is social media addiction (Li et al. 2023). Low self-esteem is one of the problems most often associated with this generation's social media addiction, and compared to other generations, Generation Z

lacks self-confidence the most (Chappet, 2019). However, for the people in this generation, another important component is the online environment. Their self-esteem can be negatively affected by their need to integrate into our society and receive positive “evaluations” on social media, but also by their lack of satisfaction with their physical appearance (Al Amiri et al. 2019). Being exposed to the online environment from an early age, young people from Generation Z build much of their self-esteem on the validation they receive from outside (online or offline). Comparing themselves to those around them in terms of appearance usually begins in early adolescence for both girls and boys (Chen & Jackson, 2009), and during this same period, they consider physical appearance to be the main indicator of their worth (Harter, 2006).

There are studies that discuss how social media can lead to lower self-esteem in young people (Ahmed et al. 2021, Tibber et al. 2020), and one of the causes may be “social comparison.” This phenomenon refers to how individuals process information from those around them in comparison to themselves (Wood, 1996). Daily exposure to images with this type of content can cause users to consciously or unconsciously compare themselves with others, resulting in increased or decreased self-esteem, depending on the conclusion of the comparison.

Generation Alpha is the generation preceding Generation Z and includes people born between 2010 and 2025. Reis (2018) characterized the people of Generation Alpha as “digital natives,” creative and dynamic, and predisposed to choose leadership roles. They have high standards when it comes to their lifestyle, preferring the idea of a “luxury” lifestyle and having purchasing power (Thomas & Shivani, 2020). For this reason, Generation Alpha has a very high influence on the family budget (Carter, 2016). This characteristic makes this generation crucial in companies’ marketing and advertising strategies. Born in a time when technology is at its peak, Generation Alpha consumes social media content from a very young age, having access to tablets or phones even before they can speak, which often leads to addiction. If the time they spend in the virtual world is not supervised and managed by adults, they are more likely to access content that could negatively affect them psychologically. The result can lead to social distancing, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Astapenko et al., 2021). However, some studies indicate that members of Generation Alpha have more self-confidence than those of Generation Z (Apaydin & Kaya, 2020).

Social media platforms play a critical role in changing and imposing beauty standards, which affects how young people assess their worth and the level of satisfaction with their physical appearance (Laughter et al., 2023). Therefore, the consequences that can arise when a member of Generation Alpha comes into contact with this type of content on social media can be very serious. It should be noted that Generation Z is also affected by these issues, but the severity of the situation increases as the age at which young people are exposed to social media decreases, making them much more vulnerable. In present times, there are very few studies that discuss the self-esteem or involvement of Generation Alpha in the beauty industry, but these things can be observed or inferred from how they manifest themselves on social media

3. The beauty standards on TikTok and self-esteem

The content found on social media platforms can have a negative impact on young people's self-esteem and their opinions about their physical appearance. It is worth noting that social media platforms that feature visual content (photos or videos) encourage young people to develop negative opinions about themselves (Wilksch et al., 2020). An example of such a platform is TikTok. This platform makes it very easy for everyone to post content and to create or follow trends. The app is also known for its filters, which come in the form of games or interactive filters, as well as "beauty" filters that alter users' physical appearance, add makeup or jewelry, or change hair color. However, even if there are filters that should only add makeup on users' faces, there have been instances where these filters also subtly change people's features to try and make them fit the beauty standard. They slightly reduce the size of the nose and jaw and make the lips fuller and the eyes bigger (Barker, 2020).

Furthermore, exposing young people to this type of content that uses filters can lead them to compare themselves to the person in the video, possibly lowering their self-esteem. However, there can be more serious consequences of this type of content. It can have such a strong impact on some individuals that it could lead them to consider cosmetic surgery in order to get as close as possible to their "improved" versions that the filters present (Eshiet, 2020). This problem extends beyond the desire to fit into beauty standards, ultimately affecting individuals' professional opportunities. The study "Cosmetic Surgery and Self-esteem in South Korea: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis" (Yoon & Kim, 2020) describes how women and men in South Korea opt for cosmetic surgery so they can have features as similar as possible to those seen on social media or to themselves after using filters. Another reason why they resort to these procedures is to gain more career opportunities, considering that a pleasant physical appearance gives you an advantage over others. On TikTok, comparing oneself to other users of this app is a relatively common phenomenon, and it can lead to young people feeling inferior towards those who fit the beauty standards (Savira et al., 2022). Since TikTok can be considered one of the main apps where physical appearance is commented on, praised, or insulted by users, they may experience the negative effects mentioned above (Fatima et al., 2024).

