

PATTERNS OF DIGITAL INTERACTION THROUGH TIKTOK REPOSTING AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EMOTIONAL STATE OF GENERATION Z

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Abstract

The development of social media in the digital era has transformed patterns of social interaction, especially among Generation Z who have grown up with digital technology. TikTok, as a short-video-based platform, functions not only as an entertainment medium but also as a space for emotional expression and symbolic communication. One emerging form of interaction is reposting activity, which refers to resharing content perceived as relevant to users' personal emotional conditions. This study aims to analyze digital interaction patterns through TikTok reposting and their relationship with Generation Z's emotional conditions. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques including in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving five Generation Z informants who are active TikTok users. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, supported by source triangulation to ensure data validity. The findings reveal that reposting is not merely a content-sharing activity but carries deeper psychological meaning. It functions as indirect self-expression, emotional regulation, and a form of social validation seeking within digital spaces. Reposted content reflects users' emotional states such as sadness, anxiety, psychological pressure, as well as positive emotions. This activity generates psychological effects including emotional relief, social connectedness, and emotional fluctuations influenced by responses received from other users in social media environments.

Keywords: Digital, reposting, emotion, interaction, generationZ

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology in the contemporary digital era has brought fundamental changes in the pattern of human social interaction. Social media has become a new social space where individuals build identities, negotiate meaning, and express their psychological states dynamically. Generation Z as a group born and raised in a digital environment shows a high level of engagement in the use of social media, including short video-based platforms such as TikTok. The platform features a variety of interactive features that encourage active user participation in the production and distribution of digital content. One of the features that has increased usage is reposting, which is the activity of resharing other people's content as part of

participatory and reflective digital social interactions (Anderson & Jiang, 2019). This activity forms a new communication pattern that is more implicit and full of symbolic meaning.

Reposting on TikTok shows a transformation in the way individuals express themselves in the digital space. Generation Z tends to use reposted content as a medium of self-representation that is not always expressed directly through verbal language. The content chosen to reshare often reflects personal experiences, emotional states, and psychological dynamics that are being experienced. Reposting serves as a form of indirect communication that allows individuals to symbolically convey emotional messages to their social environment (Bayer et al., 2020). This shift suggests that digital interaction has evolved towards a more interpretive and subjective experience-based form of communication.

Along with the increasing intensity of TikTok use among Generation Z in recent years, there is a tendency that reposted content has a strong emotional charge. Content related to sadness, anxiety, interpersonal relationships, and reflection on life is the dominant part of reposting activities. This phenomenon indicates a link between reposting activities and individual emotional states. Reposting is a means to channel feelings that are difficult to express directly as well as an effort to gain social validation from the digital environment. In many situations, users expect that the content shared can be understood as a representation of the inner state they are experiencing (Nesi et al., 2021). This shows that digital activities have a significant emotional dimension.

The pattern of digital interaction through reposting is also closely related to the process of emotion regulation carried out by individuals. Generation Z shows a tendency to use social media as a means of managing emotions, both in the form of venting, seeking support, and self-reflection. Reposting content that is appropriate to certain emotional conditions can have psychological effects such as a sense of relief, connection, and strengthening of emotional experiences. This activity reflects a transformation in the mechanism of emotion regulation, where the digital space becomes an alternative medium in the process of processing emotions (Gross, 2022). These changes show that digital technology has an important role in shaping individual emotional adaptation patterns.

Digital interaction through reposting opens up opportunities for the formation of emotional relationships between users. Reshared content can trigger responses from other users in the form of comments, likes, or follow-up interactions that have implications for an individual's psychological state. Positive responses tend to reinforce feelings of acceptance and appreciation, while limited responses can lead to feelings of loneliness or unrecognition. These dynamics suggest that digital

interactions are closely related to the emotional well-being of individuals in daily life (Valkenburg et al., 2022).

