

# The Use of Therapy-Speak Throughout Tik Tok: Accuracy of Information and Sentiment

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## ABSTRACT

Through the increasing popularity of social media platforms coupled with a lack of qualified mental health service providers, a new concept arises: therapy-speak. Since many people do not, or are unable to, discuss topics surrounding mental health with a professional, many users are now posing questions about mental health to the broader, unqualified public. In this paper I posit that therapy-speak can have both positive and negative effects on social media users depending on how these terms are employed. In section II, Literature Review, I prove this statement by analyzing the effects of using therapy-speak incorrectly and explore the effects of using it properly. I further examine the use of therapy-speak throughout Tik Tok when employed by mental health professionals in the last segment of the literature review. In section III, I detail the methodology implemented throughout this study, which includes both a content and sentiment analysis, as further described in sections III(A)(1) and III(A)(2), respectively. I also discuss the limitations to the study, in section III(B), with the primary obstacles consisting of human bias and algorithmic preferences. After presenting the findings of this study, in section III(C), the Discussions and Interpretations section (III(D)), details the significance of these findings. Finally in section IV, I conclude that there is a disconcerting amount of misinformation and misrepresentation of therapy-speak terms throughout Tik Tok, which, connecting back to the literature review, has the potential to harm Tik Tok users.

## Introduction

During recent times, society has been putting a much greater emphasis on individual mental health needs. This can be seen in the steadily increasing demand for mental health treatment among average adults (American Psychological Association, 2021; McHugh, 2022).<sup>1</sup> This increasing demand for treatment poses new problems of access to experts who are qualified (i.e., licensed) to speak on this topic. According to Tom Delaney PhD., Associate Professor at the Lerner College of Medicine, accessing a therapist has become far more difficult due to an influx of people vying for the same services (McHugh, 2022). A recent survey conducted by a prominent non-profit organization, Mental Health America, substantiates this assertion, concluding that there is a 350:1 ratio of individuals to mental health providers (Reinert et al., 2022, p. 29).<sup>2</sup> Even though this ratio is already concerning low, this statistic “does not account for whether these providers are able to accept patients, are accepting insurance or providing in-network care, or are culturally or linguistically representative of the communities they work in” (Reinert et al., 2022, p. 29). In addition, many Americans are unable to obtain mental health services due to economic restrictions (Conroy et al., 2020). This is often in part because these services

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<sup>1</sup> The reasons for this increase in demand for mental health services are outside the scope of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> The term “mental health provider” accounts for “psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, counselors, marriage and family therapists, and advanced practice nurses specializing in mental health care” (Reinert et al., 29).

must be deemed a medical necessity for this expense to be covered by insurance providers (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2015).

Without means of formal mental health services, many people are looking for not only an outlet, but other sources of information. Due to its prevalence and accessibility in modern society, social media has become a popular medium for disseminating information, especially surrounding mental health. Since these platforms are so popular, information has the potential to reach a multitude of different communities and demographics. In fact, a Pew Research Center Analysis states that roughly 72% of adults in the United States report using at least one social media platform, the majority frequenting these sites at least once a week (Gallo & Cho, 2021). This does not account for the millions of children and adolescents who also visit these sites, obtaining much of their important information via informal means of communication.<sup>3</sup>

Through the increasing popularity of social media platforms coupled with a lack of qualified mental health service providers, a new concept arises: therapy-speak. Since many people do not, or are unable to discuss topics surrounding mental health with a professional, many users are now posing questions about mental health to the broader, unqualified public. This can be seen through the popularization of different hashtags such as #mentalhealth, #adhd, and #anxiety, all having well over nine billion views on Tik Tok (Amato, 2022). The latter two hashtags are prevalent examples of therapy-speak, which can be defined as “prescriptive language describing certain psychological concepts and behaviors” (Fishbein, 2024). However, other definitions, such as one provided by psychotherapist Eleanor Morgan, define therapy-speak as merely “language of the therapy room” (Morgan, 2023). I assert that although broad, this definition is more reflective of therapy-speak, because not all terms are inherently prescriptive. However, in this paper I will be utilizing the first definition as I am focusing primarily on prescriptive therapy-speak.

