Comparative Discussions of Care: Exploring Self-Care and Radical Self-Care on Instagram Reels

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INTRODUCTION

- In recent years, *self-care* has been increasingly associated with commercialization and beauty products instead of overall well-being
- To combat this, activists have reclaimed the original intentions of self-care and created the term *radical self-care* to put the focus back on mental and physical health
- Little is known about radical self-care content on social media. Additionally, there are few studies on self-care and social media. Finally, there are no studies comparing the contents of self-care vs. radical self-care

> The purpose of this research study is to compare discussions of self-care and radical self-care content on Instagram to understand the presentation and how it can influence mental and physical health.
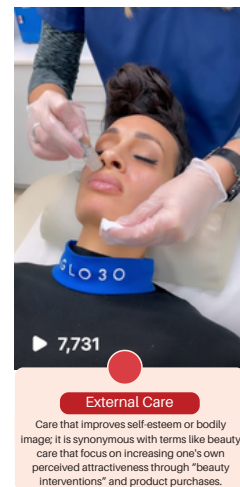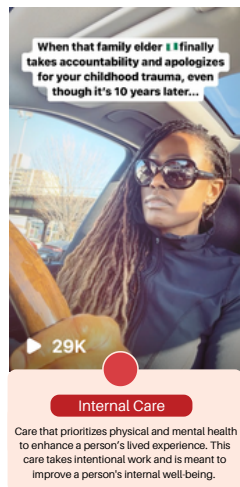
METHODS

- The following study was exempt from the IRB at the University of Wisconsin–Madison
- This study did a content analysis of Instagram Reels and ran Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) analyses on captions

Search Strategy

- Instagram reels from 2022-2023 were collected on every third post
  - Search terms: #selfcare and #radicalselfcare
- Inclusion criteria
  - Captions must have a sentence or more of writing, be written in English, and contain the hashtag #selfcare or #radicalselfcare

Data Collection

- Each Reel was assessed from video content, caption, and hashtags
- Variables like advertisement (PR, sponsors, etc.), engagement (# of likes, comments, views, and followers), internal care (healing, mediation, and eating healthy foods), and external care (skincare, retail therapy, and bubble baths) were used to investigate how these hashtags differ in communicating care

METHODS (cont.)

- Finally captions were run through LIWC analysis to evaluate:
  - **emotional tone**
  - **affective processes**: positive emotions, negative emotions, anxiety, anger, and sadness
  - **biological processes**: body, health, and sexual
  - **personal concerns**: work, leisure, money, and death
  - **drive words**: power, reward, and risk

Analysis

- T-tests were utilized on content analysis and LIWC analysis data to compare the content differences between #selfcare and #radicalselfcare. Frequencies were only evaluated on content analysis data to gather the amount of engagement and care representations present in each hashtag.

RESULTS

- 50 Instagram reels were assessed from each hashtag: #selfcare and #radicalselfcare. n=100
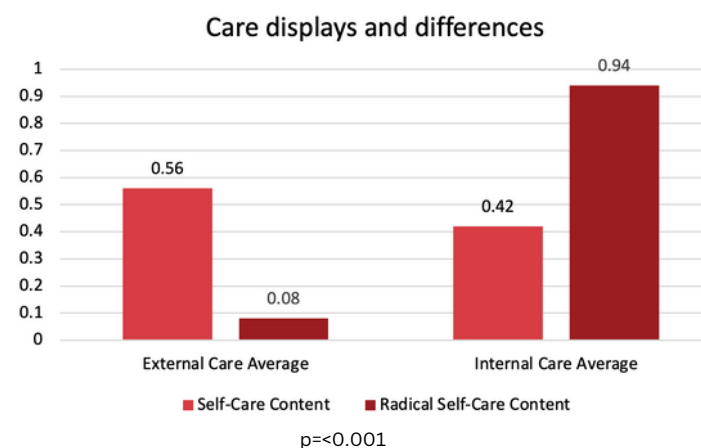
Average	Radical Self-Care Content	Self-Care Content	p value
Likes	208.96	744.68	p=<0.001
Comments	10.44	16.90	p=0.006
Views	5,022.82	11,156.24	p=0.003
Followers	15,265.26	155,460.40	p=0.008

- Self-care and radical self-care content were significantly different from each other. From the table we can see that self-care content had higher in engagement overall
- Self care was significantly high for likes, comments, views, and followers.


