

Dove #KidsOnlieSafety Campaign: A Public Relations Case Study

Dove, a leading personal care brand under Unilever, started its existence in the United States in 1957 when it introduced the Beauty Bar, an exclusive mix of ¼ moisturizing cream and gentle cleansers (Project 2023). With campaigns like #NoDigitalDistortion, Reverse Selfie/Selfie Talk, and #DetoxYourFeed, Dove is demonstrating its long-term dedication to driving positive change in beauty and acting towards making social media a more positive environment (Project 2023). Social media can help young people to be creative, but research indicates that young people's mental health is being negatively impacted by toxic online content (Project 2023). During the Dove Self-Esteem Project, which it launched in 2004, Dove has taught over 94 million young people worldwide about body confidence and self-esteem (Project 2023). As part of the Campaign for Kids' Online Safety, the Dove Self-Esteem Project is expanding its purpose in 2023 to support safer social media design and contribute to the creation of a more positive online community. This campaign also draws attention to problems including distorted body images, cyberbullying, and artificial beauty standards, suicide rates, hospitalizations for self-harm, depression that are made worse by social media use (Beni-Haynes 2023). Dove desires to update laws, stand for more awareness, and provide parents with the resources they need to protect their kids online (Project 2023).

Dove first needed to distinguish a key target public for the campaign to effectively values kids' mental health in the digital era. The campaign mainly targets educators, parents, and other caregivers who responsible for guiding and controlling their children's online conduct. Dove leveraged Grunig and Hunt's (1984) situational theory to further refine the effectiveness of the campaign in reaching the desired audience. Situational theory involves categorising publics based on their awareness of and involvement with an issue (Grunig and Hunt 1984). Initially, the key public can be categorised as an "aware public", as they are aware of social media's dangers, yet not highly active or engaged with them. At this stage, the target audience was not sufficiently engaged to accomplish the desired changes. Therefore, The Dove needed to shift their public towards becoming "active" through targeted Instagram messaging and participation opportunities. As the theory outlines, an "active public" is one who not only recognises and understands the issue but also motivated to take action in addressing them (Grunig and Hunt 1984). Dove's campaign seeks to change these parents into "active" public by promoting involvement and offering opportunities for interaction through social media messages, Instagram stories (see Appendix A). The situational theory provided Dove with a roadmap to transition their key public from passive observers to active change-makers, emphasising the importance of public relations frameworks in effecting meaningful change.

Van Leuven and Slater's (1991) stages of public opinion formation model identifies five sequential phases that publics move through in response to an issue, from initial awareness to action. Dove used Instagram to strategically guide its target audience through these stages of opinion formation to transform the previously mentioned passive

awareness into activism. In the awareness stage, Dove launched the #KidsOnlineSafety campaign on April 12, 2023, with an Instagram post to raise awareness of negative impacts of social media on kid's mental **health** (**see Appendix B**). This post generated over 206,534 likes with supportive comments such as "Thank you for highlight this important issue" (**see Appendix C**). In the elaboration stage, Dove widened the discussion by publishing several detailed posts that elaborated on significant issues like body image problems, cyberbullying, and the addictive qualities of social media sites. Additionally, Dove held live-streamed webinars that allowed audience the chance to talk with psychologists and specialists in digital safety, giving them knowledge of the campaign's goals (**see Appendix D**). The audience was inspired by these initiatives to begin thinking seriously about the **issue** (**see Appendix E**). By linking the wider social impacts of excessive social media use, Dove was able to expand the audience's comprehension at this understanding stage. Dove emphasized through live events and Instagram posts how unlimited scrolling of dangerous online content can result in long-term mental health problems like anxiety, sadness, and body image disorders. As part of the campaign, Dove, released a short film titled "Cost of Beauty", which portrayed the real-life experience of a young girl who was impacted by social media and explained her recovery. This story-telling technique promoted emotional involvement, which made it easier for the audience to understand the problem and make connections between it and other societal issues (**see Appendix F**). In the attitude crystallization, Dove urged the audience to act on their beliefs by getting involved in real-world tasks. To encourage safer online environments for kids, the brand shared and encouraged followers to join campaigns in support of the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA). A change was evident in the comments made on posts, as viewers expressed support for the policy changes and encouraged others to sign the petition by sharing the link (**see Appendix G**). The goal of Dove's campaign's last phase was to inspire the audience's crystallized opinions into activism. Dove provided materials to teach kids safe social media practices through workshops and webinars for parents and educators. Dove also included interactive polls and Q&A sessions in their Instagram stories to encourage supporters to participate and become activists in their communities. In addition to encouraging online participation, these initiatives gave the public tangible ways to show their support for the issue (**see Appendix H and I**). By aligning their Instagram strategies with Van Leuven and Slater's model, Dove effectively moved its audience from awareness to activism.