Another phrase that I will be referring to throughout this paper is “mental health jargon.” Jargon can be defined as niche terms that are characteristically hard to understand and solely utilized by a specific profession or group (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, n.d.). In this case, mental health jargon is employed by people who work in the field of psychology, including therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, certain professors, social workers, specialized doctors and nurses, etc. However for purposes of this study, I define mental health jargon as the medical definitions for therapy-speak terminology. In other words, the intended more nuanced definitions for the therapy-speak terms that have been assimilated into everyday verbiage. The factor that distinguishes therapy-speak from mental health jargon is the idea that therapy-speak encompasses terms that previously were reserved for a medical setting, but have made their way into the vernacular (Gifford, 2023).

In this paper I posit that therapy-speak can have both positive and negative effects on social media users depending on how these terms are employed. In section II, Literature Review, I prove this statement by analyzing the effects of using therapy-speak incorrectly and explore the effects of using it properly. I further examine the use of therapy-speak throughout Tik Tok when employed by mental health professionals in the last segment of the literature review. In section III, I detail the methodology implemented throughout this study, which includes both a content and sentiment analysis, as further described in sections III(A)(1) and III(A)(2), respectively. I also discuss the limitations to the study, in section III(B), with the primary obstacles consisting of human bias and algorithmic preferences. After presenting the findings of this study, in section III(C), the Discussions and Interpretations section (III(D)), details the significance of these findings. Finally in section IV, I conclude that there is a disconcerting amount of misinformation and misrepresentation of therapy-speak terms throughout Tik Tok, which, connecting back to the literature review, has the potential to harm Tik Tok users.

Through my analysis of the literature and the study described later in this paper, I address a gap in the literature by quantifying the amount of accurate information as well as the sentiment seen under prescriptive

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<sup>3</sup> A Pew Research Analysis states that a large majority of teenagers ages 13-17 frequent social media sites, 51% using these platforms daily (Vogles et al.).

therapy-speak hashtags. Although there is information surrounding the importance of accurate and destigmatizing mental health information, there have been no accessible studies that have quantified these metrics. In addition, I am addressing another gap by focusing on one specific platform that is not generally well researched, Tik Tok, and the information seen throughout these videos.

## Literature Review

### Negative Effects of Utilizing Therapy-Speak: Misinformation and Misinterpretation

#### *Misinformation and Misinterpretation*

The sheer amount of information presented throughout social media platforms, specifically Tik Tok, makes it difficult to discern whether the facts and definitions presented are accurate (Basch et al., 2022, p. 3). With respect to therapy-speak and knowledge surrounding mental health, misconstrued information has the potential to be particularly damaging, “becoming a dangerous resource for future health information seekers” (Basch et al., 2022, p. 2). The idea that misinformation can be harmful is relatively uncontroversial. However, a prevalent issue that is more nuanced, is user misinterpretation or misuse of mental health knowledge presented throughout the media. A fair amount of the information seen through different platforms is accurate, however, it is not always inaccurate facts that are harmful. The interpretation of accurate information can be harmful as well (Wood, 2021). Jeremy Tyler, Doctor of Psychology claims that “you can get a fairly accurate list of the criteria a psychologist or psychiatrist might use to diagnose an illness right at your fingertips. However, there is criteria that is intended to be interpreted only by a mental health professional” (Wood, 2021). Self-diagnosing mental conditions may have negative repercussions because many different conditions have overlapping symptoms. This could result in misdiagnosis and/or wrongful treatment (Thatcher, 2021). In addition, social media has the potential to promote misdiagnosis through partial or complete misrepresentation of mental health concepts. There can also be a number of benefits to therapy-speak in social media, which will be discussed in section II (B).

#### *Causing Stigma*

Utilizing any sort of “prescriptive language” when discussing mental health concepts may impact communities in unintended ways. Having discussions about mental health can help break public stigma surrounding select topics (C4 Innovations, 2021).<sup>4</sup> However, if these discussions are not fielded in a conscious and thoughtful manner, utilizing therapy-speak has the potential to deepen misconceptions about mental health jargon; thus perpetuating the negative stigma surrounding a myriad of concepts. In most cases, these discussions are not fielded in a way that is beneficial to the masses. In fact, in an article published in the academic journal Social Science and Medicine, authors Berkers and Pavlova claim that “mental health discourse showed a trend in affectivity rising over time, mainly due to an increase in negative – and to a lesser extent positive – sentiment” (Pavlova & Berkers, 2020, p. 8). In other words, discussions around mental health have become charged with primarily negative sentiment, therefore stigmatizing important topics and terms. This causes rising “affectivity” in content, or the ability for these new discussions to more greatly influence people’s actions and emotions. Affectivity occurs due to a sort of chain reaction that arises with the introduction of negative public stigma. In an article published in the National Library of Medicine, Doctor of Philosophy Xi Chen and co-authors claim that one’s view of “public stigma” can often result in “internalized stigma” which has a number of detriments (Chen et al., 2021). Internalized stigma can be especially harmful, acting as a “major barrier to people... [in]

