**Step 3: Characterize Content Characteristics of Ephemeral and Non-Ephemeral Content**

*Content Analysis*

**Summary:**

I conducted a content analysis of both ephemeral and non-ephemeral videos to characterize the content characteristics (i.e., a video’s user engagement metrics and audio, visual, and linguistic elements) of each. I developed a preliminary codebook based on prior research on NSSI content on social media (Himelein-Wachowiak et al., 2022) and moderation of mental health content on social media (Steen et al., 2023), as well as open coding. I then discussed and refined these codes further with an information science researcher based on criteria such as data classification, coding category saturation, and coding regularities to establish a final codebook (see Supplemental File). We tested intercoder reliability with this final codebook using Cohen’s kappa (κ = 0.76). My analysis resulted in six high-level categories: addiction language, algospeak, signaling, visible scars, explicit NSSI language, and the presence of trigger warnings. I organized 24 child codes under these categories: three for addiction language, six for algospeak, four for explicit language, four for visible scars, and seven for signaling. I coded each characteristic as present (1) or absent (0) in Excel.

**Results:**

As observed through the content analysis (Table 5), approximately a third (33.03%) of all videos in the sample included explicit NSSI language, with explicit terms referencing NSSI scars (16.84%), methods of engaging in NSSI such as cutting or burning (4.25%), or the act of self-harm itself (10.87%). The analysis also revealed that 32.79% of videos contained some form of addiction language. This language framed NSSI in terms commonly associated with substance use disorders. For instance, 19.79% of videos referenced recovering from or being “clean” from NSSI. These videos often shared milestones related to NSSI sobriety*.* A commonly observed trend included photos of users with text celebrating their sobriety (e.g., “I’m four months sober!!”) followed by photos of their younger selves (e.g., “Wait, we stayed clean for longer than a day?”). Alternatively, a smaller subset of videos discussed relapsing (9.73%), reflecting the challenges users face in “quitting” NSSI. Videos with relapsing language commonly included screenshots of the “I Am Sober” app, a sobriety tracking app designed to track and log milestones for addictions such as alcohol, drugs, and nicotine.

Signaling was another common characteristic, observed within 31.64% of videos in the sample. These videos often relied on insider references (9.32%) understood primarily by those with lived experiences with NSSI, such as referencing feelings of “showers stinging,” “locking the door and get[ting] supplies,” and wearing rubber bands, a common harm reduction strategy to mitigate NSSI urges. Other instances of signaling referenced parts of users’ bodies with NSSI wounds (7.03%), such as “Don’t let them see you like this. Wash your face and hide your wrists” or “I hate ‘what happened to your arms?’ season so much.” Similarly, signaling also referenced clothing (5.97%) as a means to conceal (or reveal) NSSI wounds (e.g., “POV your parents got confused and chose thought daughter and now I can’t wear short sleeves its 81 degrees tmw”).

Approximately 28.62% of videos employed algospeak. Common forms of algospeak included abbreviations of NSSI terms (13.82%), most notably “sh” in place of self-harm. Other videos (8.18%) replaced letters in NSSI terms with numbers or symbols: “My controversial opinion. $H healed scars are not ‘inappropriate’ for young people to see…we don’t need censorship. We need awareness.” Algospeak was observed in references to instruments used to engage in NSSI (e.g., b1ade), methods of engaging in NSSI (e.g., c\*t), and addiction language (e.g., cle@n).

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| **Content Characteristic** | **Videos (n = 1,223)** | **%** |
| **Addiction language** | 401 | 32.79% |
| Sobriety | 243 | 19.87% |
| Relapsing | 119 | 9.73% |
| NSSI as an addiction | 54 | 4.42% |
| **Algospeak** | 350 | 28.62% |
| Abbreviation | 169 | 13.82% |
| Symbol | 100 | 8.18% |
| Coverup | 68 | 5.57% |
| Term | 29 | 2.37% |
| Misspelling | 20 | 1.64% |
| Character | 16 | 1.31% |
| **Signaling** | 387 | 31.64% |
| Insider reference | 114 | 9.32% |
| Body | 86 | 7.03% |
| Clothing | 73 | 5.97% |
| Imagery | 58 | 4.74% |
| Summer | 45 | 3.68% |
| Lyric | 35 | 2.86% |
| Blood | 31 | 2.54% |
| **Visible scars** | 129 | 10.55% |
| Healed | 55 | 4.50% |
| Drawn | 53 | 4.33% |
| Bandaged | 14 | 1.14% |
| Fresh | 8 | 0.65% |
| **Explicit NSSI language** | 404 | 33.03% |
| Scars | 206 | 16.84% |
| Self-harm | 133 | 10.87% |
| Method | 52 | 4.25% |
| Instrument | 36 | 2.94% |
| **Trigger warnings** | 41 | 3.35% |