Dove implemented dialogic communication principles by encouraging mutual discussions with its followers in the comments section of its Instagram photos titled "Kids Online Safety". According to Kent and Taylor (2002), dialogic communication theory emphasizes two-way involvement between audiences and organizations with the goal of building mutual understanding. Responding respectfully to user comments and interacting directly with its target audience generated a meaningful dialogue where viewers felt valued and heard like "we're so happy to have your support ❤️ 🙌" (**see Appendix J**). By doing this, Dove invited followers to contribute their own opinions and experiences to the campaign's messaging. This collaborative strategy corresponded to dialogic theory of Kent & Taylor (2002), which emphasizes conversational humanization and sympathetic listening in public relations. The campaign's dialogic Instagram strategy

enabled Dove to build trust and strengthen relationships with its audience through open, ethical engagement.

Dove used a variety of persuasive communication techniques to convince the public to support the #KidsOnlineSafety campaign. To boost familiarity and a positive attitude, Instagram utilized the mere exposure principle by engaging its target audience to this content and images on a regular basis. Zajonc (1968) established the mere exposure theory, which states that an increased attitude towards a stimulus is associated with repeated exposure. Dove implemented this by consistently posting stories, and videos using the hashtag for the campaign and important images that emphasized the side effects of social media on children's mental health. Through constant reminders of the campaign's significance, Dove's followers were able to familiarize themselves with it and connect its message positively, which enhanced the campaign's persuasiveness.

Dove also incorporated rhetorical theory further to enhance the effectiveness of the campaign's messaging. The three fundamental components of persuasive communication ethos (credibility and ethics), logos (logical reasoning) and pathos (emotions and feelings) are examined by Aristotle's rhetorical theory (**Sutherland 2019**). According to Beni-Haynes (2023) Dove Self-Esteem Project built credibility by collaborating with musician Lizzo, Common Sense Media and ParentsTogether Action to promote the 2023 Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA). These respected partnerships increased Dove's credibility and expertise on this issue of online safety for children. It reduces children's interaction with harmful beauty content that has been shown to lower their self-confidence. By displaying research and statistical data on the harmful impacts of social media on young people's mental health, Dove made use of logos. Dove emphasized that 80% of mental health specialists think social media contributes to children's mental health issues (Project 2023). Moreover, studies found that among youths (10–17), 7 out of 10 have come across social media content that promotes weight loss or body transformation (Project 2023). Furthermore, over half of the population between the ages of 14 and 17 exposed to content that encourages disordered or restricted eating habits (Project 2023). This logical argument emphasized how serious the problem is and forced parents and policymakers to act. Furthermore, Dove used pathos in their "Cost of Beauty" video to express sympathy by sharing real-life experiences of youngsters dealing with mental health concerns caused on by social media. Parents were affected by this heartbreak tale, which made them motivated to act quickly to prevent their kids from this kind of harm. Using these persuasive techniques, Dove was able to successfully build relations with its key public and drive meaningful action towards this campaign.

