



## Analysis of the Impact of "Self-Love" Content on Tiktok Social Media on the Behavior of Gen Z

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### Abstract

*This study examines the role of self-love content on TikTok in shaping self-identity, self-awareness, motivation, and behavioral outcomes among Generation Z in Manggala District, Makassar City. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving ten active TikTok users selected through purposive sampling. The findings reveal that self-love content contributes positively to self-awareness, self-acceptance, confidence, motivation, and self-care practices. Participants reported becoming more reflective about their emotions, personal values, and life goals after repeated exposure to self-love narratives. However, the findings also indicate potential negative consequences, including social comparison and emotional dependence on digital validation. The novelty of this study lies in its exploration of self-love content as an algorithmically mediated mechanism that influences both psychological development and behavioral transformation. The study highlights the importance of promoting digital literacy and critical content engagement to maximize the benefits of self-love content while minimizing its potential risks for young social media users.*

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has transformed the way individuals communicate, construct identities, and interpret social realities. Social media platforms have become central environments where young people engage in self-expression, social interaction, and identity negotiation. Among these platforms, TikTok has emerged as one of the most influential digital ecosystems for Generation Z (Gen Z), owing to its highly personalized recommendation algorithm, short-form video format, and participatory culture (Lu et al., 2026; Duong & Vo, 2025; Makanjuola, 2024). Unlike conventional social networking platforms, TikTok continuously curates content according to users' viewing patterns and interaction histories, thereby intensifying exposure to specific narratives and value systems. Recent studies suggest that algorithm-driven social media environments substantially shape adolescents' perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral orientations through repeated exposure to particular content categories (Nassif & Ben Moussa, 2024; Boer et al., 2025; Gupta et al., 2025).

The growing influence of TikTok is particularly evident among Gen Z, a generation characterized by extensive digital engagement and strong reliance on online platforms for information, entertainment, and emotional support (Shamsuddin & Azman, 2025; Stahl & Literat, 2023). Research indicates that social media simultaneously serves as a source of social connection and a contributor to psychological vulnerability, including anxiety, low self-esteem, social comparison, and emotional distress (Tariq et al., 2025; U Wang et al., 2025; Ruan et al., 2023). Within this digital landscape, self-love content has emerged as one of the most prominent thematic trends. Self-love content generally promotes self-acceptance, self-compassion, emotional awareness, positive affirmations, and mental health advocacy. Through motivational videos, personal storytelling, and reflective narratives, creators encourage audiences to develop healthier relationships with themselves and to challenge unrealistic social expectations (Shatara et al., 2024; Pertiwi & Sanusi, 2023; Gautam & Nainwal, 2025).

The popularity of self-love discourse reflects broader societal concerns regarding mental health among young people. Contemporary research has documented increasing levels of stress, anxiety, loneliness, and identity uncertainty among adolescents and young adults, particularly in highly digitalized environments (Hemberg et al., 2024; Boer et al., 2025; Tamba & Iancu, 2023). Consequently, many Gen Z users actively seek online content that provides emotional reassurance, psychological validation, and practical strategies for self-improvement. TikTok has become a preferred venue for this purpose because its recommendation system rapidly amplifies content that resonates with users' emotional states and personal experiences (Ruan et al., 2025; Raghunathan & Kumar, 2025). As a result, self-love messages are repeatedly encountered and gradually incorporated into everyday cognitive and behavioral processes.

The impact of self-love content is still a complex theoretical and empirical phenomenon despite its potential benefits. Previous research has shown that self-love narratives can increase self-awareness, boost self-esteem, foster emotional regulation, and boost psychological health. Positive digital content can serve as an informal source of mental health support, which can contribute to users building self-acceptance and resilience to face social pressures (Lim et al., 2024; Merino et al., 2024). Moreover, supportive online communities can alleviate feelings of isolation and offer an opportunity for identity exploration and self-expression. The results of this study indicate that messages about self-love can have a positive effect on the psychological functioning of adolescents, through reinforcing adaptive psychological resources.

