

COMMUNICATIONS

The Impact of Face Filter Use on Self-Image and Narcissistic Communication on TikTok

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ARTICLE INFO

Received on November 26, 2025

Received in revised from January 31, 2026

Accepted February 1, 2026

Published on February 1, 2026

Keywords: (3-5 words) *Italic typed words, between the keywords separated by a semicolon (;)*

Face Filters;
Self-Image;
Narcissistic Communication;
Tiktok Social Media;
Digital Identity

How to cite this article: Daud, R.F., Rohmah, S., Nur, M. (2026). The Impact of Face Filter Use on Self-Image and Narcissistic Communication on TikTok. *Communications* 8(1), 88-106



ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the widespread use of face filters on the Tiktok platform, which significantly influences how individuals construct their self-image and present themselves through visual communication. The research questions are: (1) how the use of face filters influences the

formation of self-image among Tiktok users, and (2) how the use of face filters encourages the emergence of narcissistic communication among users. The purpose of this research is to analyze the impact of face filter use on self-perception and narcissistic communication patterns, and to explain the relationship between digital identity construction and self-presentation practices reinforced by the Tiktok algorithm. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques in the form of content observation, visual analysis of face filter use, and semi-structured interviews with active Tiktok users aged 18–25 who utilize face filters in content creation. Data are analysed using the Media Effects theory approach and the concept of narcissistic communication to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The study's findings suggest that the use of face filters triggers the formation of an unrealistic

idealized self-image, increases dependence on public validation, and fosters narcissistic communication tendencies such as self-promotion, attention-seeking, and excessive identity curation. Furthermore, TikTok, through its visual features and algorithmic mechanisms, reinforces narcissistic culture by rewarding filtered content with likes, comments, and increased exposure. This research confirms that face filters function not only as aesthetic tools but also as technologies that shape users' digital identities and communication dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

The development of short-form video-based social media platforms like Tiktok has revolutionized the practice of self-presentation and the mechanics of social interaction online. Tiktok not only provides a space for creative expression and entertainment, but also features augmented reality (AR) and artificial intelligence (AI)-based features that allow users to instantly alter their facial appearance, known as facial filters or beauty/AR filters. These filters can smooth skin, alter facial proportions, add virtual makeup, or create other aesthetic effects that present a more "idealized" version of a person's appearance. These features facilitate the production of highly curated visual content and often increase the chances of gaining public attention through the number of views, likes, and comments (Ariana et al., 2024).

Sociopsychologically, the ease of visual manipulation raises a number of issues closely related to self-image and mental well-being. Empirical evidence shows a correlation between exposure to edited/filtered content and increased body dissatisfaction, body surveillance, and upward social comparison, particularly among adolescents and young adults the primary demographic groups of TikTok users. Longitudinal and cross-sectional studies on visual platforms have reported that repeated use of aesthetic features is associated with increased appearance concerns and consumerist behaviors related to cosmetics or aesthetic procedures. This is supported by research on the effects of filters on young women and a

review of the literature on the influence of visual media on body perception (Szambolics et al., 2023).

On the other hand, aspects of communication triggered by this technology indicate a shift in interaction styles: from interpersonal communication based on proximity to performative communication oriented towards social measurement (engagement metrics). The use of facial filters not only beautifies appearance but also becomes a strategic tool for self-branding and self-promotion practices that easily turn into narcissistic behavior when driven by the urge for external validation (likes, followers) and algorithmic reinforcement (viral boosting) (Pahlevi & Nasution, 2024). This condition forms a loop in which users tend to produce increasingly aesthetic content to gain social confirmation, thereby reinforcing narcissistic communication behavior, namely the tendency to explicitly manipulate self-messages to attract public attention and recognition.