3.1. Body-shaming on TikTok

In the current context, the more exposure there is to TikTok content that includes body shaming, the more dissatisfied the app users become with their own physical appearance (Silva & Steins, 2023). Prolonged exposure to this type of content can negatively affect individuals' self-esteem, especially young people's, which can even lead to the development of dysmorphophobia. Body dysmorphic disorder (also known as body dysmorphic disorder) is an "obsession" with

physical appearance, an exaggerated concern with every detail of one's appearance (Stoianovici, 2020). Body shaming on TikTok affects both women and men, but women face this phenomenon more often (Li et al., 2023), as society imposes stricter beauty standards on women. Another reason why women are more often affected by this criticism may be related to the fact that they represent a higher percentage of users and content creators on the TikTok platform (Howarth, 2023), so the chances of them facing these types of problems are higher. However, young men can face this type of criticism as well, sometimes pretty often. They feel more insecure about their physical appearance after watching videos featuring boys/men who represent, in their view, an ideal of male beauty, feeling pressured to try to look like them (Ringrose et al., 2024).

This phenomenon has become increasingly common as social media platforms have grown in popularity, as well as the discrimination and bullying that occurs in these environments (Jacob, 2024). In addition to its negative consequences on mental health, body shaming reinforces and perpetuates toxic stereotypical images of beauty that individuals feel they must conform to (Clark et al., 2021), which can especially affect vulnerable groups such as adolescents (Cerolini et al., 2024). However, some young people are fighting against these beauty standards. In response to this "toxic" content, they post videos showing their physical "imperfections," trying to normalize human bodies regardless of their shape or appearance.

These types of posts often appear under the hashtags "#bodypositivity" or "#bopo." The existence of this type of content on social media platforms is important because it can help young people feel better and more confident about their physical appearance (Horeck et al., 2024). Moreover, this type of content promotes diversity in social media, as well as self-acceptance and self-esteem (Tylka et al., 2023).

3.2. The TikTok algorithm and beauty standards

One of the main reasons why users may be exposed to content that promotes toxic beauty standards or body shaming on the TikTok platform is the algorithm it uses. TikTok is known for the way it creates content "loops." Specifically, if you interact with a certain type of content, the algorithm will recommend similar content to you more and more often (Schellewald, 2023). These "loops" can provide users with either positive or negative experiences. Therefore, if you fall into the '#beautytok loop,' you will automatically be exposed to such content daily.

Some studies discuss how the algorithm used by TikTok has certain "preferences" (algorithm bias) for certain types of content (Barry et al., 2021; Baha, 2023). Since we do not have access to the entire algorithm used by TikTok, we cannot prove this fact, but some similarities can be observed when it comes to the content recommended by this platform. What we can concretely argue is how this algorithm bias can negatively affect users, especially those who are part of marginalized communities (Baha, 2023). For example, this algorithm may privilege "white" content creators (Johnson, 2023) but disadvantage people of color (Amarikwa, 2023).

Therefore, this type of algorithm does not recommend content featuring people with diverse appearances as often but prefers videos from content creators who follow the same beauty standards (Wang et al., 2024). Thus, it is not surprising that there are so many similarities in the physical appearance of the most popular content creators on social media, especially for the women. This type of appearance can be found under the name “*Instagram face*” and is characterized by European-like facial features, full lips, and clear, glowing skin (Haines, 2021).

The TikTok platform reinforces the already existing link between ideal beauty standards and success (Burchell, 2023), giving an advantage to those who have an ideal physical appearance and creating an environment in which those who do not have this type of privilege can be criticized. Since the artificial intelligence underlying the algorithm models used on various platforms shows preferences for a certain type of beauty, content that conforms to it will be recommended to users more often (Herbert, 2023).