The main problem in this phenomenon lies in the complexity of the meaning contained in the reposting activity that is not yet fully understood academically. Reposting activities are often seen as a simple act of using social media, even though there are complex and layered psychological processes within them. A lack of understanding of the emotional dimension in this activity has the potential to lead to the neglect of the individual's psychological state that is actually being expressed implicitly. In addition, the tendency to continue consuming and sharing emotional content can reinforce certain affective conditions repeatedly, potentially affecting emotional stability in the long term (Kross et al., 2021). This condition is becoming increasingly relevant in the context of the increasing use of TikTok among Generation Z.

Another problem that arises is the limitation of studies that specifically discuss reposting as a form of digital interaction that has an emotional dimension. Most studies focus more on the use of social media in general without examining specific practices that have a significant role in users' lives. Reposting as a form of symbolic communication is still relatively rarely analyzed in depth from the perspective of psychology and digital communication. In fact, this feature allows individuals to express their inner states indirectly and contextually, so it has high analytical value in understanding the emotional dynamics of Generation Z (O'Reilly et al., 2020). This limitation shows that there are research gaps that need to be filled through a more comprehensive study.

The development of TikTok's algorithm has also strengthened the digital interaction pattern that has been formed. Algorithms tend to display content that matches user preferences, including content with emotional content similar to those frequently consumed or posted. This condition has the potential to create a pattern of repetition of emotions in the digital space, where individuals are continuously exposed to certain types of emotions. In the long term, this situation can affect the way individuals interpret their emotional experiences as well as shape perceptions of social reality (Bayer et al., 2020). This shows that digital technology also shapes the structure of users' emotional experiences. The pattern of digital interaction through TikTok reposting has a complex relationship with the emotional state of Generation Z. This activity reflects a representation of the psychological dynamics that take place in individuals. This research is important to conduct in order to examine in depth the relationship between reposting as a digital interaction practice and the emotional condition of Generation Z in the context of contemporary social media developments (Smith, 2023). This study

is expected to contribute to the development of communication science and psychology and enrich understanding of the dynamics of interaction and emotions in the digital era.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type to understand in depth the patterns of digital interaction through TikTok reposting activities and their relationship with the emotional condition of Generation Z. This approach was chosen because it is able to explore subjective meanings, personal experiences, and how individuals interpret reposting activities as a form of emotional expression in digital life. The focus of the research is directed at how Generation Z interprets reposting, why they do it, and how the activity reflects the emotional state they are experiencing.

The research subjects are Generation Z who actively use TikTok and have experience reposting content. Informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on certain criteria, such as the intensity of TikTok use and involvement in reposting activities. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews to explore the informants' emotional experiences, observations of digital activities, especially reposted content, and documentation in the form of screenshots or traces of relevant activities. This technique is used to obtain comprehensive and contextual data according to the focus of the research.

Data analysis is carried out interactively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The data that has been collected is selected and categorized based on themes related to digital interaction patterns and emotional states, then presented in the form of a descriptive narrative to facilitate interpretation. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation techniques of sources, techniques, and time to ensure the consistency and validity of research findings. This research is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the relationship between TikTok reposting activities and the emotional dynamics of Generation Z.

RESULTS

Based on the results of in-depth interviews with five informants who are included in the Generation Z category and actively use TikTok, it was found that reposting activities contain complex psychological meanings and are closely related to the dynamics of individual emotional states. Each informant shows a different pattern of meaning to reposting activities which ultimately shows that

the practice is part of the mechanism of self-expression, symbolic communication, and emotional management in the digital space. The intensity of reposting, the type of content chosen, and the response received from the digital social environment also affect the emotional experience felt by each informant.