But there is increasing evidence that the consequences of algorithmic amplification of self-improvement content also come with unintended side effects. Studies have demonstrated that the idealized image of beauty, success, and personal development can promote social comparison, increased body dissatisfaction, and feelings of inadequacy among young users (Pedalino & Camerini, 2022; Boer et al., 2025). In this instance, self-love content is supposed to be about self-acceptance but it can also simultaneously create a new set of "ideal selfhood" norms that the users are driven to meet. This can be a "Catch-22" because messages designed to help children manage their mental health can actually cause them to feel pressured, insecure and critical of themselves. Furthermore, recent studies have found that TikTok's recommendation algorithm produces highly polarised "mental health content bubbles," which can lead to the need for digital validation and thus further strengthen emotional feedback loops.

Another key issue has to do with the quality and accuracy of mental health information shared via social media outlets. TikTok has become a platform for easy access to psychological counseling and self-help stories, but there is increasing worry

that people are misinformed and are using oversimplified versions of mental health terms. A new study of popular TikTok videos on mental health revealed misleading claims or information that lacked Nuance. Therefore, it is more important than ever to understand the meaning and internalization of self-love messages put to young people, as digital and mental health literacy differ greatly in different settings.

Although previous studies have extensively examined social media use, mental health, self-esteem, and online identity formation, several limitations remain. First, most studies focus on generalized social media consumption rather than specifically examining self-love content as a distinct communicative phenomenon. Second, existing research predominantly employs quantitative approaches that measure correlations between platform use and psychological outcomes, offering limited insight into how users interpret and experience self-love narratives in their everyday lives. Third, empirical evidence from developing-country contexts, particularly Indonesia, remains limited despite the country's exceptionally high social media penetration and TikTok usage rates. These limitations indicate a need for context-specific qualitative investigations that explore how self-love content shapes identity formation, self-awareness, motivation, and behavioral practices among young users.

The empirical context of Manggala District, Makassar City, provides a particularly relevant setting for such investigation. Gen Z individuals in this urban area are highly engaged with TikTok and routinely encounter self-love-related content through algorithmic recommendations. Preliminary observations indicate that while many users report increased confidence, emotional awareness, and concern for mental health, others experience social comparison, unrealistic expectations, and dependence on digital validation. This duality highlights the need to examine self-love content not merely as a positive or negative phenomenon but as a complex social and psychological process shaped by platform algorithms, user interactions, and local socio-cultural conditions.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the role of TikTok self-love content in shaping self-identity, enhancing self-awareness, and increasing motivation among Gen Z in Manggala District, Makassar City. It also investigates the behavioral impacts generated through repeated exposure to self-love narratives. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on self-love content as a specific form of algorithmically mediated communication and its examination through an in-depth qualitative perspective within an Indonesian urban context. By integrating identity formation, self-awareness, motivation, and behavioral change into a single analytical framework, this study contributes to the growing literature on digital culture, youth development, and social media psychology while providing practical insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with mental health-oriented content on TikTok.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the influence of self-love content on TikTok and its implications for the behavior of Generation Z in Manggala District, Makassar City. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' subjective experiences, perceptions, interpretations, and behavioral responses toward self-love content encountered on social media. Qualitative inquiry enables researchers to investigate social phenomena within their natural settings and to capture the meanings individuals assign to their experiences (Lim, 2025). The study was guided by an interpretive paradigm, emphasizing participants' lived experiences and personal reflections regarding the role of TikTok in shaping self-identity, self-awareness, motivation, and behavioral practices.

## Research Context and Setting

The research was conducted in Manggala District, Makassar City, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, between May and June 2025. Manggala District represents an urban environment characterized by extensive internet accessibility and high social media engagement among young people. The district was selected because Generation Z constitutes a substantial proportion of the local population and demonstrates intensive use of TikTok as part of everyday communication and information consumption. The increasing popularity of self-love-related content within this demographic provided a relevant context for examining how algorithm-driven social media exposure influences psychological and behavioral outcomes. Conducting the study within this setting enabled a contextualized understanding of the interaction between digital culture and youth identity formation.