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<sup>4</sup> Public stigma refers to “the negative or discriminatory attitudes that others have about mental illness” (Corrigan & Watson, 2002, p. 2).

accessing mental health services” defeating the purpose of raising awareness throughout the media (Corrigan & Watson, 2002, p. 2).

## The Positive Effects of Utilizing Therapy-Speak

Although using therapy-speak throughout the media has the potential to be harmful, when properly employed it can be beneficial. Correctly using therapy-speak terms can help bolster social media users’ mental health literacy (Jorm, 2000). Mental health literacy is an important concept as it is defined as “the ability to gain access to, understand, and use information in ways which promote and maintain good health” (Jorm, 2000, p. 396). There are several components that make up mental health literacy. Popularizing accurate and constructive definitions throughout the media would address many of these components.<sup>5</sup> In addition, publicizing mental health literacy and self-help skills is important, especially among people who are unable to or decide against accessing a professional. According to prominent researcher Anthony Jorm, “only a minority of people who meet diagnostic criteria for a mental disorder seek professional help” (Jorm, 2000, p. 397). Thus making the dissemination of this important information indispensable. In addition, publicizing accessible and accurate mental health information may encourage social media users to practice “help-seeking behaviors” (Latha et al., 2020). This allows for those in need to access help that they otherwise would not have known is available. This assistance does not necessarily have to be from a therapist or mental health service provider, but can also come from an internal source like friends and family, which is also valuable.

Similar to how therapy-speak has the potential to stigmatize terms, it also has the ability to destigmatize these same topics. As previously stated, fielding discussions in a “conscious and thoughtful manner” has the potential to break stigma (C4 Innovations, 2021). In fact, Doctor and Professor of Psychiatry Heather Stuart claims that, “[n]egative societal responses to people with mental illnesses may be the single greatest barrier to the development of mental health programs worldwide” (Stuart, 2016). Therefore, it can be inferred that positive societal responses may do the inverse. Publicizing healthy and positive mental health practices has the potential to break stigma and reach a wide range of different communities, making access to useful mental health resources and information attainable by low cost and non-imposing means.

## Qualified Mental Health Providers on Tik Tok

There are many creators seen throughout social media platforms that are qualified to speak on topics regarding mental health. For example, Tik Tok offers a platform for mental health professionals to educate the public by providing advice and talking about their own experiences (Blum, 2021). Some popular mental health professionals on Tik Tok include Doctors Julie Smith, Mattias J. Barker, Jeff Guenther, and many others (Bushak, 2022). As of March 2024, all of the creators named in the prior section have well over two million followers and garner thousands, if not millions, of views per video. However, the dissemination of therapy related information via Tik Tok is not an infallible option as social media has a tendency to “strip away nuance” (Cornish, 2023). Due to this, information presented by mental health service providers may not accurately represent mental health conditions. Moreover, in a podcast produced by CNN, Clinical Psychologist, Dr. Arianna Brandolini, claims that the people who properly utilize the therapy-speak popularized by Tik Tok, “are those who are in therapy” because they have the ability to discuss these concepts and learn how to utilize them in a beneficial

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<sup>5</sup> The elements of mental health literacy include: “a) the ability to recognise specific disorders or different types of psychological distress; b) knowledge and beliefs about risk factors and causes; c) knowledge and beliefs about self-help interventions; d) knowledge and beliefs about professional help available; e) attitudes which facilitate recognition and appropriate help-seeking; and f) knowledge of how to seek mental health information” (Jorm, 2).

way (Cornish, 2023). However, when licensed professionals popularize accurate definitions of mental health jargon in a neutral or positive manner, information seekers can greatly benefit from this information.