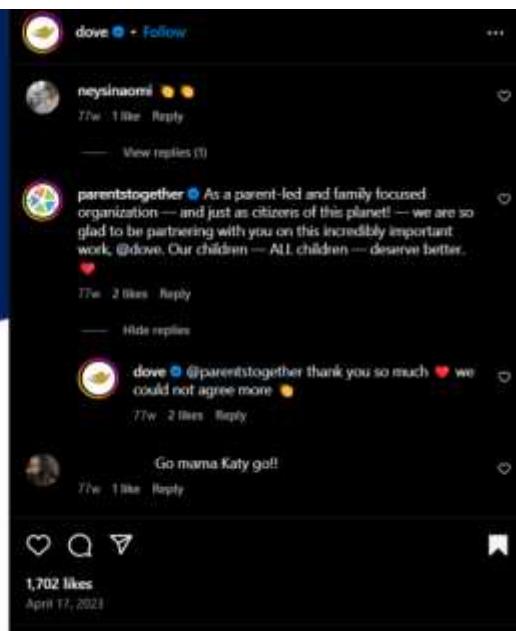
The #KidsOnlineSafety campaign was a great success, gained a lot of attention, especially on social media platforms like Instagram. Posts that combine emotional storytelling and research frequently received a lot of likes, shares, and comments, indicating that people connected with the content. Such as "Thank you finally!!", "Please keep going this!! 🙏 🙏 🙏 "(See Appendix K). After the launched of the #kidsOnlineSafety campaign, the post was shared more than 101k times.

Despite the campaign's success, some areas could have been further optimised to increase its effectiveness. Dove has not been focussed enough on moderating user-generated content within the comments of its posts relating to the #KidsOnlineSafety campaign. Dove faced controversy for failing to respond to negative feedback in a positive way (**See Appendix L**). Dove missed an opportunity to improve its transparency and authenticity when supporters questioned Dove's sincerity or its role in promoting beauty standards (**See Appendix M**). This campaign was mostly focused on Western nations, like the United States and the United Kingdom, even though it reached a wide audience. Some supports argue that the impact could have been expanded by tackling online safety issues more completely in locations where digital education and safety resources are limited.

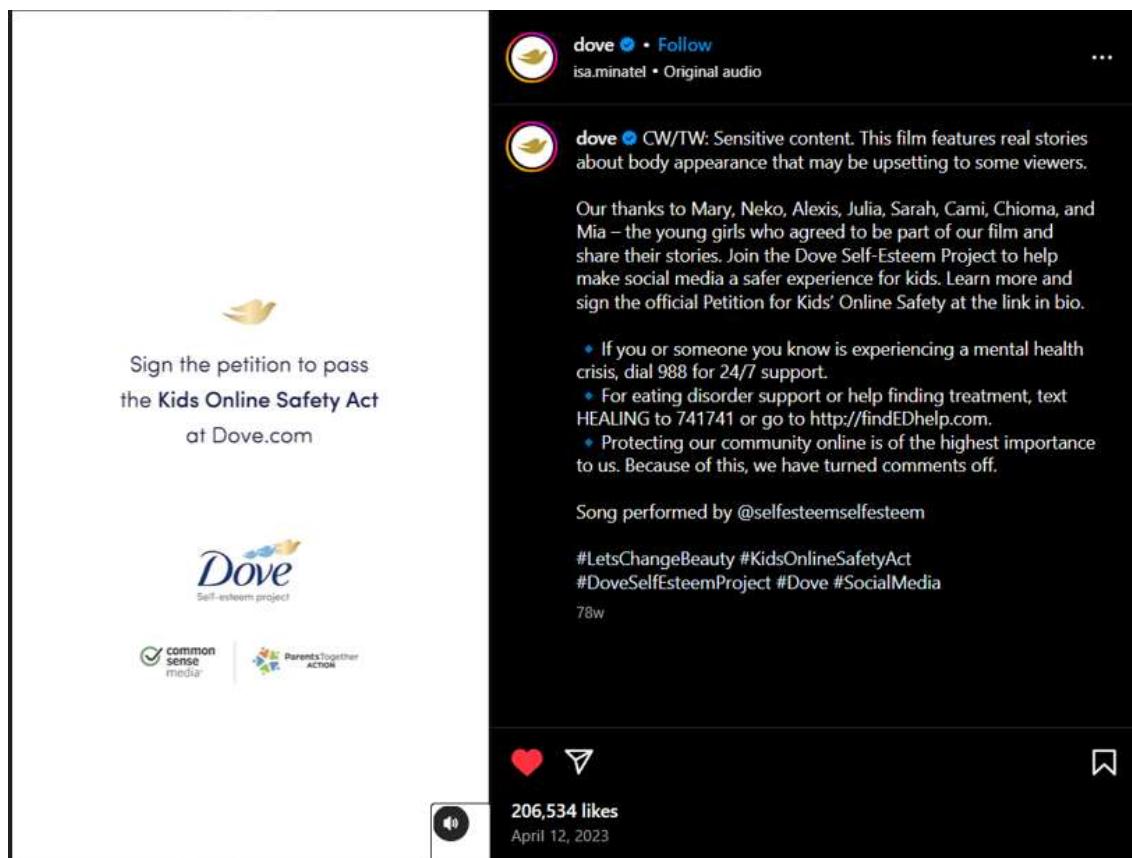
The #KidsOnlineSafety campaign by the Dove also aligns well with the principles of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the triple bottom line concept that encompasses profit, environmental sustainability and community welfare (Elkington 2013). Through collaborations with mental health advocates and organizations, Dove's campaign tackles youth mental health and internet safety, two important social issues. This emphasis on protecting children's wellbeing fits into the triple bottom line's people portion, highlighting Dove's dedication to social welfare. Dove promotes a culture of social responsibility and ethical leadership by supporting laws like the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA) and offering parenting education tools. This ensures the long-term well-being of the community rather than simply profit. Via open communication about its collaborations and initiatives that are aligned with its long-standing purpose of promoting self-esteem, Dove also avoids allegations of greenwashing. By enhancing Dove's reputation as a socially conscious company, the campaign boosts profitability by increasing brand trust and customer loyalty. This proactive strategy to incorporating CSR into its communication enhances the brand's positive reputation and represents a comprehensive approach towards achieving a balanced triple bottom line.