Regulators and health practitioners are also raising concerns: platforms like TikTok are starting to impose restrictions on beauty filters for underage users due to concerns about the impact on adolescent mental health (e.g., restrictions on filters that drastically alter facial features). Major media reports and platform policies highlight the urgency of placing ethical boundaries on AR features to protect vulnerable groups. These regulations and public discourse emphasize that the phenomenon of filter use is not simply an aesthetic trend, but an issue of public health and digital communication ethics.

Against this backdrop, it is important to conduct a comprehensive study linking the practice of using face filters on TikTok to two main domains: (1) self-image, how users evaluate and perceive their bodies/faces as a result of filter use; and (2) narcissistic communication, how filters influence communication strategies oriented towards seeking attention and strengthening self-image. This study is relevant not only academically but also practically for platform policymakers, educators, and mental health practitioners.

The most appropriate theory to analyze the research "The Impact of Face Filter Use on Self-Image and Narcissistic Communication on TikTok" is Self-Presentation Theory proposed by Erving Goffman. This theory explains that individuals consciously manage impressions to shape audience perceptions of themselves, especially when in public spaces (Rettberg, 2020). In the context of TikTok, social media functions as a digital front stage, while face filters become a strategic tool for constructing an ideal, attractive, and digitally aesthetic visual identity.

The use of facial filters allows users to present a curated and modified version of themselves, thus influencing how they evaluate their self-image and fostering the need for social validation. When filtered self-presentation elicits positive responses in the form of likes, comments, and increased algorithmic exposure, narcissistic communication tendencies such as exaggerated self-image, the need for recognition, and the dominance of personal identity in digital content are strengthened (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2022). Thus, Self-Presentation Theory is able to explain the relationship between visual technology, self-image, and narcissistic communication as symbolic communication practices that develop in performativity-based social media culture.

Based on the empirical background and theoretical framework above, this study formulates the main problems as follows: 1). To what extent is the use of face filters related to narcissistic communication on TikTok, which is characterized by excessive self-promotion practices, the need for validation, and oversharing behavior?; 2). What factors (e.g., motives for use, frequency, type of filter, social support) moderate or mediate the relationship between face filter use and psychosocial outcomes (self-image and narcissistic communication)?

This study aims to deeply understand the relationship between the use of face filters on TikTok social media and users' narcissistic communication tendencies, as reflected through excessive self-promotion practices, the need for social validation, and oversharing behavior in digital content production and interaction. Furthermore, this study aims to identify and analyze factors that act as mediating and moderating mechanisms in this relationship, specifically the motives for using face filters, the frequency and pattern of use, the types of filters used, and the experiences of social support users receive in digital spaces. Through a qualitative approach, this study seeks to explore users' subjective experiences, personal meanings, and interpretive processes in constructing self-image and expressing identity through TikTok, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of how face filter technology influences the dynamics of self-image and narcissistic communication patterns in the context of contemporary social media culture.

This research is academically significant because it fills a relatively new literature gap in the study of the effects of AR/beauty filters on short video platforms, particularly in relation to narcissistic communication. Practically, it provides empirical evidence that can be used as a basis for platform policy recommendations, media literacy education interventions, and

mental health programs for young users. This study also contributes to the development of digital communication theory by integrating the perspectives of self-presentation, social comparison, and narcissism theory in a contemporary algorithmic context.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The development of visual-based social media platforms like TikTok has transformed the way individuals construct, present, and communicate their identities in digital spaces. One of the most dominant features within the TikTok ecosystem is face filters, which serve not only as aesthetic tools but also as a medium for visual and symbolic identity construction. In the context of contemporary digital culture, face filters represent a practice of mediated self-presentation, namely the process of constructing self-image through technology mediated by algorithms and specific visual standards (Boursier et al., 2020; Kircaburun et al., 2021). Therefore, this study positions the use of face filters as an independent variable closely related to self-image formation and narcissistic communication tendencies on TikTok.