4. TikTok’s influence on purchasing behavior

Especially for women, beauty content is very often recommended on the platform’s “For You Page,” and unintentionally viewing the most popular beauty products is almost inevitable in this environment. This type of interaction can be used as a strategy whereby users can learn about a product even if they have not specifically searched for it, learning this information ‘against their will’ (Han, 2020). These interactions subsequently helped create a trend called “*#tiktokmademebuy-it*,” which became very popular on TikTok. This trend consists of creating videos in which users present products they have purchased based on recommendations from other users of the platform (Russell, 2022).

Another trend that successfully promotes products without the company’s involvement is when users use the phrase “*run, don’t walk to...(store name)*.” This content helps brands reach new customers and increase sales without paying for this type of promotion (Andersson & Bendrik, 2024). Some TikTok users, after discovering a product (especially in the beauty industry) that they consider to be very good, will film themselves saying the phrase “Run, don’t walk to...”, after which they will present the product and their opinion about it. These types of videos easily influence TikTok users to buy products, successfully promoting various brands and even leading to empty shelves that contained these products (Morris, 2021).

There are also trends that promote beauty products in a more subtle way, and perhaps not always intentionally. For example, there are a large number of videos on TikTok in which users present their personal “*anti-aging*” routine. Since Generation Z (and recently, Generation Alpha) has a certain fear of aging (Dennis & Helen, 2024), the behaviors in these videos can be copied as these generations want to prevent it. This fear, which is becoming more prevalent among younger generations, is exploited by companies that sell beauty products (Fang et al., 2024).

On TikTok, users have created an “aesthetic” out of every type of appearance, and these also influence the consumer behavior of other users. We can talk about *#princesscore*, which refers to an aesthetic similar to that of a princess; *#cottagecore*, which refers to a natural feminine aesthetic; *#coquettecore*, which refers to an aesthetic based on bows, pastel colors, pearls, and more (Weller, 2023). This list could go on, but what is important about these trends is the influence they have on clothing style, beauty standards, and subsequently, on users’ product consumption. If they want to adopt one of these styles, they need to buy the necessary clothing or beauty products to follow this trend.

TikTok users have also managed to divide “femininity” into countless categories: “*delicate femininity*,” “*traditional femininity*,” “*siren femininity*” (Weller, 2023), “*light femininity*,” “*dark femininity*,” “*soft femininity*,” and others. All these types of femininity urge girls and women to analyze themselves in too much detail in order to try to fit into one of these typologies, which can affect their perception of beauty standards in society and how they relate to them.

Another beauty trend that is largely aimed at boys is called “*Looksmaxxing*.” This term, as defined in the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, refers to the efforts and practices that boys engage in to become more attractive. However, these practices have become destructive, demeaning those who do not look “perfect” and urging them to completely change the way they look. One of the most controversial practices found within this trend urges boys to break their jawbone with a hammer so that, after it heals, they will have a jaw that looks stronger and more masculine.

5. Methodology

This paper analyzes the toxic beauty trends on TikTok that have become topics of discussion on other platforms. Some potentially destructive trends have come to the attention of content creators on YouTube, so this paper analyzes the TikToks they have selected and discussed in their videos. These content creators are not specialists in the field, but they are expressing their concerns about the potential dangers of these trends. The YouTube videos were selected based on the way they were recommended after searching for “TikTok toxic beauty trends” on Youtube. Recommended videos with at least 500,000 views were selected. Many of the TikTok videos that these YouTubers talk about in their content have been deleted due to negative reactions from other users, so only the videos that are still accessible were analyzed.

Twelve videos discussing various “toxic” trends were selected from YouTube, which offer TikTok videos as examples for the problematic trends. From these examples were found and analyzed 50 videos. The analysis was carried out according to the following criteria: the problematic trend referred to, *solution offered in the video* (V1), *engagement* (V2), and *comments* (V3). For this analysis, a new TikTok account with no engagement was created and used, so that the algorithm would not show videos or comments that resonate with personal preferences.