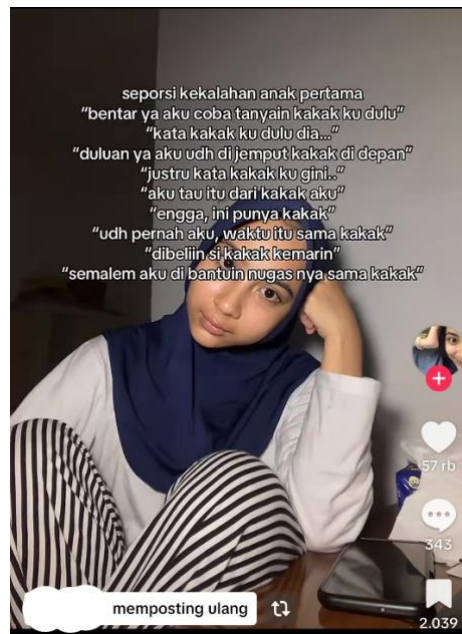


Figure 1. Reposting TikTok as a Form of Digital Interaction for Generation Z

Informant S (20 years old) revealed that reposting activities have a very significant role in his daily emotional life. She explained that she tends to have difficulty expressing her feelings directly to others, especially when she is in an unstable emotional state such as sadness, anxiety, or overthinking. In this situation, she prefers to look for content on TikTok that has a match for the inner state she is feeling. The content is then reshared as an indirect representation of the feelings they experience. He said that the act of reposting provides a sensation of emotional relief because he feels that the message he wants to convey can be conveyed without having to go through explicit verbal communication. He explained that when the reposted content gets a response from other users, such as likes or comments that show empathy, it has a positive impact on his emotional state. He feels more understood, appreciated and does not feel alone in dealing with the feelings he is experiencing. In his view, reposting has become a more convenient form of emotional communication compared to in-person interaction.

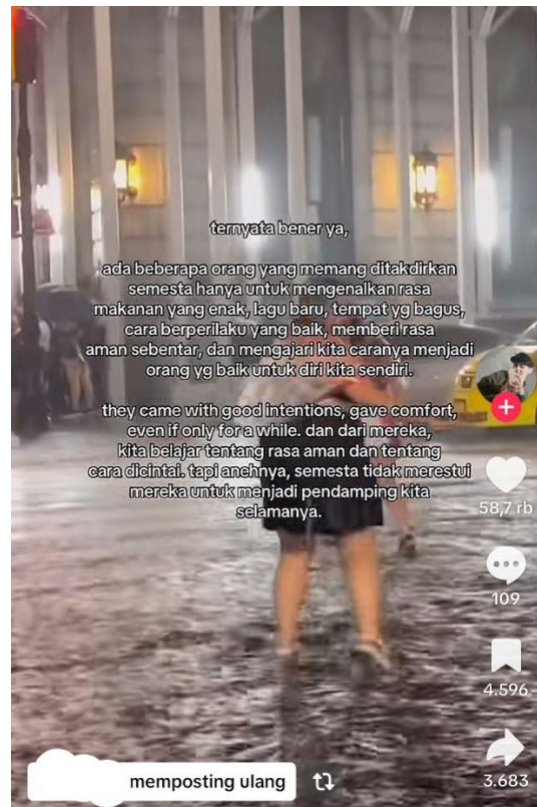


Figure 2. Reposting TikTok as a Form of Digital Interaction for Generation Z

Informant A (19 years old) explained that the reposting activity was greatly influenced by the situational conditions being faced, especially related to academic pressure and the dynamics of social relations. He revealed that when he experiences pressure from lecture assignments or conflicts with friends, he tends to be more active in reposting. The content you choose usually contains an implicit message that reflects the feelings of tiredness, disappointment, or confusion that you are experiencing. He views reposting as a form of communication that is secure because it does not demand direct openness, but is still able to convey an emotional message to the people around him. In his telling, there is a desire for others to understand his condition through the content shared, even without an explicit explanation. He also revealed that social responses have an important role in shaping his emotional experiences. When the reposted content gets attention, he feels a validation of his feelings. Conversely, when there is no significant response, a feeling of neglect arises that indirectly affects his mood.



Figure 3. Reposting TikTok as a Form of Digital Interaction for Generation Z

Informant R (21 years old) gave a different perspective by emphasizing that reposting is also a means to express positive emotions. He stated that he often reshares content that is motivational, inspiring, or describes certain achievements. This activity is seen as a way to maintain a positive emotional state while building a self-image on social media. He feels that by sharing positive content, he can influence his personal mood while having a positive impact on others who see him. In his explanation, reposting is part of a personal strategy in maintaining emotional balance, where the chosen content serves as a reminder of the positive values that you want to maintain in daily life. He also added that the interaction that emerges from the content strengthens the sense of social connection and increases confidence.