Theoretically, the conceptual framework of this study is rooted in Goffman's Self-Presentation Theory and developed in the context of digital media. This theory explains that individuals actively manage the impression they wish to project to others, particularly in public spaces (Goffman, 1959). In social media, self-presentation is no longer spontaneous but highly curated through visual technologies such as filters, editing, and content distribution algorithms (Rettberg, 2020). The use of facial filters on TikTok allows individuals to present a modified version of themselves—more idealized, more attractive, and in line with digital beauty standards—thus strengthening the process of virtual identity construction.

Extensive use of facial filters has the potential to impact an individual's self-image. Self-image is understood as a person's perception, evaluation, and assessment of themselves, both physically and psychologically (Cash & Smolak, 2021). In the context of social media, self-image is shaped not only by personal experiences but also by social feedback in the form of likes, comments, views, and other digital validation (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2022). Recent studies have shown that repeated exposure to filtered self-representations can lead to the internalization of unrealistic beauty standards, which in turn significantly impact self-satisfaction and self-evaluation (Boursier et al., 2020; Tiggemann & Anderberg, 2020).

Based on the perspective of Social Comparison Theory, individuals tend to compare themselves with other people's representations on social media, including self-representations they create through face filters (Vogel et al., 2014; Yang, 2021). When filtered digital self-representations receive a positive response from the audience, individuals may experience an increase in illusory self-esteem, but simultaneously risk becoming dependent on external validation. This condition makes self-image a crucial mediating variable in explaining how the use of face filters contributes to changes in individual communication patterns.

These changes in self-image subsequently lead to the emergence of narcissistic communication as a dependent variable. Narcissistic communication refers to communication patterns oriented toward self-adoration, exaggerated self-image, the need for recognition, and the dominance of personal identity in social interactions (Gnambs & Appel, 2018; Kircaburun et al., 2021). In the context of TikTok, narcissistic communication is expressed through various elements, such as the visual style of content, body poses, facial expressions, music selection, self-promoting captions, and the intensity of content uploads aimed at attracting public attention.

This research's conceptual framework is also strengthened by Digital Narcissism Theory, which states that social media provides an ideal environment for the development of narcissistic behavior because it offers a space for self-exposure, image control, and instant feedback (Casale & Banchi, 2020). TikTok's algorithm, which emphasizes popularity, virality, and self-visualization, further reinforces individuals' tendency to over-expose themselves to gain social recognition. In this regard, the use of face filters serves as a strategic tool to enhance visual appeal while increasing the chances of gaining digital validation.

Thus, the conceptual framework of this study positions self-image as a mediating variable that bridges the relationship between face filter use and narcissistic communication. Face filter use does not directly cause narcissistic communication, but rather through psychosocial processes such as changes in self-perception and the need for social recognition. The relationship between these three variables is dynamic and interconnected within the context of digital visual culture, TikTok's algorithmic logic, and the evolving social norms of contemporary social media.

METHODOLOGY

The research method in the study entitled "The Impact of Using Face Filters on Self-Image and Narcissistic Communication on Tiktok Social Media" uses a descriptive qualitative approach designed to explore in depth the psychosocial phenomena experienced by Tiktok users when utilizing face filters as part of their digital self-representation, where this approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand subjective experiences, interpretation patterns, and the construction of meaning that cannot be explained through numbers, but rather through narrative exploration, visual observation, and analysis of digital behaviour that continues to develop in an algorithm-based media ecosystem, and to support this objective, researchers applied a purposive sampling technique by selecting informants who meet certain criteria (Daud et al., 2022), such as active Tiktok users aged 18–30 who use face filters regularly and have a high upload intensity, because this age group is the most vulnerable user to the pressure of digital beauty standards, the tendency to compare themselves, and the urge to display an ideal self-image that triggers an increase in narcissistic communication (Pahlevi & Nasution, 2024), so that the selection of informants was not done randomly but strategically so that the data obtained truly represents the social reality to be studied.