6. Results

It was noticed that in more than half of the videos analyzed, the most popular comments were those criticizing the obsession with physical appearance, many of them arguing that these issues are not as relevant as others consider them to be, that people look good anyway, and that it is completely normal to age or have imperfections. However if we look at all the comments we can see that there is a significant amount of them in which users seem interested in trying the methods presented in the videos there are.

There are also comments from which it could be interpreted that the content just viewed has created new insecurities for users about their physical appearance. For example, a very popular content creator on the TikTok platform (@mimiermakeup) posted a video in which she “took” the viewers with her to inject “micro botox” into their foreheads. She started the video by showing what her forehead wrinkles look like when she raises her eyebrows and expressed her dissatisfaction with it. She claimed to feel much more confident after the procedure. One of the first comments on the video was: *“I didn’t know I was insecure about my forehead until now.”* Even if this content creator did not intend to negatively affect anyone’s self-esteem, presenting a part of her appearance as visually unpleasant and her choice to “correct” it may affect the way people perceive these features to some extent.

In the TikTok videos that were analyzed, certain insecurities were mentioned more often by content creators. If we refer to the main insecurity related to the appearance of boys/men, we can say that it would be the jaw. In these videos, the jaw was the part of their physical appearance that the vast majority of them were trying to change/improve through various methods. Other aspects of their appearance that were a source of stress for them were the shape of their eyes (eyes with drooping lower eyelids and downward-sloping outer corners), a round or asymmetrical face.

For women, the main insecurity related to appearance is wrinkles, which they try to prevent from an early age using various methods. Other aspects they are dissatisfied with are double chins, large arms or thighs, bloated abdomens, legs that are not slim, asymmetrical faces or imperfect skin. Therefore, after identifying these aspects of appearance that are considered “unattractive” by many beauty content creators, we can deduce what beauty standards look like in their view. For boys/men, the standard of beauty includes a chiseled, strong jawline, elongated eyes with upward-slanted outer corners, a symmetrical face and a fit body. For girls/women, it includes a wrinkle-free, symmetrical, supple face, a wrinkle-free neck, clear skin, slim legs/abdomen/arms, flat calves and full lips.

After analyzing the videos, another trend was discovered, or rather a conglomerate of trends, each represented by a type of “aesthetic.” These consist of creating a specific style of clothing/makeup, but have come to include even specific types of faces. More specifically, there are several types of beauty into which, as claimed on TikTok, every girl fits: *popular beauty*, *natural beauty*, *model beauty*, *standard*

beauty. As part of this trend, girls/women film themselves and ask TikTok users what type of beauty they think suits them best.

These “types of beauty” have various characteristic features, for example: *popular beauty* refers to faces that attract everyone’s attention, are often found on social media, and have features that are generally considered attractive; *natural beauty* presents a fresh look that looks good without effort, makeup, or styling; *model beauty* refers to faces with unique, distinctive features, usually with high cheekbones or a slender face; *standard beauty* presents a classic, universally attractive appearance with symmetrical features.

There are filters that can determine what type of beauty category you fall into, or videos that show you examples of celebrities who fit into these types, so that you can then place yourself easier into one of these categories. TikTok users seem to be very convinced of the importance of these types of beauty, going so far as to create makeup looks that you “should” do if you fall into a certain category.

It is worth noting that these are by no means the only types of beauty that exist on TikTok, and among them are fox beauty, rabbit beauty, deer, cat, mermaid, witch, vampire, fairy, alien, beach, forest, ice, angel, goddess, and the list goes on.

For each of the previously mentioned physical insecurities, there is one or even several solutions, some offered by content creators in the form of advice that does not require the use of other products, and others that offer a solution in the form of a product. When it comes to wrinkles, users offer a number of solutions to prevent them. Sleeping on your back every night is a solution they often offer to prevent wrinkles, but also to ensure that your face remains symmetrical. There are many videos in which content creators urge users to even buy products to help them do so.