Advertising Average

- 37% Radical Self-Care Content
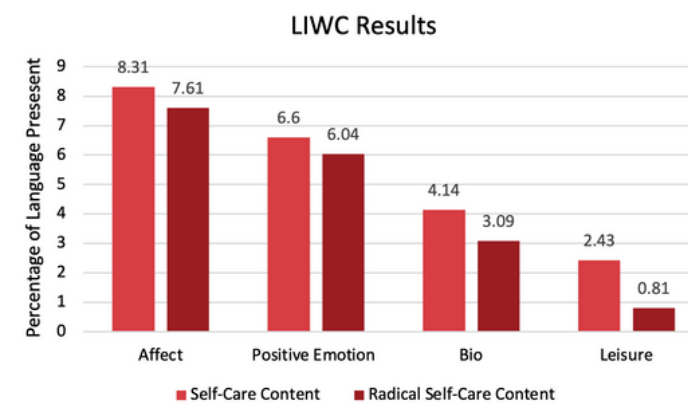- 63% Self-Care Content
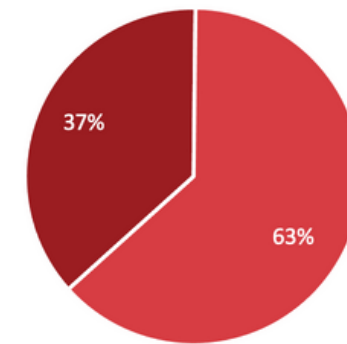
- When comparing self-care and radical self-care content, advertising was significantly different (p=0.01). Self-care content contained more advertising
  - Among the sample 19 reels contained advertisements. 12 were self-care content (63%) and 7 were radical self-care content (37%)

Care displays and differences
(p=<0.001)

- External Care Average: Self-Care Content 0.56, Radical Self-Care Content 0.08
- Internal Care Average: Self-Care Content 0.42, Radical Self-Care Content 0.94

- When comparing self-care and radical self-care content, *internal care* was seen in 94% of radical self-care content
  - Internal care was only in 42% of self-care content
- External care was seen the most in self-care content at 56%
  - External care only represented 8% of radical self-care content

Emotional Tone
(p=0.006)

- Self-Care: 64.25
- Radical Self-Care: 74.79
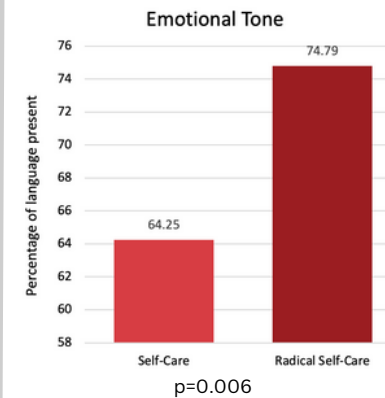
- In comparing *emotional tone*, radical self-care captions were more positive in tone compared to self-care content.
  - Self-care captions on average we're still slightly positive

LIWC Results

	Self-Care Content	Radical Self-Care Content
Affect	8.31	7.61
Positive Emotion	6.6	6.04
Bio	4.14	3.09
Leisure	2.43	0.81

- Self-care captions were significantly higher in:
  - A*ffective processes:* happy, cried, etc. (p=0.002)
  - *Positive emotions:* love, nice, sweet, etc. (p=0.002)
  - *Biological processes:* blood, eating, body, etc. (p=0.015)
  - *Leisure:* cook, chat, movie, etc. (p=0.005)

CONCLUSIONS

- *Engagement and advertising* were higher in self-care content which suggests that self-care content is more well-known and commodified
- *External care and internal care* had major differences between self-care and radical self-care content. External care was in 56% of self-care content, while radical self-care content had 8%. In comparison, internal care appeared in the majority of radical self-care content (94%). All this suggests that self-care content is more focused on beauty as a way to care for oneself, while radical self-care content focuses on mental and physical health to improve one's well-being
- *Tone* was significantly more positive in radical self-care captions, but it didn't convey as many words relating to emotions. This may suggest that while radical self-care content does have a more compassionate and helpful tone, it doesn't directly address emotions as much as self-care content
- *Affective processing words and positive emotion* were seen in more self-care captions. This suggests that self-care content may directly speak more about emotions. Or this could be due to the frequent use of the word emotional words like "love" to describe appreciation of a procedure or product.
- *Biological processing words* were seen more in self-care captions. This could suggest that self-care content puts more of an emphasis on bodies.
- *Leisure* is seen more in self-care captions. This may suggest that self-care content contains activities that are more traditionally associated with relaxation or spare time.

IMPLICATIONS

- The increased use of advertising, external care, and biological processes and leisure words in self-care content may suggest to users that buying items and taking care of outward appearance is the primary way to sustain overall well-being. This is especially concerning when you consider the large amount of engagement self-care content receives.
- In contrast, the increased use of internal care in radical self-care content suggests new avenues in how care is represented. The #radicalselfcare may be a better method to represent care that centers mental and physical health, while making it more accessible to the public.
- Further studies should explore the language differences in self-care and radical self-care content to understand the contrasts in emotional tone and emotional words.

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