In conclusion, #KidsOnlineSafety campaign illustrates the potential of strategic public relations in driving social change through digital platforms. By using Grunig and Hunt's situational theory and Van Leuven and Slater's stages of public opinion formation, Dove effectively shifts its audience from passive awareness to active participation. The campaign's social media strategy, particularly on Instagram, integrates theories such as dialogic communication and rhetorical theory, ensuring deep engagement and fostering community support. Despite some criticisms regarding moderation and authenticity, Dove's alignment with CSR principles and its transparent communication efforts demonstrates a balanced approach, contributing positively to its brand image and societal impact. Overall, Dove's "Kids Online Safety" campaign provides a valuable case study in how public relations can harness social media for corporate social responsibility and social change.

Appendices:



Appendix A



Appendix B

dove • Follow

78w 2 likes Reply

— View replies (1)

 Thank you for highlighting this important issue @dove

78w 2 likes Reply

— View replies (1)

 drsharimarchbein Omg so much YES to this @dove 🙌🙌 Our elementary school has education about this also and it's so important for kids and parents

79w 3 likes Reply

— Hide replies

 dove @drsharimarchbein happy to have your support 🙌💕✨

78w 1 like Reply

Appendix C

You're invited to join

A Call for Kids' Online Safety:
A Dove Forum for Change

Streaming LIVE April 11

dove Social media is causing a mental health crisis in kids.* Join our LIVE virtual event on April 11. Head to our Stories to set a reminder and <https://www.dove.com/us/en/stories/campaigns/kids-online-safety.html> to find out more.