Figure 4. Reposting TikTok as a Form of Digital Interaction for Generation Z

Informant D (22 years old) revealed a more reflective experience related to repotting activities. He stated that at first he was not directly aware of the reason behind the reposting habit . These activities are carried out spontaneously without deep consideration. However, after reflecting on the pattern of the reposted content, he realized that there was a strong connection between the content and the emotional state he was experiencing, especially when he felt anxious, unconfident, or experienced uncertainty in life. He also revealed that TikTok's algorithm plays an important role in shaping the pattern of reposting that is done. Content that appears frequently on the homepage tends to have a fit for his emotional state, thus encouraging him to continue consuming and resharing content with similar themes. In his view, there is a kind of emotional cycle formed through the interaction between the user and the algorithm, where the emotional state influences the choice of content, and the content again reinforces the existing emotional state.

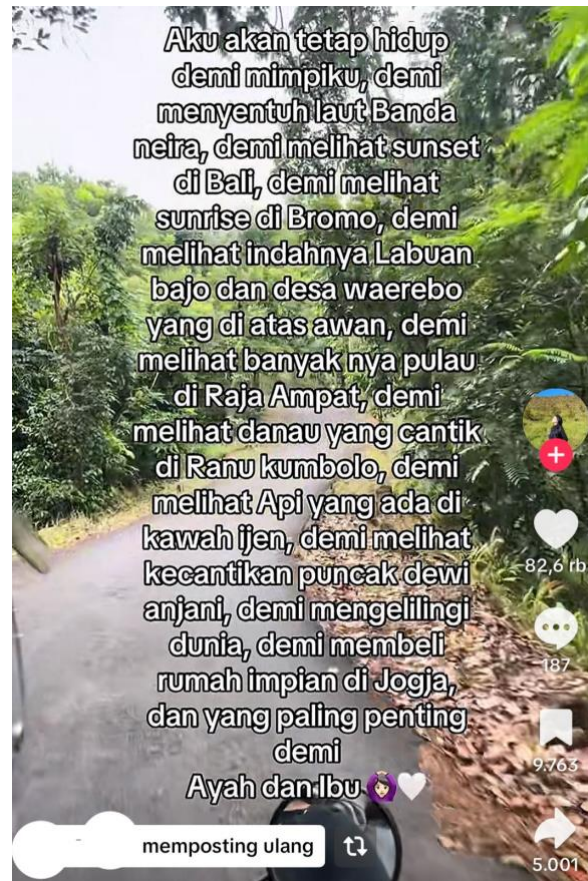


Figure 5. Reposting TikTok as a Form of Digital Interaction for Generation Z

Informant M (18 years old) stated that reposting has become part of a daily habit that is done almost unknowingly. He revealed that he often reshares content spontaneously when he feels that the content is interesting or has a connection with him, although it is not always accompanied by deep reflection at the time. However, when looking back at the history of content that has been posted, he realized that there are certain patterns that describe the emotional state that has been experienced at certain times. He views reposting as a kind of digital archive that records his emotional journey over time. In addition, he also revealed that this activity provides a sense of connection with other users who have similar experiences. In her telling, reposting is a means to feel part of a community that has similar emotional experiences.

The results of this interview show that TikTok reposting has a much more complex dimension compared to just content sharing activities. This practice is closely related to the individual's need to express themselves, seek social validation, manage emotions, and build connections with others in the digital space. The variety of experiences conveyed by each informant shows that reposting can

function as a medium of emotional expression, an emotion regulation mechanism, and a means of symbolic communication that reflects the psychological condition of Generation Z more broadly.

Table 1. Interview Results Answers

No	Name	Age	Questions	Informant's Answer
1	S	20	Why do you often repost on TikTok	To be honest, it's easier to express my feelings through reposts than to speak directly. If I'm sad or overthinking, I look for videos that are very related to my condition, and I repost them. It felt like a relief, as if other people could understand without me having to tell a long story.
			How do you feel after reposting	Usually I feel lighter. Especially if someone likes or comments, like "I also feel the same thing", it makes me feel like I'm not alone.
			Does the repost reflect your feelings	Yes, almost everything I reposted was in accordance with the condition of my heart at that time.
2	A	19	When do you usually repost content	Usually when I am tired, have a lot of tasks, or have problems with friends. So it seems like it needs to be vented.
			Why choose a repost from a live story	And if the repost is more secure, it's not too open, but people can understand what it means. So you don't have to explain in detail.
			What influences the response of others	If there are many responses, I feel cared for, but if it's quiet, sometimes I think too, like "why doesn't anyone notice".