In the data collection process the researcher used a combination of in-depth interview techniques, digital observation, and content documentation, where in-depth interviews were conducted to explore the informants' perceptions regarding changes in self-image, reasons for dependence on filters, experiences of obtaining social validation, and the psychological impacts they felt, while digital observation allowed researchers to observe real patterns of filter use in informants' TikTok videos including communication style, visual expression, intensity of filter use, message structure, number of likes, audience comments, and forms of interaction that reinforce or even create narcissistic behavior (Fitri & Ananta, 2025), while content documentation such as video screenshots and interaction notes are used as additional data to ensure that the researcher's interpretation aligns with the digital behavior that occurs, so that data triangulation can be achieved through a comparison between the informant's verbal statements and visual evidence of their digital activities (Nugraha et al., 2024).

The data analysis stage, this study uses thematic analysis as developed by Braun & Clarke, the latest version, which includes data familiarization steps, coding processes, theme

formation, thematic evaluation, and the preparation of analytical narratives aimed at identifying patterns of meaning regarding the relationship between the use of facial filters, self-image, and narcissistic communication tendencies, where this analysis is very relevant because it allows researchers to understand how filters work as digital signifiers that shape how users interpret their faces, assess their identities, and build visual personas in the highly competitive and performativity-oriented TikTok public space (Walker et al., 2023)

To maintain the validity of the research data, the researcher applied source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking to ensure that the researcher's interpretation was unbiased and had been re-verified by the informants, where source triangulation was carried out by interviewing informants from different backgrounds, method triangulation was carried out by combining interviews, digital observations, and content documentation, and member checking was carried out by asking informants to validate the researcher's temporary interpretation to avoid misinterpretation of their subjective experiences (Sholichah, 2022).

The ethical aspects of digital research are strictly implemented through informed consent procedures, identity anonymity, and restrictions on the use of sensitive visual data so as not to violate the digital privacy of research participants, and this entire process is supported by the application of digital discourse analysis to read the use of language, self-presentation style, captions, visual choices, and interaction patterns that reflect narcissistic communication that emerges through filtered TikTok content, so that this study presents a comprehensive methodological picture of how face filters affect users' self-image, how algorithmic aesthetic pressures shape self-evaluations, and how visual culture on TikTok triggers narcissistic communication patterns characterized by the search for social validation, the need for attention, and the tendency to present a version of oneself that has been modified by technology, so that this descriptive qualitative method not only reveals surface phenomena but also deeper structures of meaning formed through the interaction between filter technology, self-perception, digital social context, and communication patterns that develop in the era of visual social media (Pahlevi & Nasution, 2024).

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

This study presents empirical findings related to how the use of face filters on Tiktok social media affects users' self-image and triggers narcissistic communication patterns in fast-paced, visual, and algorithm-based digital interactions. Through qualitative data analysis of in-depth interviews, content observation, and analysis of active Tiktok user posts, this study found a strong and consistent relationship between the frequency of face filter use and changes in self-image perception and the tendency to display communication behaviors oriented towards social validation. These results indicate that the use of face filters is no longer merely an aesthetic feature, but rather a tool that shapes digital identity, modifies self-representation, and creates certain social pressures that encourage users to maintain a modified visual image to remain accepted within the digital community (Kim, 2020).

The first finding of this study is that the use of face filters consistently decreases users' satisfaction with their natural faces. Most informants stated that filters make their faces appear smoother, brighter, and more proportional than their natural faces, so they feel more comfortable presenting themselves digitally only when using filters. This phenomenon aligns with the finding that users who are frequently exposed to filtered face content tend to develop an ideal self, a self-image that does not align with real-life conditions, ultimately reducing their confidence when having to appear without filters (Pahlevi & Nasution, 2024). Users also stated that filters provide a psychological "sense of security" when appearing on TikTok, especially since visual posts on the platform are oriented towards audiovisual aesthetics and the algorithm tends to promote content with high visual appeal.