*2023 Dove Self Esteem Project Research for Kids' Online Safety

#Dove #SocialMedia #Let'sChangeBeverly #KidsOnlineSafetyAct #DoveSelfEsteemProject

Edited - 70w

thank you for doing what you're doing. We need more of this. Despite the many positives social media needs to be made illegal for under 18s - it's no different to driving, drinking alcohol, etc etc

70w Reply

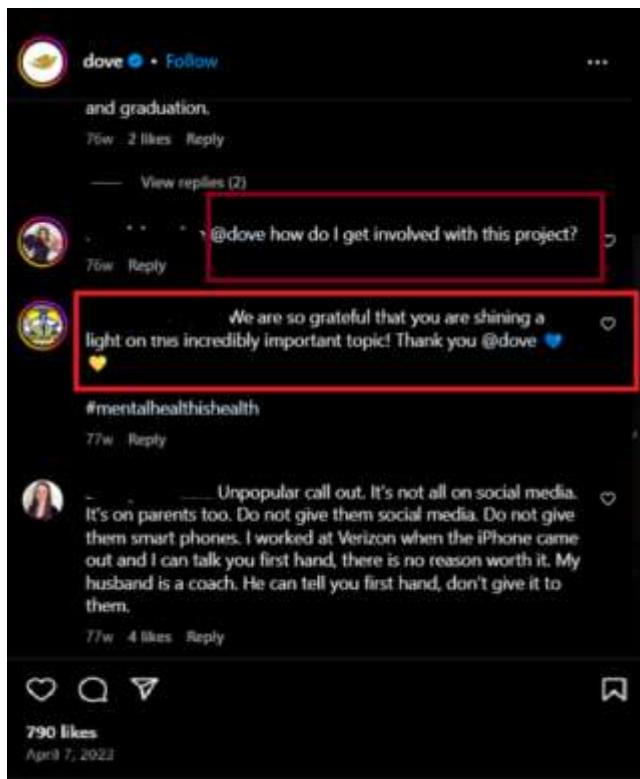
Love this

View replies (0)