## Study: Is Therapy-Speak Primarily Negative or Positive?

### Methodology

Since both the accuracy and sentiment of videos play a large role in shaping social media users' perception of mental health conditions (see section II above), I formulated an essential question that aims to address both of these aspects. This question is: To what extent does prescriptive therapy-speak throughout Tik Tok (1) reflect the medical definitions for this jargon and (2) increase stigma, through the implementation of these terms, surrounding mental health concepts? Assessing both the sentiment and accuracy of information is necessary for the purposes of this study, as it provides a more representative example of how these terms are being portrayed throughout Tik Tok. In order to accurately respond to both components presented in the guiding question above, the methodology employed in this paper is multivariate; section III(A)(1) below focuses on accuracy of information and is a content analysis, while section III(A)(2) below aims to study stigma in videos through a sentiment analysis. A spreadsheet that documents the quantitative data collected throughout the content and sentiment analyses can be found in Appendix A.

In this study, I analyzed the twenty top videos under three different prescriptive therapy-speak hashtags: #OCD, #narcissism, and #depression. In order to select these terms, I reviewed a relatively unbiased Tik Tok feed, one that was created for purposes of this study (see section III(A)(1)). I found that OCD, narcissism and depression were the most commonly occurring terms on that page. I then reviewed these terms by searching for them in Tik Tok's browser, revealing that all three hashtags are relatively popular. As of March 17, 2024, #OCD has amassed over 339,900 posts, #narcissism has 395,500 posts and #depression has 2.5 million posts. In addition, these terms are also vastly different from one another and, because of this, are better representative of the broader category of therapy-speak. In sum, I selected these terms on account of their popularity and recurrence throughout a relatively unbiased Tik Tok feed. Additionally, this study solely focuses on the use of hashtags (#) because "this function ... allows people to easily follow topics they are interested in," making these videos more accessible to mental health information seekers (Pavlova & Berkers, 2020, p. 5). However, this is also a limitation (as discussed in section III(B)), as many videos containing hashtags may not be representative of all videos that feature therapy-speak.

### *Content Analysis: Accuracy of Information*

In order to assess the accuracy of information presented throughout Tik Tok, I performed a content analysis on the top twenty videos that populate when #OCD, #narcissism, and #depression are searched in Tik Tok's browser.<sup>6</sup> In order to combat algorithmic biases (i.e., videos curated towards my personal preferences and interests), I first created a new Tik Tok profile that has no followers, is not following any users, contains no posts, and has not liked or saved any content on Tik Tok. This was an essential step in this study, as a curated feed is not representative of the content seen by an individual user. Next, I created a spreadsheet, found in Appendix A, to report on the general information, community engagement statistics, and most importantly, accuracy of information seen throughout each video (see the spreadsheet subjects in Tables 1 and 2).

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<sup>6</sup> "Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e. text). Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings, and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts" (Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, n.d.).

**Table 1.** General Information and Community Engagement (Content Analysis)

Therapy Speak Term	User Handel (@)	User Name	Licensed	Date Posted	Date Accessed
Video Length	Views (#)	Likes (#)	Comments (#)	Views per Like	Views per Comment

**Table 2.** Definition Formatting (Content Analysis)

OCD	Definition 1: Mayo Clinic	Definition 2: Harvard Health	Definition 3: APA Dictionary
Narcissism	Definition 1: Mayo Clinic	Definition 2: Harvard Health	Definition 3: APA Dictionary
Depression	Definition 1: Mayo Clinic	Definition 2: Harvard Health	Definition 3: APA Dictionary

In order to determine whether each term used is representative of its jargon-based definition, as described in the section I, I created one rubric per definition. This rubric included information about each term's general definition, as well as symptoms that are considered necessary for diagnosis. If a video did not meet both criteria, it was considered to be misrepresentative of its intended jargon-based definition. I compared each term to three separate definitions creating three rubrics per term. Since I analyzed three different therapy-speak terms in this methodology, there are a total of nine rubrics. Assessing whether each instance of therapy-speak is utilized correctly under three definitions from different sources helps to counteract the possible vagueness or unnecessary specificity seen in a particular definition. Although I am able to bypass biases within each definition through the inclusion of multiple sources, it is impossible to completely eliminate any bias. The choice of the Mayo Clinic, Harvard Health, and the APA Dictionary was also deliberate. Each of these sites contain definitions for all three terms and are considered to be credible in the field of psychology, which includes therapy-speak. The Mayo Clinic is a well established "nonprofit surgical and medical clinic," which has been in operation for over 100 years (Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024). Due to its continual publication and good reputation, the Mayo Clinic has gradually become a household name. Harvard Health Publishing is a division of Harvard Medical school (Harvard Health Publishing, n.d.-a), which is revered as one of the most prestigious institutions for higher level education (Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2003). Lastly, the APA dictionary of psychology is published by the American Psychological Association, which is the largest professional organization of psychologists in the United States (Willis, 2023). These definitions can be seen in Table 3 below and the full nine rubrics can be found in Appendix B.