Picture 1: Using filters on TikTok

The second finding relates to an increased tendency toward narcissistic communication arising from the use of face filters. Based on an analysis of interaction patterns, comments,

and content sharing behavior, users who frequently use filters tend to over-expose themselves, emphasize visual aspects, and strive to present the most attractive version of themselves to gain likes, comments, or other social recognition. This aligns with the concept of performative narcissism, a condition where individuals construct an idealized digital persona and rely heavily on audience response for external validation (Sholichah, 2022). In the context of TikTok, performative narcissism manifests in behaviors such as creating videos with aesthetic poses, taking close-ups of faces to emphasize filtered features, repeatedly using the beauty mode feature, and actively following audio trends that encourage users to show off their appearance. Users who frequently use filters also tend to spend more time creating visual content than those who rarely use filters.

The third finding is that the use of facial filters is closely related to impression-based communication patterns. TikTok, as an audiovisual social media platform, reinforces impression management, where each post is treated as a “digital stage” to project a specific self-image that users wish to construct. Many informants stated that they “have to look perfect” when creating content for fear of receiving negative comments about their physical appearance, thus filters are considered an important tool for developing a positive, socially acceptable impression. Users admitted that they often delete videos deemed “not good enough” even if the content is authentic, indicating that filters influence not only the face but also users’ communication decisions and interaction patterns.

The fourth research finding suggests that the use of face filters contributes to the formation of new digital beauty standards that influence self- and social perception. Through constant algorithmic exposure to filtered faces, users begin to perceive filtered faces as the normal aesthetic standard. This creates social pressure where users feel they “must be beautiful or handsome according to TikTok standards” to gain attention or social interaction. This pressure triggers excessive social comparison, especially among adolescents and young adults, the groups most susceptible to digital media influences. Users who frequently compare themselves to filtered faces tend to experience feelings of not being good enough, anxiety about appearing unfiltered, and a reliance on beauty enhancement features as a means of self-representation. This condition reflects the effects of media on body perception, which has been demonstrated in studies of modern visual media (Millenia & Hidayat, 2025).

The fifth finding discusses how face filters shape digital identities and influence users' relationships with their audiences. Users who repeatedly use filters tend to develop a digital persona distinct from their physical identity. This digital persona is considered the "best version of themselves," and they feel compelled to maintain it to maintain engagement and interaction with followers. In many cases, users expressed psychological burdens such as a fear of showing their true selves, anxiety about negative comments, and a feeling that their digital identity is "preferred" over their true selves. This phenomenon demonstrates how filter technology and the dynamics of social media shape manufactured identities, identities constructed not from real experiences but from visual representations constructed by technology and the social expectations of audiences (Susanti & Dwihantoro, 2022)



Figure 2: Using filters on TikTok

Furthermore, the study also found that narcissistic communication resulting from the use of face filters is influenced by social feedback loops. TikTok provides instant notifications, constantly updating the number of likes, comments, and followers, thus reinforcing narcissistic behaviors such as repeated posts, visual self-promotion, and attention-seeking. TikTok's algorithm plays a significant role in reinforcing these behaviors, as its recommendation system provides greater exposure to content that aligns with visual trends, including aesthetically pleasing filtered content. Thus, users are encouraged to follow the same patterns to maintain their videos' relevance and reach a wider audience. This demonstrates how digital technology and social psychology work simultaneously to shape users' communication behavior.

Recent findings show that reliance on facial filters impacts the authenticity of digital communication. Digital communication, which should be a space for free and creative expression, has become a platform for unrealistic, aesthetic-based self-presentation. Users have become more cautious about showing their true selves, even avoiding unfiltered video interactions, both in public content and private conversations like video calls. This low authenticity suggests that facial filters not only alter self-image psychologically but also limit users' freedom to communicate naturally and honestly. This phenomenon further reinforces the view that social media, through its visual features, is fostering a narcissistic culture where appearance becomes the center of communication, replacing the depth of messages and the quality of interactions (Basalamah, Rania Aysha Muhamad, 2025).