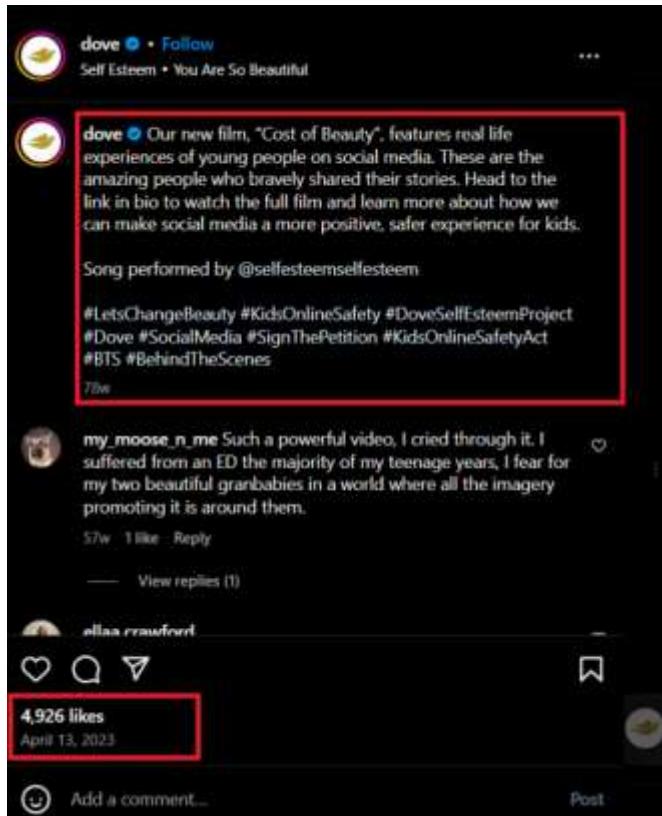
790 likes

April 7, 2023

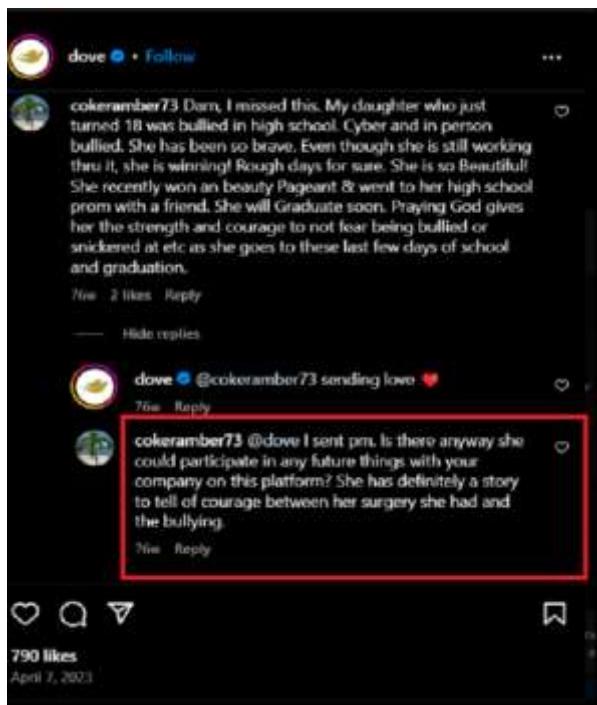
Appendix D



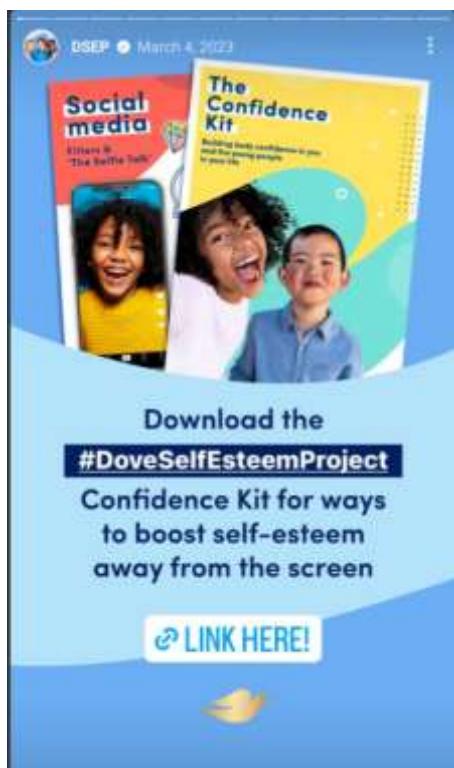
Appendix E



Appendix F



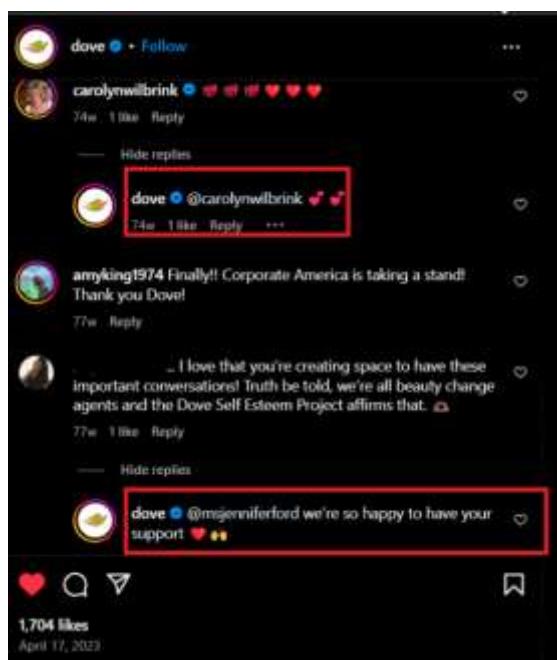
Appendix G