## Participants and Sampling Procedure

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure their relevance to the research objectives. Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative studies to identify information-rich cases capable of providing in-depth insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Tajik et al., 2025). The inclusion criteria required participants to belong to Generation Z, be between 15 and 29 years old, actively use TikTok, and regularly engage with self-love-related content. Ten participants were recruited, representing diverse educational and occupational backgrounds, including university students, secondary school students, employees, entrepreneurs, and content creators. This diversity allowed the study to capture multiple perspectives regarding the consumption and interpretation of self-love content. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the participants.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participant Category	Frequency
University Students	5
Secondary School Students	2
Employees	2
Entrepreneur/Content Creator	1
Total	10

Source: Field Data, 2025

## Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection technique, allowing participants to freely express their experiences while enabling the researcher to maintain focus on the research objectives. Interviews explored participants' patterns of TikTok use, perceptions of self-love content, emotional responses, and perceived behavioral changes. Each interview was conducted face-to-face and recorded with participants' consent.

Observation was employed to complement interview findings by providing contextual information regarding participants' interactions with digital content and their behavioral expressions. The study adopted unstructured observation, allowing the researcher to identify emerging patterns and phenomena throughout the fieldwork process. Documentation was also utilized to support data triangulation through the examination of screenshots, digital content examples, field notes, and other relevant materials related to self-love narratives on TikTok. The combination of these techniques facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon and enhanced data richness.

## **Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Monaro et al. (2022), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved transcribing interviews, organizing field notes, coding meaningful statements, and identifying emerging themes related to self-identity formation, self-awareness, motivation, and behavioral changes. Subsequently, the data were systematically displayed through thematic categorization and narrative descriptions to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verifying patterns across participants' accounts. This iterative analytical process enabled the identification of recurring themes and relationships while ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in empirical evidence.

## **Trustworthiness and Research Validity**

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study adopted the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability proposed by Ahmed (2024). Credibility was enhanced through methodological triangulation by integrating interviews, observations, and documentation. Member checking was conducted by confirming key interpretations with participants to ensure the accuracy of the findings. Dependability was supported through detailed documentation of research procedures and analytical decisions, creating an audit trail throughout the study. Confirmability was achieved by maintaining reflective field notes and ensuring that interpretations were derived from participants' narratives rather than researcher assumptions. Finally, thick descriptions of the research context and participant experiences were provided to facilitate transferability and enable readers to assess the applicability of the findings in similar contexts.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the empirical findings regarding the influence of self-love content on TikTok among Generation Z in Manggala District, Makassar City. The findings are organized into two major themes corresponding to the research objectives. The first theme examines the role of self-love content in shaping self-identity, increasing self-awareness, and enhancing motivation among Gen Z users. The second theme explores the behavioral impacts resulting from repeated exposure to self-love content, including both positive and negative consequences. The findings are derived from in-depth interviews, observations, and supporting documentation collected from ten active TikTok users who regularly engage with self-love-related content.

### **The Role of TikTok Self-Love Content in Shaping Self-Identity, Self-Awareness, and Motivation**

The findings indicate that self-love content has become an integral component of participants' digital experiences. Most informants reported frequent exposure to self-love content through TikTok's For You Page (FYP), largely due to the platform's recommendation algorithm. Participants described self-love content as motivational, reflective, and emotionally relevant to their personal circumstances.

Figure 1 illustrates examples of self-love content frequently encountered by participants, including motivational messages, affirmations, emotional reflections, and mental health advice.