**Table 3.** Definitions used to Assess Videos

Term	Mayo Clinic Definition	Harvard Health Definition	APA Dictionary Definition
OCD	"Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) features a pattern of unwanted thoughts and fears known as obsessions. These obsessions lead you to do repetitive behaviors, also called compulsions. These obsessions and compulsions	"In obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), a person is troubled by intrusive, distressing thoughts (obsessions) and feels the pressure to carry out repetitive behaviors (compulsions)."	"[A] disorder characterized by recurrent intrusive thoughts (obsessions) that prompt the performance of neutralizing rituals (compulsions)."



	get in the way of daily activities and cause a lot of distress.”		
Narcissism	“[A] mental health condition in which people have an unreasonably high sense of their own importance. They need and seek too much attention and want people to admire them. People with this disorder may lack the ability to understand or care about the feelings of others. But behind this mask of extreme confidence, they are not sure of their self-worth and are easily upset by the slightest criticism.”	“Narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) is a mental health condition in which a person may show a pattern of behavior or inner experience that may include: - a need for admiration from others - a grandiose or excessive sense of self-importance (needs to have) - a sense of entitlement - a preoccupation with themselves - a lack of empathy for others.”	“[A] personality disorder with the following characteristics: (a) a long-standing pattern of grandiose self-importance and an exaggerated sense of talent and achievements; (b) fantasies of unlimited sex, power, brilliance, or beauty; (c) an exhibitionistic need for attention and admiration; (d) either cool indifference or feelings of rage, humiliation, or emptiness as a response to criticism, indifference, or defeat; and (e) various interpersonal disturbances, such as feeling entitled to special favors, taking advantage of others, and inability to empathize with the feelings of others”
Depression	“[A] persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest...it affects how you feel, think and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems”	“With major depression, there is a profound sadness or a sense of despair. The symptoms of major depression are defined as lasting at least two weeks, but usually they go on much longer”	“[A]ny of the mood disorders that typically have sadness or empty or irritable mood as the predominant symptom”

### *Sentiment Analysis: Discerning Stigma*

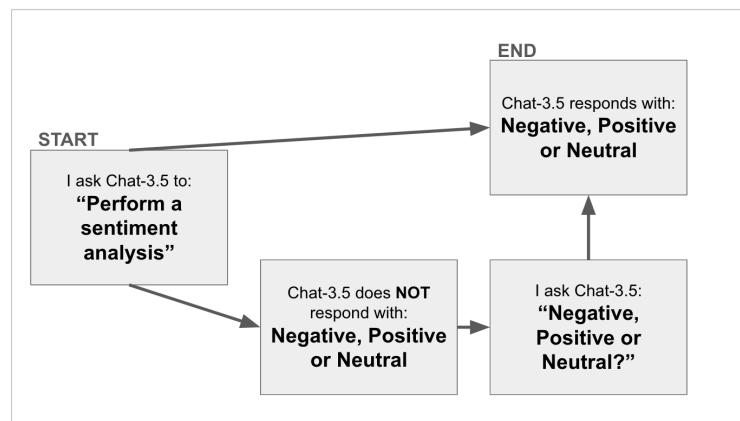
In the second segment of this study, I analyzed the sentiment of the videos in order to discern whether each term is being charged with negative or positive sentiment.<sup>7</sup> I performed the initial sentiment analysis, assessing whether the therapy-speak terms are being used negatively, positively or in a neutral manner by observing tone, word choice, and the visuals displayed in each video.<sup>8</sup> For example, when user Keara Sullivan (@superkeara)

<sup>7</sup> The content and sentiment analyses were performed concurrently and on the same sixty videos.