3	R	21	What type of content do you often repost	I often repost that is motivated or that has positive vibes. Sometimes it is also related to life achievements.
			Why repost positive content	Because I want to keep my mood too, so that I don't carry negativity continuously. It's like sharing positive energy with others.
			What effect does it have on you	Not bad, it makes me more enthusiastic and feel more confident.
4	D	22	Are you aware of the reason for the repost?	At first it wasn't, it was just spontaneous. But if you think about it again, it turns out that what I reposted is in accordance with what I feel again.
			What type of content is frequently reposted	Usually the ones about anxiety, overthinking, or no longer care.
			What does TikTok have to do with you	It's like I'm trying to figure out what I'm going through, so the more I see the same stuff, the more I repost it.
5	M	18	How often do you repost	It's quite common, almost every day if you find someone who relates immediately.
			Do you think before reposting	Sometimes not, it's more spontaneous. But I still feel like it's "me".
			What does a repost mean to you?	It's like a diary, but a digital version. When I look back at the old posts, I remember what I was doing.

DISCUSSION

TikTok Reposting as a Fulfillment of Generation Z's Emotional Needs

Based on the results of research that has been obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, TikTok reposting activities show that Generation Z actively uses digital media as a means to meet emotional needs that cannot always be channeled through direct interaction in daily life. In the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, individuals are seen as actors who have awareness and purpose in choosing the media used so that media use is driven by certain psychological needs (Anderson & Jiang, 2019). This is reflected in the findings of the study, where informants such as S and A consistently show that reposting activities are carried out when they are in certain emotional states, such as sadness, anxiety, academic pressure, and interpersonal conflicts that affect their psychological stability.

Reposting activities can be understood as a form of indirect emotional channeling mechanism. Informant S, for example, revealed that he prefers to reshare "relevant" content rather than verbally expressing his feelings to others. This phenomenon suggests that reposting serves as a symbolic medium that allows individuals to express their inner state without having to engage in communication that is confrontational or open. In the study of media psychology, the use of digital content as a means of emotional expression is often associated with individual efforts to seek emotional comfort and reduce perceived psychological distress (Bayer et al., 2020).

The results of the study also showed that there was a close relationship between the type of content reposted and the emotional conditions that were being experienced by the individual. Informants tend to choose content that has the same meaning as the personal experience they are feeling, such as content about overthinking, mental fatigue, or feeling unappreciated (Adawiyah & Junaidi, 2026). This pattern indicates that the reposting activity is a direct reflection of the individual's affective state at any given time. Social media acts as an affective space that allows individuals to channel, strengthen, and understand the emotions experienced (Nesi et al., 2021). This selective content selection process shows that individuals are actively constructing their emotional experiences through interaction with digital content.

Reposting activities also provide psychological effects in the form of emotional relief or catharsis. The informants in this study revealed that after reposting, they felt a lighter feeling than before. This suggests that reposting can serve as a coping mechanism that assists individuals in managing emotional distress. In the study of emotion regulation, the act of expressing emotions, either directly or indirectly, is one of the strategies used by individuals to reduce the intensity of negative emotions (Gross, 2022). Reposting can be understood as a form of digital media-based emotion regulation that allows individuals to cope with psychological distress without having to rely entirely on face-to-face interactions (Junaidi, 2025).

The research findings also show that the emotional needs met through reposting have a social dimension. Informants reveal that they feel better when the reposted content gets a response from other users, such as likes or comments that show empathy. This shows that fulfilling emotional needs through social media is also related to the need for recognition and social connection. In the theory of Uses and Gratifications, the need for social integration and interpersonal interaction is one of the main motivations in the use of media (Valkenburg et al., 2022). Reposting here is an effort to gain social support in the digital space.