One example of a product designed for this purpose is a pillow that covers the back and sides of your head, but has a hollow center so that when you want to sleep on your side, your face doesn’t touch any surface. The pillow in the video costs \$180, and the content creator who presented it in his video urges uncertain users in the comments to buy it. There are various comments in which users admit that they cannot sleep well at night because they fear they will age faster if they sleep with their face on the pillow. One brand that sells this product is @FlawlessFacePillow, which uses this concern (wrinkles from sleeping with your face on the pillow) as its main promotional strategy.

Another solution for wrinkles and asymmetrical faces found on TikTok is facial massage. This can be done with your hands or with products, such as guasha (a flat stone/crystal used in ancient China to relieve pain). There are a multitude of facial massage products sold by many companies. A more “extreme” measure to prevent wrinkles and imperfections that has become a trend on TikTok is to cover almost the entire face while sleeping. This trend goes by the name of “*morning shed*” and it includes several products that are supposed to help slow down aging during sleep, such as *jaw straps* that are attached to the top of the head to keep the jaw still while sleeping, *mouth tape*, which prevents mouth breathing during sleep (it is claimed that mouth breathing causes an unpleasant appearance in your profile

over time), *wrinkles tape*, which separates wrinkles during the night, but also provides a “facelift”, a thick band that must be tightened around the forehead during sleep, and, in most cases, face masks that can be left on overnight.

The slogan for this trend is: “The uglier you go to sleep, the more beautiful you’ll wake up.” The vast majority of comments on these videos are positive or neutral, with users claiming that they also take some of these measures while sleeping.

Another product used by beauty content creators to prevent wrinkles around the mouth caused by pursing the lips is the “*anti-aging straw*”. This is a glass straw with a horizontal top and an opening along its length for drinking. This straw does not require pursing the lips like normal straws. There is also no clear evidence that this straw actually prevents wrinkles around the mouth.

Reactions to “anti-aging” videos vary. There are many comments that are positive or neutral about this type of content, asking for additional advice or expressing a desire to follow the steps presented in the video or purchase the products featured in it. However, in the videos analyzed for this paper, the most appreciated comments were usually those expressing a negative opinion about the content of the video. Some recurring statements can be noted: “*Aging is normal*”, “*This is very sad*”, “*Can we live?*”, “*Brainrot*” (a term referring to a brain negatively affected by excessive time spent on the internet/a lack of connection with real life).

A very problematic trend that consists of a community formed around offering advice on improving physical appearance is called “*looksmaxxing*”. This trend is very consistent, consisting of both relatively harmless and dangerous content. The trend is mainly aimed at boys/men, but there are also some girls/women who follow these practices.

To clarify, “*looksmaxxing*” is the process of maximizing one’s physical appearance to get as close as possible to society’s standards of beauty (Vevers, 2024). This trend includes practices such as facial massage, jawline sculpting exercises, eye shape massage, diets, or exercises, and is mostly dedicated to boys/men.

The practices found in the videos analyzed in this paper focused largely on improving the appearance of the jaw, but also on facial massage and diets. The creators of these videos who offer looksmaxxing tips, place a lot of emphasis on training the jaw using various methods. This is where another trend comes in, called “*mewing*”, which refers to straightening and holding the tongue on the roof of the mouth to achieve a more chiseled jawline and get rid of a double chin. Another technique they use is chewing very hard gum to train the jaw. One brand that sells this type of gum is GrecoGum, which primarily promotes itself as gum for sculpting the jaw.

In the videos that were analyzed, content creators also use a product that must be placed in the mouth and chewed with the molars. These are made of durable material and are designed to train your jaw. One brand that offers both these jaw training products and chewing gum for the same purpose is Jawliner. This brand has numerous collaborations with boys/men on TikTok who create “looksmaxxing” content.

In the comments on videos featuring these types of exercises, as well as those featuring ways of improving facial appearance, users seem largely interested and eager to try these techniques.

There are also comments criticizing the obsession that these content creators have with their own physical appearance. In the comments, many users ask for or offer advice on how to correct their own appearance.