<sup>8</sup> A sentiment analysis is used to determine the emotional charge of the analyzed content. I simplified results seen throughout the sentiment analysis performed in this study by categorizing videos as positive, negative or neutral sentiment as opposed to looking at specific emotions.

flippantly states that she is “mentally ill” in reference to her OCD diagnosis, I qualified that statement as negatively charged (Sullivan, 2023).<sup>9</sup> Conversely, I identified 5hahem’s (@5hahem) video about depression as positive because, in a reflective tone, he discusses what he has done to persevere in the face of depression (5haham, 2024).<sup>10</sup>

In order to eliminate potential biases of my own review, I then used an AI generative tool, Chat GPT, to confirm my findings. This tool is “trained to follow an instruction in a prompt and provide a detailed response” (OpenAI, n.d.). I created specialized instructions for this tool to follow, excluding extraneous words, in order to reduce potential biases of the instructional terms. For context, Chat GPT is run by Open AI, a private company, founded in 2019 (Marr, 2023). Chat-3.5, the model used in this study, has improved upon the skills of the prior models, offering far better accuracy than before (Marr, 2023). To use this program, I transcribed each video, including important symbols and/or music in brackets, putting this information into Chat-3.5 and asking the tool to “perform a sentiment analysis.” If the program did not provide a direct answer, I responded with the question “negative, positive or neutral?” These questions are short and free of any bias, allowing the program to provide the most objective answer. See Figure 1 for a visual representation of the course of action I took when using Chat-3.5.



**Figure 1.** Course of Action When Using Chat-3.5

## Limitations

Tik Tok’s adaptive algorithm and human bias are limitations, as they both have the potential to skew the results of my research. Tik Tok’s algorithm adapts based on user interests, thus the top twenty videos would be curated towards my personal preferences. In an attempt to bypass this bias by creating a new Tik Tok profile that had no prior interaction with other accounts and videos. However, it was impossible to eradicate all algorithmic bias, but I minimized its affectivity on the study. In addition, human bias was also a concern when conducting the sentiment analysis portion of this study. This could be on account of my own, possibly inaccurate, interpretation of the meaning of certain terms. In order to limit the impact this factor had on my research, I utilized an AI generative tool to confirm my findings. I also had some minor limitations that could not be directly addressed. For example, due to time constraints, this paper solely focuses on the noun variations of therapy-speak terminology as opposed to the adjectives (i.e., depression instead of depressed). This limits the amount of videos that populate when a hashtag is searched, despite the fact that there are many other videos that discuss the same

<sup>9</sup> Seen in video 8 in the chart featured in Appendix A.

<sup>10</sup> Seen in video 52 in the chart featured in Appendix A.



mental health condition. In addition, videos that mentioned or focused on the three therapy-speak terms, but did not include a hashtag were not included in this study, as they are not nearly as accessible to mental health information seekers. The following are outside the scope of this paper, but may be the subject of future studies: an analysis of the adjective form of OCD, narcissism, and depression, the inclusion of non-prescriptive terms like boundaries or triggers, the use of different definitions and different AI tools, and other extraneous considerations that would have broadened the scope of this paper.

## Findings

In this study, I collected data that tracks community engagement, accuracy of information and sentiment that would represent specific hashtags, not individual videos. For this reason, I have averaged the data acquired in my analyses of sixty videos in order to produce information that could apply to individual hashtags. This allows me to synthesize the data making it more representative of the broader concept of therapy-speak. I organized the data depending on their respective hashtags and will present them as such: A) #OCD, B) #narcissism, C) #depression and D) the average of all findings.

**Table 4.** Content Analysis Findings

Term	Views per Like	Views per Comment	Definition 1: Mayo Clinic	Definition 2: Harvard Health	Definition 3: APA Dictionary
OCD	12.56444603	911.8947908	14 Accurate 6 Inaccurate	13 Accurate 7 Inaccurate	12 Accurate 8 Inaccurate
Narcissism	19.45698214	857.3436717	6 Accurate 14 Inaccurate	9 Accurate 11 Inaccurate	7 Accurate 13 Inaccurate
Depression	10.37419048	1407.61441	14 Accurate 6 Inaccurate	13 Accurate 7 Inaccurate	14 Accurate 6 Inaccurate

**Table 5.** Sentiment Analysis Findings

Term	Sentiment (human)	Sentiment (ChatGPT)
OCD	6 Negative   12 Neutral   2 Positive	9 Negative   9 Neutral   2 Positive
Narcissism	16 Negative   4 Neutral   0 Positive	16 Negative   4 Neutral   0 Positive
Depression	13 Negative   5 Neutral   2 Positive	12 Negative   5 Neutral   3 Positive

### *Data Collected on #OCD*

In this study's sampling of the top twenty videos containing #OCD, the accuracy of information seen throughout the videos was at 65% accurate. Conversely, 45% of Tik Toks featured misrepresentative content, qualifying these clips as inaccurate under the definitions of OCD provided by the Mayo Clinic, Harvard Health and the APA Dictionary.<sup>11</sup> In addition, when compared to the three hashtags studied, #OCD has a high view to like

<sup>11</sup> In order to account for the differences in the definitions, I averaged findings from both methods of content analysis in regards to accuracy of information.

ratio when compared with the other two terms; thus demonstrating a relatively high amount of community engagement.