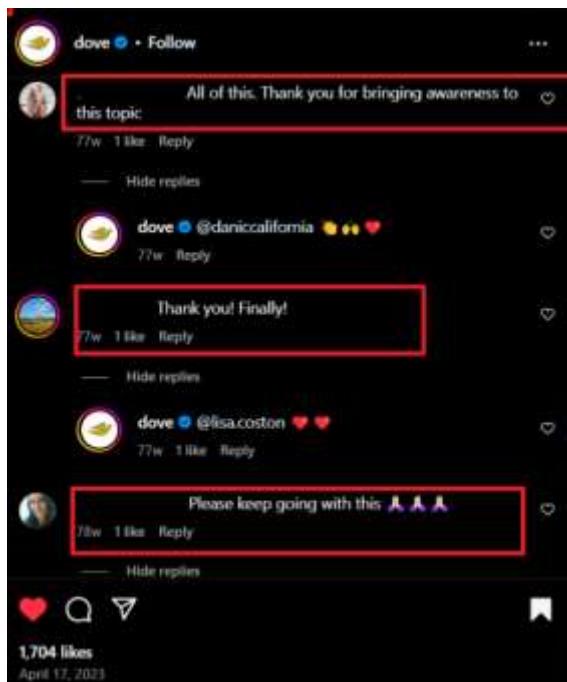
Appendix H



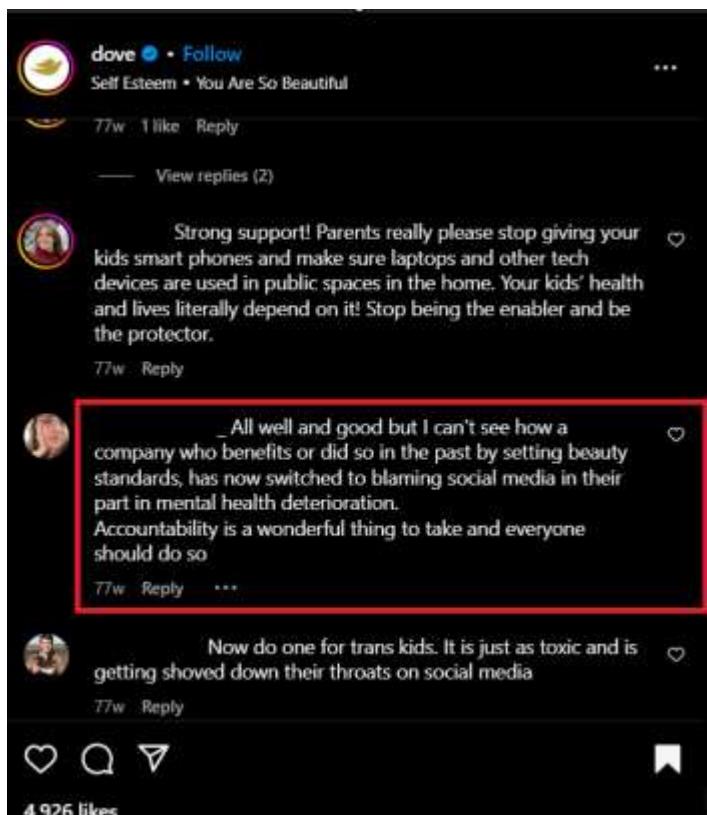
Appendix I



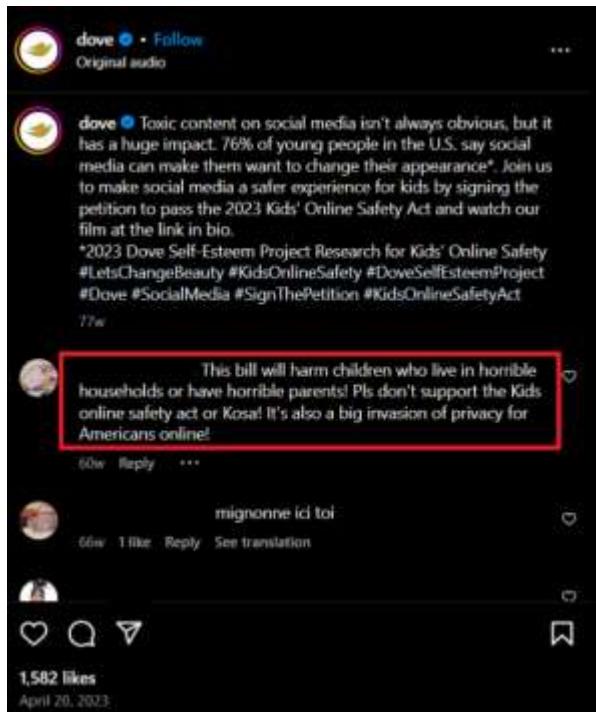
Appendix J



Appendix K



Appendix L



Appendix M

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