There is a tendency to repeat emotions through reposting activities. Informants like D point out that TikTok's algorithm tends to display content that matches the emotional state they are experiencing, so individuals are constantly exposed to similar types of content. This condition has the potential to reinforce certain emotions repeatedly, both in the form of positive and negative emotions. Social media serves as an environment that shapes and amplifies an individual's emotional experiences (Kross et al., 2021). In other words, there is a reciprocal relationship between the individual's emotional state and the content consumed and reshared.

Reposting as a Form of Indirect Self-Expression in Digital Interaction

The results of the study show that reposting activities on the TikTok platform are a form of self-expression that is implicit and symbolic. Generation Z in this context shows a strong tendency to use digital media as a space of self-representation, where emotional messages are conveyed through the selection and dissemination of content that is considered relevant to their psychological condition. In the Uses and Gratifications Theory, individuals actively use media to meet needs for self-expression, personal identity, and psychological actualization that cannot always be met in direct

social interaction (Anderson & Jiang, 2019). This shows that reposting is part of a communication process that has a deep psychological dimension.

The findings of the study on informants such as D and M reinforce this understanding, where both state that reposting activities are often carried out spontaneously without careful planning, but still represent their own condition at a given moment (Junaidi, 2025). Informant D revealed that after reflecting, he realized that the reposted content was closely related to feelings of anxiety, lack of confidence, and uncertainty that he was experiencing. Meanwhile, Informant M explained that reposting has become part of everyday digital habits, where reshared content is often considered a "self-reflection" even though it is not fully realized at the time of the process. This pattern suggests that self-expression in digital spaces can arise spontaneously in response to emotional stimuli received from the social media environment.

This shows a significant shift in the way individuals express their identity in the digital age. If in traditional communication self-expression is generally done through verbal language or direct interaction, then in the context of social media, digital symbols such as videos, captions, and repost content are the main medium in conveying emotional meaning. Reposting in this case serves as a form of nonverbal communication that allows individuals to convey psychological messages in a safer, more flexible, and less socially risky manner. Individuals do not need to explicitly explain the feelings they are experiencing, as the content shared is already considered to represent the emotional state. This shows that social media has changed the structure of communication from being direct to more representational and symbol-based.

In the framework of Uses and Gratifications, the need for self-expression is one of the main motives for the use of digital media, especially among Generation Z who grow up in a highly interactive technology ecosystem. Reposting is a form of fulfilling these needs because it provides space for individuals to build self-narratives indirectly. The identities that are formed come from the digital footprints left behind through activities such as reposting. Social media has become a dynamic and ever-evolving identity construction space along with changes in the emotional state of individuals (Bayer et al., 2020).

The results of the study also showed that reposting activities have a role in forming a sense of connection with others who have similar emotional experiences. When individuals find content that matches their feelings, then re-share it, it creates a feeling that they are not alone in experiencing the condition. This process reinforces the social function of digital self-expression, where individuals express themselves to establish an emotional connection with their digital social environment. Self-

expression through reposting is inseparable from the social dimension inherent in the use of modern social media.

Reposting as a Means of Seeking Social Validation and Its Impact on Emotions

The research findings show that reposting activities within the TikTok platform cannot be separated from the need for individuals to gain social recognition from the digital environment. The responses given by other users to the reposted content have a very significant role in shaping an individual's emotional state. In the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, one of the main needs in the use of media is the need for interpersonal relationships, social integration, and recognition from others (Valkenburg et al., 2022). This is clearly seen in the results of interviews with informants S and A who stated that the existence of responses such as likes, comments, and other forms of interaction had a real emotional impact on how they felt after reposting.

Informant S explained that when the reposted content received a positive response, he felt an increase in mood and feelings of being valued. He feels that his feelings are acknowledged and understood by others in the digital space. On the other hand, when the content shared does not get the expected response, there is a feeling of emptiness, lack of attention, and sometimes even doubts about one's own worth. This pattern of experience shows that social validation in the digital space has a close relationship with the emotional stability of individuals, where acceptance from others is one of the important factors in determining a person's psychological state.