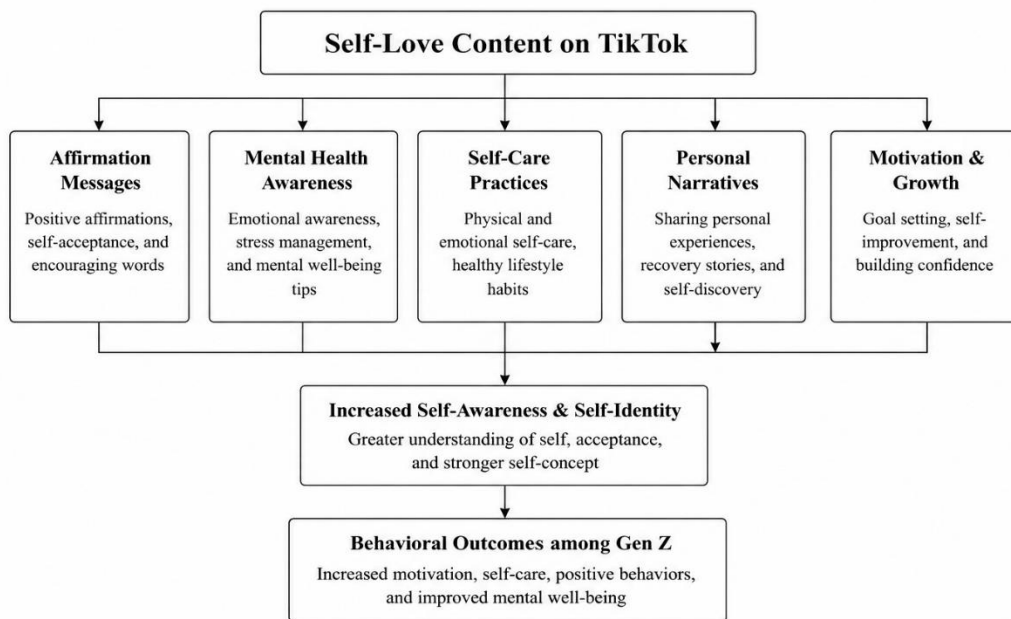


Figure 1. Conceptual Representation of Self-Love Content Exposure on TikTok and Its Influence on Generation Z

Source: Developed by the Authors Based on Field Findings, 2025

Observational data revealed that such content often appeared repeatedly throughout participants' daily TikTok use. This repetitive exposure contributed to the internalization of messages concerning self-acceptance, emotional awareness, and personal development.

### Self-Identity Formation and Increased Self-Awareness

One of the most prominent findings concerns the role of self-love content in facilitating self-identity development and increasing self-awareness. Participants consistently reported becoming more reflective regarding their personal values, emotions, and life goals after regularly consuming self-love content.

Ananda Putri Pratiwi explained that repeated exposure to self-love narratives encouraged her to better understand herself and become less influenced by external judgments. She described how the content gradually altered her perception of personal worth and life direction:

*“Every time I scroll through TikTok, I often encounter content about accepting yourself, loving yourself, and not being overly concerned with what other people think. At first, I just watched it casually, but over time I started reflecting on my own life. I realized that I had spent too much time worrying about other people’s opinions. The content reminded me that I should focus more on understanding myself and determining my own goals. It made me feel more confident and more certain about who I am.”*

This statement demonstrates how self-love content functions as a reflective stimulus that encourages users to evaluate their self-concepts. The repeated messages concerning self-worth and personal growth appear to facilitate a more stable sense of identity.

A similar experience was reported by Hafsah Fatih Ramadhan, who emphasized that self-love content encouraged deeper self-reflection regarding her treatment of herself and others.

“Usually, the content makes me stop for a moment and think about myself. Sometimes I realize that I have been too hard on myself or that I expect too much from myself. After watching these videos, I become more aware of how I treat myself, how I respond to problems, and even how I interact with other people. It feels like a reminder that I should take care of myself emotionally as well.”

This narrative indicates that self-awareness emerged through repeated reflection stimulated by digital content. Participants increasingly recognized their emotional conditions and personal needs, suggesting that self-love content served as a catalyst for introspection.

Diva Azzahra also described how self-love content changed her perspective on self-acceptance.

*“After watching this type of content regularly, I realized that I do not have to be perfect all the time. I became more accepting of my weaknesses and stopped forcing myself to meet standards that were not realistic for me. It made me feel more comfortable being myself.”*

These findings collectively demonstrate that self-love content contributed to the development of positive self-perceptions and greater emotional awareness among participants.

### **Increased Motivation and Positive Validation**

Beyond self-awareness, participants frequently reported experiencing increased motivation and positive emotional reinforcement after viewing self-love content.

Several informants explained that motivational messages and personal success stories provided encouragement during periods of emotional difficulty. Participants often perceived the content as a source of validation and psychological support.

Ananda explained:

*“The content is full of encouragement. Sometimes when I feel tired or discouraged, I see videos reminding me that it is okay to fail and that everyone progresses at their own pace. Those messages motivate me to keep moving forward and not give up. It feels like someone is reminding me that I am capable and that my efforts are valuable.”*

This account suggests that self-love content functions as a source of emotional affirmation that reinforces personal resilience.

