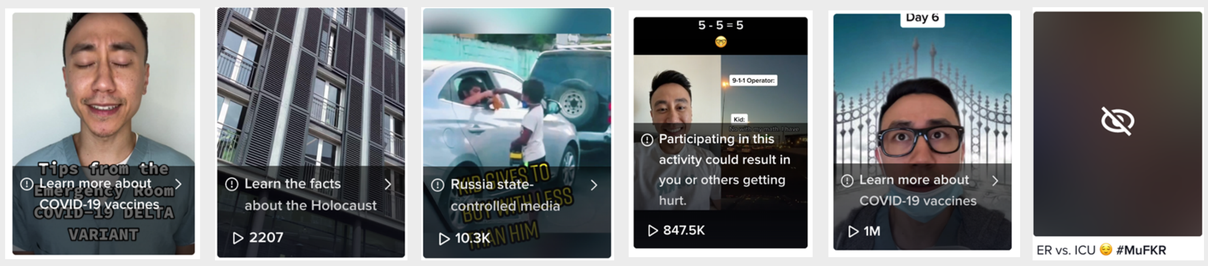
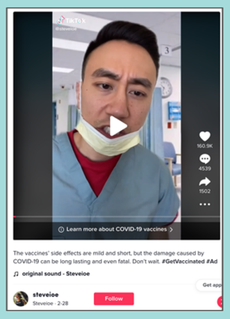
DETECTING MISINFORMATION ON TIKTOK WITH A FOCUS ON ADOLESCENT USERS

A. “COVID-19 vaccines” and “COVID-19” labels

EXAMPLES OF WARNING LABELS IN DATASET

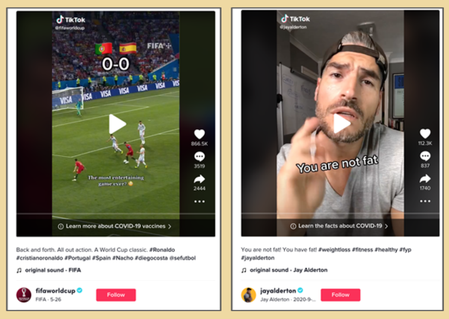


ACCURATELY APPLIED



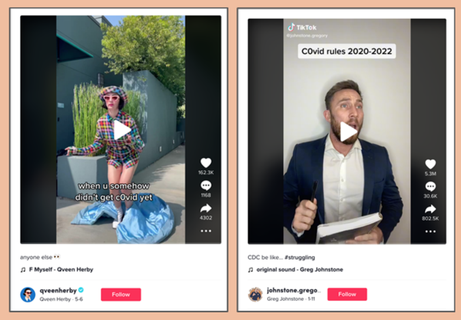
#GetVaccinated
“Vaccines”
“COVID-19”

MISAPPLIED



No mentions of COVID-19 or related content. Examples are: #futbol and #weightloss

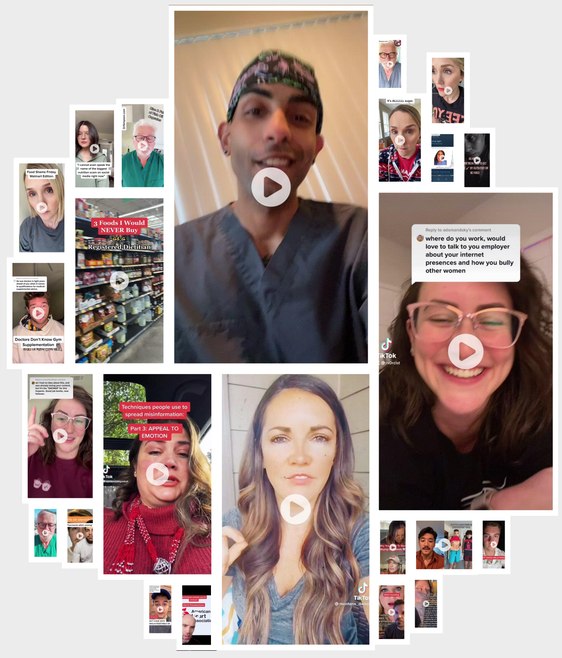
NOT APPLIED (OBFUSCATION)