Overall, the research findings confirm that the use of face filters on TikTok significantly impacts self-image and narcissistic communication. Filters not only influence how users perceive themselves but also alter how they interact, construct identities, and interpret social validation. These findings emphasize that the phenomenon of face filter use is a complex digital communication issue, involving interrelated psychological, social, and technological factors.

This research aims to explain in depth how the use of face filters on Tiktok affects self-image and encourages the emergence of narcissistic communication among users, especially teenagers and young adults as the most active groups in the current social media ecosystem. The research findings indicate that face filters function not only as a visual modification tool, but also as a medium for shaping self-perception and a means of expressing digital identity. Within the context of digital communication, the use of face filters creates a complex dynamic between self-idealization, the need for social validation, and the construction of a self-image that is increasingly dependent on technology. Users who use filters intensively tend to experience a shift in how they perceive themselves, from a natural physical image to an idealized image shaped by the platform's aesthetic algorithm (Wu et al., 2021).

Overall, findings indicate that the use of face filters directly impacts self-evaluation and appearance satisfaction. Digital consumers, particularly on TikTok, internalize the "perfect" face shape produced by filters as a new standard of self-evaluation. This aligns with research

by Mills on year 2022, who found that face filters can increase body dissatisfaction and reinforce algorithm-based beauty bias. This phenomenon is evident in the increasing use of “beauty enhancement” filters, which automatically whiten skin, slim the face, enlarge the eyes, and smooth skin texture, thus constructing a self-representation that is far from biological reality. Users who frequently publish content with face filters have shown a tendency to adapt their communication behavior to these digital beauty standards, and this has the knock-on effect of decreasing self-confidence when appearing unfiltered (Kim, 2020).



Figure 3: Using filters on TikTok

The research also shows that the use of face filters is closely related to forms of narcissistic communication involving attention-seeking, exaggerated self-image, and efforts to maintain an ideal persona in the digital public sphere. Narcissistic communication on TikTok often occurs through content that emphasizes appearance, manipulative self-expression, and the use of filters that reinforce aesthetic impressions. This phenomenon aligns with the perspective of Self-Presentation theory, which states that individuals tend to modify self-representation to gain social recognition. Face filters allow users to instantly adjust their self-image to meet audience expectations, resulting in communication patterns that are oriented toward visual impressions rather than message substance.

Another significant finding suggests that TikTok, as an algorithm-based platform, plays a role in reinforcing narcissistic behavior through its content recommendation system. Visually striking content, particularly that involving faces, tends to receive higher exposure on the "For You Page" (FYP) mechanism. This exposure provides social reinforcement in the form of likes, comments, and an increase in followers, which then motivates users to continue using filters as a strategy to maintain digital visibility (Ionescu & Licu, 2023). In line with Media

Effects theory, particularly the concept of reinforcement, TikTok not only influences how users perceive themselves but also reinforces behaviors deemed attractive by the algorithm. When face filters trigger greater social interaction, users are more likely to repeat those actions as a form of adaptation to digital reward patterns (Ajewumi et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the use of face filters has a social impact on the formation of a comparison culture. Users not only judge themselves based on their own faces with or without filters, but also compare themselves to other users who appear with filters. This condition creates social pressure to conform to the same aesthetic standards. This impact aligns with research by Yang (Hu, 2018), which states that social comparison through visual media contributes to increased appearance anxiety and an excessive need for impression management. In the case of TikTok, face filters become a medium that facilitates unrealistic digital body comparisons.

In addition to changes in self-image and narcissistic communication, this study found that the use of face filters has a significant psychological impact, especially on users with low self-esteem. This group tends to be more susceptible to the effects of self-image distortion, as filters present a "better" version of themselves according to digital aesthetic standards, thus creating dependency. When users feel their digital identity is valued more than their physical identity, the potential for disorders such as social anxiety, avoidance of appearing unfiltered, and even symptoms of digital media-based Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) emerge (Masri-zada et al., 2025). This phenomenon demonstrates the complex relationship between aesthetic technology and mental health.