Hafsah reported similar experiences:

*“I often feel more motivated after watching self-love videos because they remind me that I do not have to be perfect. The content tells us that making mistakes is normal and that personal growth takes time. That message gives me confidence and helps me continue pursuing my goals.”*

The motivational effect was also evident in participants’ descriptions of increased confidence and willingness to pursue personal aspirations.

Wiwiq Putri Pratiwi explained:

*“There has definitely been a change. I feel more confident speaking in front of people and expressing my opinions. Before, I was afraid of being judged. Now, I try to focus on improving myself instead of worrying too much about what others think.”*

The findings suggest that self-love content contributes to psychological empowerment by providing positive validation and encouraging self-confidence.

## **The Impact of Self-Love Content on Gen Z Behavior**

The second major finding concerns the behavioral changes associated with repeated exposure to self-love content. Participants reported various modifications in daily habits, emotional management, interpersonal interactions, and lifestyle practices.

### **Positive Behavioral Changes**

The most frequently reported behavioral outcome was increased self-care. Participants indicated that self-love content encouraged them to pay greater attention to both physical and psychological well-being.

Ananda described these changes as follows:

*“I take care of myself more now. I pay attention to my appearance, my health, and even the way I talk to myself. I have learned that self-care is not selfish. It is something important. I also make more time for myself because I realize that resting and taking care of my mental health are necessary.”*

This statement reflects a shift toward healthier self-management practices influenced by self-love narratives.

Another notable change involved the adoption of “me time” practices. Participants reported intentionally creating personal time for relaxation, reflection, and emotional recovery.

Hafsah explained:

*“Before, I felt guilty when I spent time on myself. Now I understand that taking a break is important. I set aside time to relax, reflect, and do activities that make me feel better emotionally.”*

The findings indicate that self-love content encouraged participants to establish healthier boundaries and prioritize emotional well-being.

Behavioral changes were also observed in social interactions. Several participants reported reduced tendencies toward social comparison and increased focus on personal development.

Zaskia Putri Andriana stated:

*“I used to compare myself with other people all the time. Whenever I saw someone more successful or more attractive, I felt insecure. After watching self-love content regularly, I started focusing more on my own progress. I still admire other people, but I no longer feel that I have to become exactly like them.”*

This finding suggests that self-love content promoted a shift from external validation toward self-referenced evaluation.

### **Improved Mental Health Awareness**

Participants consistently described heightened awareness of mental health issues after engaging with self-love content.

Reski Ananda Ilham explained:

*“The content helped me understand my emotions better. Before, I often ignored my feelings or kept everything to myself. Now I recognize when I am stressed, tired, or overwhelmed. I also know that it is okay to ask for help when needed.”*

This increased awareness was accompanied by greater emotional openness and improved communication regarding personal challenges.

Similarly, participants reported feeling calmer and more capable of managing stress. Several informants explained that self-love content helped reduce overthinking and encouraged more positive coping strategies.

### **Negative Social Comparison**

Despite these benefits, the findings also reveal several negative consequences associated with self-love content consumption. One significant concern involved social comparison.

Some participants reported feeling inadequate when comparing themselves to highly curated portrayals of beauty, success, and self-improvement frequently presented on TikTok.

Siti Nadifa described this experience:

*“Sometimes I look at TikTok and see people who seem perfect. They have beautiful appearances, successful careers, and ideal lifestyles. Even though the content talks about self-love, it can make me feel like I am not doing enough or that I am falling behind.”*

This statement demonstrates how idealized self-love narratives may unintentionally generate feelings of inadequacy.

Sarmila reported similar experiences:

*“There are moments when I feel insecure after watching certain content. Some creators appear to have perfect lives, and that can make me question myself. Even though the message is positive, sometimes it creates pressure.”*

These findings indicate that self-love content may simultaneously promote self-acceptance while reinforcing unrealistic standards.

### **Emotional Dependence on Self-Love Content**

Another notable finding concerns participants’ emotional reliance on self-love content as a source of comfort and validation.