In the sentiment analysis section of this study, it was uncovered that neutral sentiment was the most common among the sampled videos, with 52.5% of the content being neutral.<sup>12</sup> There was also a high number of videos containing negative sentiment, 37.5%, and a comparatively low number of positively charged videos, 10%.

### *Data Collected on #narcissism*

The accuracy of information seen throughout the twenty sampled videos containing #narcissism was low, especially when compared to the other two therapy-speak hashtags. About 36.7% of videos sampled were representative of their intended definitions; thus, 63.3% of the videos under this hashtag were inaccurate, misrepresenting the narcissistic personality disorder. When collecting quantitative data on community involvement, the view to like ratio was low with about 19.5 views per every like. On the contrary, community involvement when analyzed from a commenting standpoint was significantly greater than the rest of the terms studied. For every one comment made on a video containing #narcissism in the caption, there was an average of 857.3 views.

Of the three hashtags, #narcissism had the highest number of negatively charged videos and the lowest number of videos containing positive sentiment. Approximately 80% of videos analyzed were charged with negative sentiment, while 0% of videos studied contained positive sentiment. The remaining 20% of videos were neutral.

### *Data Collected on #depression*

The videos under #depression, when compared to the other therapy-speak terms, most accurately represented the intended definition of depression. 68.3% of sampled videos were accurate, while 31.7% of videos inaccurately represented depression. These statistics are very similar to that of #OCD videos, but are very different from the videos containing #narcissism. In addition, the average views to like ratio is about 10.4:1 which is considerably lower than the other therapy-speak terms. However, the view to comment ratio is 1407.6:1 which is far less community engagement when compared to the other terms.

Comparatively, videos under the hashtag depression contained more positive sentiment than the other terms studied. The number of videos containing positive sentiment is 12.5%, but is still overwhelmed by the 62.5% of negatively charged videos. Only 25% of the videos were neutral.

### *Findings Synthesized for Generalization*

In order to better represent therapy-speak as a whole, I have synthesized these findings into statistics meant to represent all three terms. These findings can be applied to the more broad concept of therapy-speak and will be used in the next section to make claims about the significance of this information. Ultimately, about 56.7% of videos sampled accurately represented their respective therapy-speak term. As a whole, community involvement is also relatively low with a view to like ratio of 14.13:1 and a view to comment ratio of 1058.95:1.

The sentiment of this information was primarily negative, with 60% of videos having a negative charge. Comparatively, there were very few videos containing positive sentiment. These videos only accounted for around 7.5% of sampled videos. Lastly, the remaining 32.5% of videos did not carry a positive or negative charge, and were neutral.

**Table 6.** Synthesized Content and Sentiment Analyses Data

<sup>12</sup> In order to account for the differences in the human versus ChatGPT sentiment analyses, I averaged findings from both methods of sentiment analysis.

Views per Like	Views per Comment	Definition 1: Mayo Clinic	Definition 2: Harvard Health	Definition 3: APA Dictionary	Sentiment (Human)	Sentiment (ChatGPT)
14.13	1058.95	34 Accurate 26 Inaccurate	35 Accurate 25 Inaccurate	33 Accurate 27 Inaccurate	35 Negative 21 Neutral 4 Positive	37 Negative 18 Neutral 5 Positive