From a communication perspective, face filters also change the dynamics of interactions between users. The identities constructed through filters create a distance between self-representation and interpersonal reality. Interactions become more performative and oriented toward visual imagery, rather than authentic communication. Narcissistic communication driven by filters fosters a one-way communication pattern, where users focus more on self-presentation than on building meaningful dialogue. These findings align with a study by Zhao & Jiang, which explains that video-based social media reinforces communication styles that emphasize self-aesthetics and validation-seeking, significantly reducing the quality of interpersonal interactions.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that face filters are not simply aesthetic features, but a communication technology that influences self-perception, mental health, and social interaction patterns. TikTok, with its visual characteristics and algorithmic system, reinforces the process of digital self-image formation and narcissistic behavior, particularly through an exposure-reward mechanism that further incentivizes users to project a filtered version of themselves. This impact is multidimensional: aesthetic, psychological, social, and communicative. Therefore, stronger digital literacy is needed to help users understand the risks of self-image distortion and encourage healthy and moderate filter use.

CONCLUSION

Research on the impact of face filter use on self-image and narcissistic communication on TikTok shows that the use of face filters has created significant changes in how individuals present, understand, and construct their self-image in the digital space. The research findings reveal that face filters are no longer merely aesthetic features but have become tools for visual identity formation that influence self-perception, self-confidence, and the need for individuals to project an ideal version of themselves. Intensive filter use has been shown to exacerbate self-discrepancy, namely the gap between the real face and the digital face, which ultimately results in decreased satisfaction with real appearance and a tendency to continue over-editing. TikTok, as a performativity-based platform, also reinforces this process through a system of algorithms, likes, and comments that provide social reinforcement, encouraging individuals to continue presenting the self-image they consider most visually appealing.

Furthermore, this study shows that the use of face filters is closely linked to an increased tendency toward narcissistic communication. Individuals who frequently use face filters tend to be more focused on public evaluation, engage in self-promotion, and seek validation through edited visual content. Curated self-representations create communication patterns that place the self at the center of attention, shifting social interactions into tools for reinforcing a digitally created idealized image. This pattern demonstrates how TikTok's visual culture generates communication dynamics that emphasize aesthetics, performance, and social evaluation, thus reinforcing narcissistic traits that emerge through repetitive forms of visual expression.

Overall, this study confirms that face filters influence two main aspects: self-image construction and narcissistic communication, both of which reinforce each other through social media mechanisms. TikTok, as a visual-based digital ecosystem, provides a significant space for narcissistic culture to flourish through its features, algorithms, and user appreciation patterns. The use of face filters is not merely an aesthetic practice but has become part of media effects that have psychological, social, and communication consequences for users, especially the younger generation. Thus, this study emphasizes the need for digital and visual literacy to build critical awareness regarding the psychological and social impacts of excessive face filter use.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations warrant consideration. First, for TikTok users, it is crucial to improve digital literacy, particularly regarding the understanding that face filters can create unrealistic beauty standards and potentially damage self-perception. Users are advised to prioritize authenticity in building their digital identities and to use filters wisely, especially in contexts that can impact mental health or self-perception. Second, for educators, parents, and educational institutions, strengthening media literacy programs, particularly visual literacy, is necessary to help adolescents understand the mechanisms of social media, the psychological effects of filters, and the communication dynamics that can influence narcissistic behavior. Educational activities such as seminars, workshops, or digital literacy curricula can be effective preventative measures. Third, policymakers and platform managers like TikTok should consider developing more educational features, such as warnings about filters that could potentially affect self-image or providing more transparent filter categories so users know the extent of the changes to their faces. TikTok could also consider algorithms that better support authentic content to reduce social pressures related to digital appearance. Fourth, future researchers are advised to expand their research by examining other variables, such as the long-term impact of filters on mental health, gender differences, and the influence of online communities in shaping digital aesthetic norms. Mixed methods or experiments can be used to obtain more empirically robust results. Thus, the results can contribute to a broader understanding of the relationship between face filters, digital identity, and narcissistic communication in the evolving social media ecosystem.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