Several informants admitted turning to TikTok whenever they experienced sadness, anxiety, or emotional distress.

Siti Nadifa explained:

*“When I am feeling down, I automatically open TikTok and look for self-love content. Sometimes it feels like the content understands exactly what I am going through. It helps me feel better, but I realize that I have become quite dependent on it.”*

This statement suggests the emergence of emotional dependency, where digital content becomes a primary coping mechanism.

Sarmila expressed a similar experience:

*“When I feel lonely or overwhelmed, I often look for self-love videos. Sometimes my phone feels like my closest companion because I am afraid of burdening other people with my problems.”*

The findings indicate that while self-love content provides emotional support, excessive reliance may reduce direct interpersonal communication and encourage dependence on digital validation.

The results demonstrate that self-love content on TikTok exerts a multifaceted influence on Generation Z in Manggala District. The content contributes positively to self-awareness, identity development, motivation, self-care, and mental health awareness. However, repeated exposure may also generate negative social

comparison and emotional dependence on digital content. These findings highlight the complex role of self-love narratives within contemporary digital culture and underscore the importance of critical engagement with social media content.

### **Self-Love Content as a Digital Mechanism for Identity Construction and Behavioral Transformation among Generation Z**

The findings demonstrate that self-love content on TikTok functions as more than a source of entertainment; it serves as a digital mechanism through which Generation Z constructs self-identity, develops self-awareness, and regulates behavior. The participants' experiences indicate that repeated exposure to self-love narratives facilitates reflective processes that encourage self-acceptance, emotional awareness, and personal growth. This finding aligns with recent studies suggesting that social media platforms increasingly act as spaces for identity negotiation and psychological development among young users (Valkenburg et al., 2022; Nesi et al., 2023; Beyens et al., 2024). Rather than passively consuming content, users actively interpret and internalize messages that resonate with their emotional experiences, thereby integrating these narratives into their self-concepts.

The observed increase in self-awareness supports previous research indicating that self-reflective digital content can enhance emotional intelligence and psychological insight among adolescents and young adults (Orben & Przybylski, 2023; Odgers & Jensen, 2024). Participants reported becoming more conscious of their emotions, values, and personal needs after regularly engaging with self-love content. This finding is consistent with studies showing that exposure to positive mental health narratives on social media may promote adaptive self-reflection and encourage healthier emotional regulation strategies (Naslund et al., 2022; Vogel et al., 2023). However, the present study extends this literature by demonstrating how TikTok's recommendation algorithm intensifies such exposure through repeated content delivery, creating a continuous cycle of reflection and self-evaluation. Consequently, self-awareness appears not only as an individual psychological outcome but also as an algorithmically mediated process shaped by platform architecture.

The findings regarding identity formation further support contemporary perspectives on digital identity development. Previous studies have argued that social media environments provide opportunities for experimentation, self-expression, and identity exploration (Uhls et al., 2021; Charmaraman et al., 2023). The participants in this study described self-love content as helping them recognize their strengths, accept personal limitations, and define life goals independently from external expectations. Unlike earlier research that primarily examined identity construction through peer interaction and self-presentation, this study highlights the role of therapeutic and motivational content as an influential identity resource. This represents an important contribution to the growing literature on digital youth cultures by demonstrating that identity formation can emerge through the consumption of value-oriented content rather than solely through social interaction.

Another significant finding concerns the motivational impact of self-love content. Participants frequently described experiencing positive validation, increased confidence, and greater willingness to pursue personal goals. These findings corroborate recent evidence indicating that supportive online content can strengthen self-efficacy and resilience among young people (Frison et al., 2022; Boer et al., 2025). The motivational effect appears particularly relevant in contemporary social environments characterized by academic pressure, social expectations, and uncertainty regarding future opportunities. Consistent with Self-Determination Theory, positive affirmations and messages of self-acceptance may satisfy fundamental psychological needs for competence and autonomy, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The present findings suggest that TikTok's

self-love ecosystem may function as an informal motivational resource that supports personal development and psychological empowerment.