The same thing was also expressed by Informant A who stated that reposting is often done in the hope that others can understand the condition they are experiencing without the need for verbal explanation. He considers that the response from the digital environment is a form of indirect recognition of the feelings he expresses through content. When such responses appear, he feels more cared for and not alone in the face of emotional distress. However, when the response is not present or very minimal, he admits that it can lead to feelings of neglect and negatively affect his mood. These findings suggest that digital interactions have a significant psychological impact on individuals.

The results of the study show that reposting serves as a strategy to seek social validation in the digital environment. Individuals indirectly expect an acknowledgment of the emotional state they convey through the reshared content. This relates to the need for social integration and a sense of belonging, where individuals use media to strengthen social relationships as well as derive

psychological satisfaction from the interactions that occur (Bayer et al., 2020). Reposting is part of the process of seeking emotional legitimacy carried out through social media.

It also shows that an individual's emotional experience in the digital space is not only influenced by the content reposted, but also by the social response that follows the activity. Responses from other users become a kind of indicator of social acceptance that directly affects an individual's perception of himself. When the response received is positive, individuals tend to experience increased confidence and emotional comfort. Conversely, a lack of response can lead to feelings of worthlessness or lack of attention. This shows that social media has become a space where social validation has a very strong role in shaping the emotional state of individuals (Kross et al., 2021).

Table 2. The Use of Uses and Gratifications Theory in Research

No	Aspects of Theory Uses and Gratifications	Form in TikTok Reposting	Research Findings	Impact on Emotional Conditions
1	Emotional needs	Reposting sad, overthinking, motivational, or "relevant" content	Informants S and A often repost when they are sad, anxious, or depressed	Provides a sense of relief, emotional vent, and reduces inner stress
2	Self-expression	Reposting as a representation of feelings without verbal explanation	Informants D and M admitted that they reposted spontaneously but according to the condition of the heart	Helps individuals express emotions indirectly
3	Social validation	Hope to get likes, comments, or responses from others	Informants S and A feel cared for when they receive a response	Increases a sense of being valued, but can trigger feelings of being ignored if there is no response
4	Social integration	Reposting content that "relates" to others	Informants feel connected to other users	Fostering a sense of community and reducing loneliness

			who have had similar experiences	
5	Self-identity	Selection of content that reflects one's character or condition	Informant R often reposts motivational content to build a positive image	Shaping digital self-image and boosting confidence
6	Coping or emotion management	Reposting as a way to cope with psychological stress or pressure	All informants show reposting when the emotional state is unstable	Becomes a mechanism for venting and regulating emotions
7	Selective consumption of media	Choosing emotional content	Informant D said the algorithm adjusts the user's emotions	Reinforcing emotions (positive or negative)
8	Digital social interaction	Reposting followed by responses from other users	Response affects the feelings of the informant after the repost	Increase or decrease emotional well-being

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on the pattern of digital interaction through TikTok reposting and its relationship with the emotional state of Generation Z, it can be concluded that the reposting activity is not just an act of resharing content, but has a complex psychological meaning. Generation Z is actively utilizing reposting features as a means to meet emotional needs that can't always be conveyed directly in real life. The content that is reposted tends to reflect inner conditions such as sadness, anxiety, social pressure and other emotional experiences that are being experienced by individuals.

Reposting also serves as an indirect form of self-expression in the digital space. Individuals use content as a symbolic medium to convey feelings and psychological conditions without having to express them verbally. This activity shows a shift in communication patterns, where self-expression no longer depends on direct interaction, but through implicit digital representations. Reposting is also closely related to the need for social validation, where responses from other users such as likes and comments can affect an individual's emotional state, both positively and negatively.

TikTok reposting has a significant role in the emotional lives of Generation Z, both as a means of emotional regulation, self-expression, and the search for social validation. This activity reflects that social media has become an important space in the formation of individual emotional experiences in the digital age. In the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, the use of media by Generation Z is active and aims to meet certain psychological needs so that reposting can be understood as part of an emotional adaptation strategy in daily life.

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