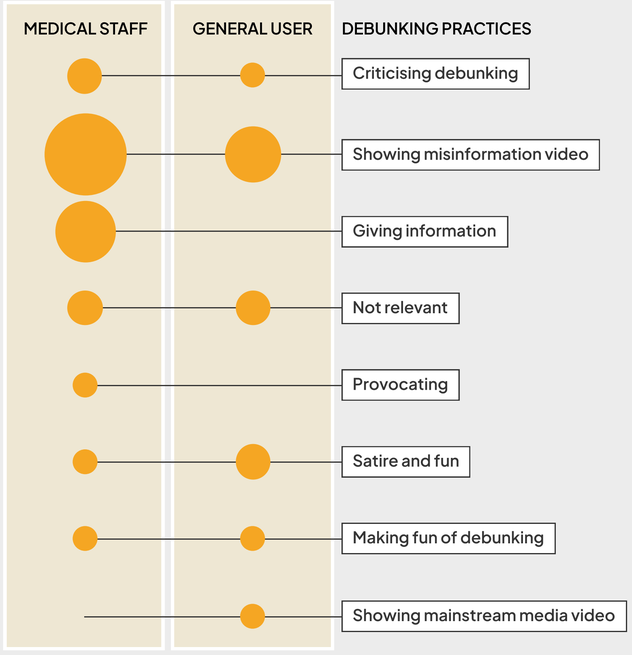
Intentionally obscuring key terms which may trigger warnings or poses the risk of being banned. Ex. “C0vid” vs “covid” Misinformation could be covertly circulated by adopting this tactic.

Brunton and Nissenbaum (2015) position obfuscation as “the deliberate addition of ambiguous, confusing or misleading information to interfere with surveillance and data collection”. In this sense, users intentionally obscure or mispell key terms which may trigger warning labels or even the risk of being banned (e.g., “Covid” vs. “C0vid”). We recognize the intentional obfuscation of various terms by TikTok users functions as a successful way in which the widespread dissemination of misinformation may go undetected by the platform’s automated labeling of content it considers dangerous or misleading.

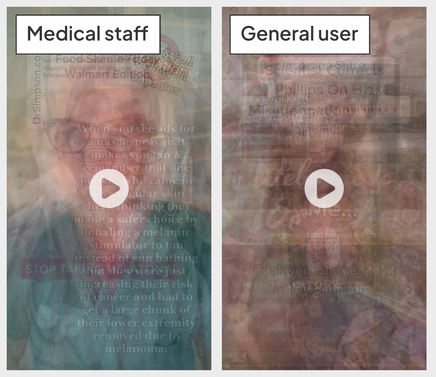
B. Medical staff VS general user portrayals



The visualization shows some of the thumbnails of the video collected in the dataset, created by medical staff. The size of the image maps the number of like obtained by the videos.



The graph shows the amount of videos shared by the two cathegories of users —medical staff and general users— sorted by debunking practice