The behavioral changes identified in this study also correspond with previous findings concerning the relationship between digital content consumption and lifestyle practices. Participants reported improvements in self-care routines, emotional regulation, and mental health awareness. Similar outcomes have been documented in studies examining online mental health communities and digital well-being campaigns (Pretorius et al., 2022; Radovic et al., 2023). The current findings indicate that self-love content encourages users to prioritize both physical and psychological well-being through practices such as self-care, emotional boundary setting, and reflective coping. These behavioral shifts suggest that digital media can contribute positively to health-related behaviors when content emphasizes realistic and constructive forms of self-improvement.

Nevertheless, the findings also reveal important contradictions. Although self-love content promotes self-acceptance, some participants simultaneously experienced negative social comparison and feelings of inadequacy. This paradox supports previous research demonstrating that social media can generate both beneficial and harmful psychological effects depending on content interpretation and individual vulnerability (Verduyn et al., 2022; Appel et al., 2023). Exposure to idealized representations of beauty, success, and personal growth may unintentionally create new standards that users feel compelled to achieve. Consequently, narratives designed to encourage self-love may paradoxically reinforce self-criticism when individuals perceive themselves as unable to attain the lifestyles portrayed online. This finding extends current scholarship by illustrating that positive content is not inherently protective; its effects depend on how users interpret and compare themselves with digital representations.

Similarly, the emergence of emotional dependence on self-love content highlights another critical issue. Several participants relied on TikTok as a primary source of comfort, validation, and emotional support. While previous studies have documented the therapeutic potential of online communities (Rideout & Fox, 2023; Naslund et al., 2022), excessive dependence may reduce direct interpersonal communication and weaken offline coping resources. The findings suggest that self-love content can function as both emotional support and emotional dependency, depending on the intensity of use and availability of alternative support systems. This duality represents an important theoretical contribution because it demonstrates that digital well-being content may simultaneously empower and constrain users.

This study is novel because it treats self-love content as an algorithmically mediated social phenomenon instead of simply a psychological intervention. This study is unique in that it explores how self-love narratives are understood, adopted, and manifested into practice among Generation Z in an urban environment in Indonesia, rather than just the frequency of use of social media or overall mental health outcomes. The results confirm the extension of traditional media effects to the cultivation of self-perceptions, behavioral orientations, and emotional responses through repeated exposure to positive digital narratives, thus enriching Cultivation Theory.

On a practical level, these findings indicate that teachers, mental health professionals, parents, and policymakers need to be aware of the impact of self-love content on youth development. Digital literacy initiatives must focus on the critical engagement with self-improvement content, so that young users are able to differentiate between positive and negative self-acceptance and between narratives of self-optimisation and self-improvement. Content producers are also expected to

convey messages that give due consideration to emotional challenges without pushing for the idealization of positive messages.

There are a number of caveats. The study used a relatively small sample from one district and hence the findings are not generalizable to the larger population. Second, the qualitative design does not emphasize statistical generalizability, but rather depth in understanding. Third, the results are based on the participants' reported experiences, and may not fully capture changes in long-term behavior. Research in the future may use mixed methods or longitudinal studies to investigate the long-term impact of self-love content in various cultural and demographic groups. Comparative studies between platforms, e.g., TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, could also yield more insight into the psychological and behavioural effects of algorithmic differences among platforms.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the content of self-love in the TikTok media has a significant influence on the self-identity, self-awareness, motivation, and behavior patterns of Generation Z in the Manggala District, Makassar City. The results suggest that retelling self-love stories can foster a user's self-acceptance, emotional awareness, confidence and self-care. The study also indicates that self-love content can also come with a price tag, in the form of negative social comparison and emotional reliance on digital validation. The results point to the twofold nature of self-love content as a source of psychological empowerment and also a source of vulnerability.

In theory, the work of this study helps to expand upon the literature on digital culture and media effects as it reveals the ways in which algorithmically curated content directly affects identity formation and behavioral transformation for young users. In real-world terms, the results highlight the need for critical awareness and digital literacy in relation to self-improvement materials, to help increase the likelihood that online experiences will be healthy. The study has some limitations in terms of its qualitative nature and its local context. Future studies could apply a longitudinal or comparative design with exposure to self-love content across social media platforms and across cultures, to study the long-term psychological and behavioral effects of self-love content exposure.

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