Even though exposure to this type of content can negatively affect young people psychologically in the long run, these practices are the least problematic part of this trend. Within it, there is another practice of improving the appearance of the jaw, which started as an internet joke but later started unironically getting followed by many young people. This practice is called “*bonesmashing*” and means exactly what the name suggests: breaking bones.

More specifically, boys/men gradually break their jawbone by hitting it lightly with a hard object, with the expectation that it will heal and give them a more prominent jawline. There are no concrete studies to support that this technique works, but many do not seek such evidence and choose to trust the content creators who present the method and the results they claim to have achieved. In the videos analyzed, there is no specific brand of products used for this practice, but content creators typically use hammers, hard objects with suitable shapes, or pulsating electric massage devices.

It should be noted that videos showing the “bonesmashing” technique are very difficult to find, as this type of content is considered dangerous and these videos are either reported by other TikTok users or deleted by the content creators who posted them following the multitude of negative reactions they received in response. The videos that discuss this practice that can still be found on TikTok are those that approach it in a subtle, less graphic way. Specifically, there are videos that show a set of images as a tutorial for this trend, but the images are not suggestive enough to be reported.

There are very few videos in which a user shows the process of hitting their face with a hard object to change it. In the few videos of this kind that can be found on TikTok, the reactions in the comments are mixed, with some people being curious about it and wanting to try it, others claiming that they already do it and are seeing results and others expressing their dissatisfaction with this type of content. For videos with higher engagement, the most liked comments are usually those that criticize this practice.

Finding the problematic content discussed in this paper was difficult to achieve. It should be noted that, in an attempt to find videos referring to the term “*legging legs*” (a term that refers to skinny legs), TikTok refused to show these videos. After entering this term in the search bar, TikTok will only display a message stating that everything will be fine and offering various solutions to receive support from a specialist, considering that individuals searching for this type of content have low self-esteem and can be easily negatively affected by viewing it. Thus, not all of these terms can be found on TikTok on the first try, but entering them in a more complex sentence is a solution to access these videos.

Discussions and Conclusions

Considering all the information gathered in this article, the connection between problematic beauty content on TikTok and the existence of low self-esteem among young people can be seen more clearly.

After analyzing the 50 videos on the TikTok platform, this paper can present a more deep understanding of the trends and how users interact with them on this platform. It could be noticed that in more than half of the analyzed videos, the most popular comments were those criticizing this obsession with physical appearance found in them, with many arguing that these issues are not as relevant as others consider them to be. However, these were just the comments with the most likes. If we look at all the comments it can be seen how many comments where users seem interested in trying the methods presented in the videos there are.

Following the review of numerous studies addressed in this paper and the content analysis conducted on the TikTok platform enough information was gathered to answer the research questions. Thus, after analyzing the content considered problematic on the TikTok platform, the answer to the first research question was found, which focuses on what beauty standards look like on the TikTok platform. Although there was no concrete answer to this question mentioned in the analyzed videos, it is possible to deduce what the content creators consider to be the “beauty standard” based on the “flaws” they were trying to correct.

The beauty standards that most boys/men on this platform are trying to achieve include the following aspects: a strong and chiseled jawline, a symmetrical face shape, eyes with upturned outer corners, clear skin, and a toned body. Among the girls/women on this platform, the importance of a symmetrical, wrinkle-free face, clear skin, large lips, a slender face shape, and a thin body can be noted.

Generation Z and Generation Alpha deal with self esteem in different ways. There were studies that considered young people from Generation Alpha to have high self-confidence. As studies mentioned, prolonged exposure to a certain type of content that highlights “flaws” in appearance, as well as features people who fit societal beauty standards, can lead to young people’s self-esteem decreasing and, in some cases, even to them undergoing various beauty procedures to conform to the standard, such as cosmetic surgery or botox.

Although answers were found for the research questions, it should be noted that this study does not fully cover all aspects linking viewing beauty content and its negative effects on the self-esteem of Generation Z and Alpha. Future studies that wish to address this topic could focus more on a smaller number of trends, especially those that do not appear frequently in the specialized literature. Additionally, studying the negative effects these generations may experience as a result of exposure to this type of content could be documented long-term to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

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