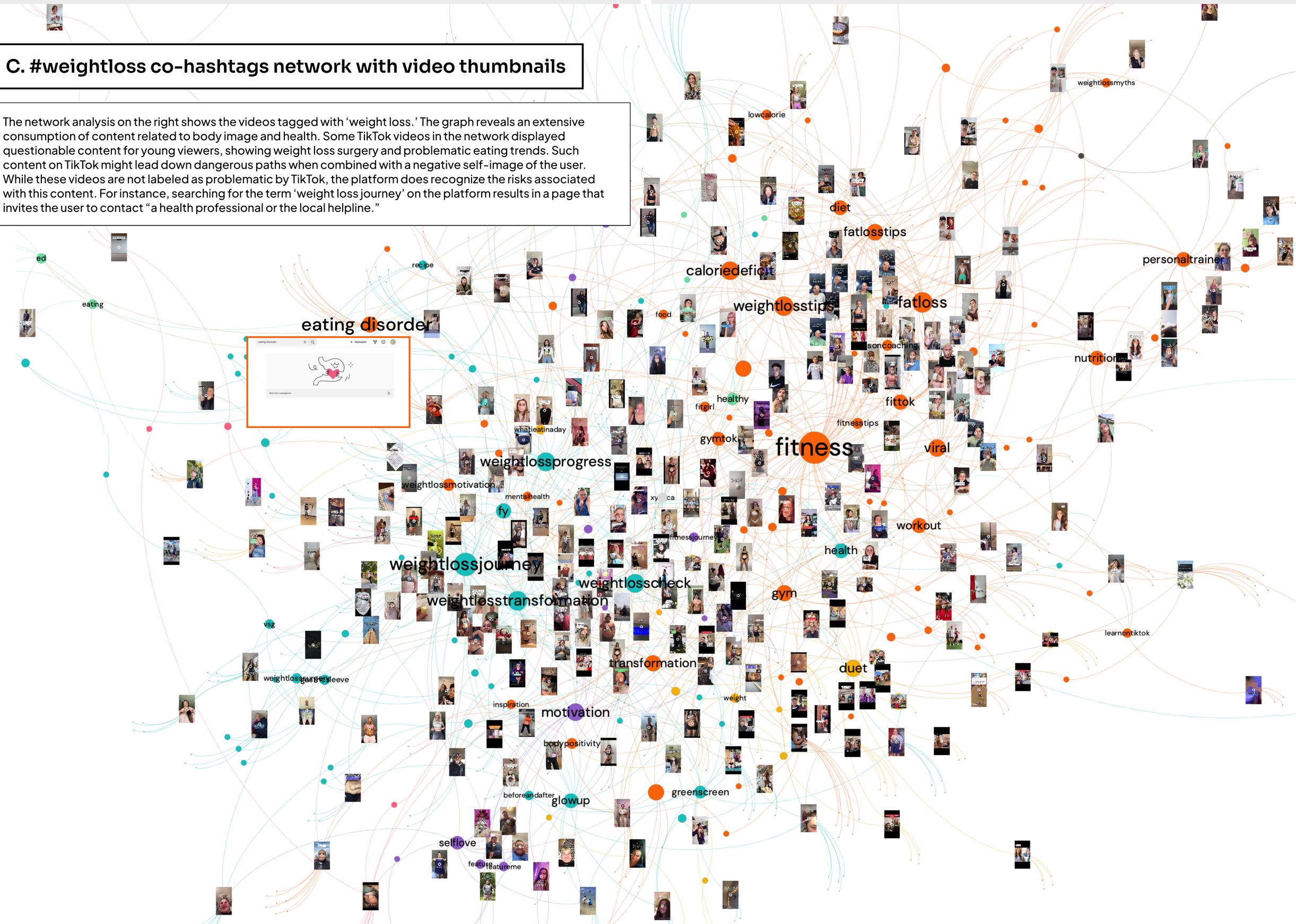


From the first network visuaslization, showing connections among the #misinformation co-hashtags, a qualitative analysis has been performed on the visual data retrieved. In particular, the thumbnails of the health cluster video were the main object of the study. From this analysis it has been found that informative content about covid has been shared by both medical staff and general users and while the experts generally share trustful information, the rest of the community may convey and spread misinformation on the platform.

The stacks of the thumbnails of the 10 most interacted videos tagged as #misinformation, clustered by portrayal.

C. #weightloss co-hashtags network with video thumbnails

The network analysis on the right shows the videos tagged with ‘weight loss.’ The graph reveals an extensive consumption of content related to body image and health. Some TikTok videos in the network displayed questionable content for young viewers, showing weight loss surgery and problematic eating trends. Such content on TikTok might lead down dangerous paths when combined with a negative self-image of the user. While these videos are not labeled as problematic by TikTok, the platform does recognize the risks associated with this content. For instance, searching for the term ‘weight loss journey’ on the platform results in a page that invites the user to contact “a health professional or the local helpline.”



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