## Discussion and Interpretations

### *Content Analysis*

The data collected in this study coupled with the information presented throughout a review of the literature (section II), can be used to draw important conclusions about the use of therapy-speak throughout Tik Tok. From an accuracy of information standpoint, it can be seen that the amount of inaccurate and misrepresentative information is high, as about 43.3% of Tik Tok videos sampled inaccurately depict important information about mental health conditions. This can be a large detriment to mental health information seekers, as these videos have the potential to skew peoples' perspective of what these mental health conditions actually entail. Furthermore, misunderstanding these prescriptive therapy-speak terms, due to inaccurate depictions and/or descriptions throughout the media, is likely to occur considering the high amount of misrepresentation of therapy-speak terminology seen in the sampled videos. In addition, the average number of views per like (refer back to section III(C)(4)) is considerably low, meaning that there is a small number of users who interact with these the viewed therapy-speak terms. This suggests that these Tik Tok videos have high affectivity and are less likely to resonate with viewers. Considering the amount of misinformation seen throughout Tik Tok, this lack of user interaction could be seen as a positive thing. Additionally, if the number of videos that accurately represent mental health conditions in a destigmatizing manner increases, this trend in rising in affectivity could also be beneficial. However, considering the virtually equal split of accurate and inaccurate information, it is unclear whether this rising affectivity is benefiting the masses, as different amounts and/or types of information are reaching different users.

The majority of videos sampled contain accurate information and this fact is not to be disregarded. This important information has the potential to reach many different demographics, which can help educate social media on a myriad of different mental health conditions. Considering that many people do not have access to a licensed mental health professional, having the ability to view accurate information for virtually no cost is an invaluable resource to many. It also allows those who would not have contacted a professional the opportunity to discreetly seek information. However, it is difficult to determine whether the video being viewed is accurate, as the study uncovered that there is a plethora of videos under the respective hashtags that do not accurately represent mental health terminology.

### *Sentiment Analysis*

The preformed sentiment analysis uncovered a large difference between the amount of videos charged with positive, negative, and neutral sentiment. Considering that sentiment is one of the primary factors in causing stigma, as seen in section III(A)(2), the overwhelming amount of videos containing negative sentiment is disturbing. Section VII provides that 60% of the videos sampled were charged with negative sentiment, increasing the chances of negative stigma surrounding therapy-speak concepts. Although the information conveyed throughout certain videos may be accurate, loading videos with negative sentiment may also decrease peoples' understanding of mental health concepts. This counteracts the good being done when terms are accurately represented throughout the media. In addition, negative stigma can decrease peoples' willingness to seek proper treatment and/or talk to others about important mental health concepts. Social media platforms like Tik Tok can

be used as a means of disseminating important information that helps those in need. However, creating videos with negative stigma increases the amount of misrepresentation and can cause more harm than good.

The number of videos charged with positive sentiment is relatively negligible at 7.5%. This suggests that there is a lot of growth to be done in terms of educating people on beneficial ways to field discussions on mental health topics. Discussing terms in a positive way has the potential to destigmatize topics and encourage mental health information seekers to view mental health conditions as a characteristic, as opposed to an inherently negative trait. In addition, fielding conversations with little to no charge (not negative or positive in sentiment) can be immensely beneficial, as these videos have the ability to disseminate unbiased information. There were a large number of videos analyzed throughout this paper, 32.5% of videos sampled, that were of neutral sentiment. This is a significant amount. The videos containing positive or neutral sentiment that also accurately portray mental health terminology could greatly improve the constructiveness of mental health conversations seen throughout Tik Tok.

## Conclusions

By performing a thorough review of the literature and a comprehensive study, this paper addresses the following question: To what extent does prescriptive therapy-speak throughout Tik Tok (1) reflect the medical definitions for this jargon and (2) increase stigma, through the implementation of these terms, surrounding mental health concepts? Based on my research, I conclude that prescriptive therapy-speak is often not reflective of the medical definitions for this jargon. It is commonly misrepresented throughout Tik Tok, revealing that there is a societal problem in the portrayal of mental health on social media platforms, specifically Tik Tok. As previously explored in section II, Literature Review, this can increase stigma resulting in negative impacts on mental health information seekers, as well as society as a whole.

In answering this question, I explored a gap in the literature by quantifying the amount of videos that portray accurate and inaccurate information under three different prescriptive therapy-speak hashtags. I also collected quantitative data on the number of videos that are charged with positive, negative, and neutral sentiment. This data was then used to draw conclusions about the implications of using therapy-speak throughout Tik Tok. I posit that changes need to be made in order to accommodate more comprehensive learning about mental health terms and facilitate beneficial discussions. While the specific changes are outside the scope of this paper, the first step in progress is recognizing the need for change and identifying the harmful effects of the status quo. Popularizing therapy-speak and bringing awareness to mental health topics can be beneficial only if the content seen by users is accurate and has a neutral and/or positive sentiment. For these reasons, many videos seen under therapy-speak hashtags have the potential to skew people's perception of mental health terminology, which can have negative implications on society as a whole.

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