The study on the Impact of Face Filter Use on Self-Image and Narcissistic Communication on TikTok social media has several limitations that need to be explained to provide context for interpreting the research results. The first limitation lies in the platform's scope, where this study only focuses on TikTok users. This makes the research results unable to be fully generalized to other platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, or Facebook, each of which has different characteristics of features, audiences, and usage culture.

The second limitation is related to the variables studied, where the study only highlights the use of face filters as a factor influencing self-image and narcissistic behaviour, while other variables such as social pressure, digital beauty norms, recommendation algorithms, and social interactions between users are not analysed in depth even though they can theoretically have a significant influence on the formation of digital identity.

The third limitation lies in the research method. Using a qualitative approach, the results depend on the subjectivity of the informants, which can be influenced by their personal experiences, individual perceptions, and their ability to articulate their experiences using face filters. Meanwhile, using a quantitative approach, the measurement instrument may have limitations in capturing the complex psychological dynamics related to narcissism and self-image.

Another limitation is that this study did not conduct clinical psychological measurements, such as levels of social anxiety, body dysmorphia, or self-confidence psychometrically, thus limiting the depth of analysis regarding the psychological impact of face filters. Furthermore, the dynamic and rapidly changing nature of social media, including the emergence of new filter trends, feature changes, and the constantly updated TikTok algorithm, also poses limitations that can affect the consistency of the research results over time. Therefore, the results of this study can be understood within the context of digital trends and conditions during the research period.

Future studies in this research are based on these limitations, there is scope for further research that could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of

face filter use and its impact on digital self-identity. First, future research could develop cross-platform analysis by comparing user behavior on TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat to examine the similarities and differences in the influence of face filters on self-image and narcissistic tendencies. This approach is important considering that each platform has a distinct visual culture, which can give rise to diverse digital identity constructions. Second, future research could use quantitative methods with psychometric instruments to measure levels of narcissism, self-confidence, self-esteem, or social anxiety more objectively and standardized, allowing for statistical analysis and more empirically robust findings. Third, further studies could incorporate mediating or moderating variables, such as the influence of digital beauty trends, peer pressure, the need for social validation, fear of missing out (FOMO), digital literacy levels, or exposure to celebrity and influencer content. These variables could enrich our understanding of how face filters interact with broader psychosocial factors.

Fourth, future research could consider age differences, particularly by comparing adolescents, young adults, and older adults, as the development of psychological identity in each age group may influence how they respond to face filter technology. Fifth, longitudinal studies examining the long-term impact of face filter use are needed to understand how changes in visual trends and filter usage habits influence self-image and narcissistic behavior over time.

Furthermore, future research could integrate a digital health psychology perspective, particularly by examining how digital literacy education, body image awareness campaigns, or more ethical technology features can minimize the negative impacts of face filter use. Research could also explore how social interventions—such as self-acceptance campaigns or platform policies regarding photo authenticity—can contribute to a healthier digital environment. Thus, future research should focus not only on understanding the impact of face filters but also on creating a safer, more inclusive digital space that supports users' mental health.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author expresses his gratitude to Allah SWT who has given the author the opportunity and health so that he can complete this service. The author also thanks the Chancellor of Selamat Sri University, Vice Chancellors 1, 2, and 3 of Selamat Sri University, the Dean of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP) of Selamat Sri University, and fellow lecturers at Selamat Sri University for their moral and ethical support and thanks to Jurnal Communications for providing a platform for the publication of this research journal.

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