

The Representation of Autism on the social media platform Tumblr

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Introduction

❖ Tumblr is a blogging platform that connects millions of people across the globe on various subjects with almost 398.8 million blogs exist on the website, available in 18 different languages (Tumblr, 2018).

❖ Recently, when key search terms related to depression, suicide, and anorexia are searched, the website prompts the user to a page with resources.

❖ Autism is another well-known topic on the Tumblr platform. Autism is a neurobehavioral condition affecting communication, language, and social interaction combined with repetitive behaviors. ("Autism: Definition, Symptoms, Causes, and Types," 2018).

RESEARCH QUESTION: *What are the tones of people's opinions, feelings, and knowledge on the topic of autism and what overall tone and single theme is the most prevalent on Tumblr?*

❖ This is a topic that has not yet been explored and would bring insight into the opinions and views of those who are talking about autism and potentially people with autism.

❖ The greater significance of this work would be to enable us to further aid in spreading awareness, information, and coping methods to those seeking information about autism.

Methodology

❖ Searched Tumblr using the five popular autism-related tags: "autism", "autistic", "autism spectrum disorder", "asd", "actuallyautistic",

❖ Quantified the number of posts per tone (~40), then the number of likes and reblogs per tone.

❖ Determined the most prevalent theme by observing the top 20 common words used in all the posts with the NVivo software (2018).

Inclusion/ exclusion criteria:

❖ Blog posts were chosen by relevance to autism by directly mentioning autism or mentioning the word or other terms related to autism.

❖ The blog post could not contain pictures and must be a text post.

❖ The tags were filtered by most recent posts to least recent posts to ensure the blog posts shown weren't shown based on popularity by likes.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the UROP team. Thank you Dr Anne TM Konkle who provided insight and their expertise on the topic.

Contact information

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Results

Figure 1. "Autism" tag's total number of Posts and Likes and Reblogs by tone (46 posts total)

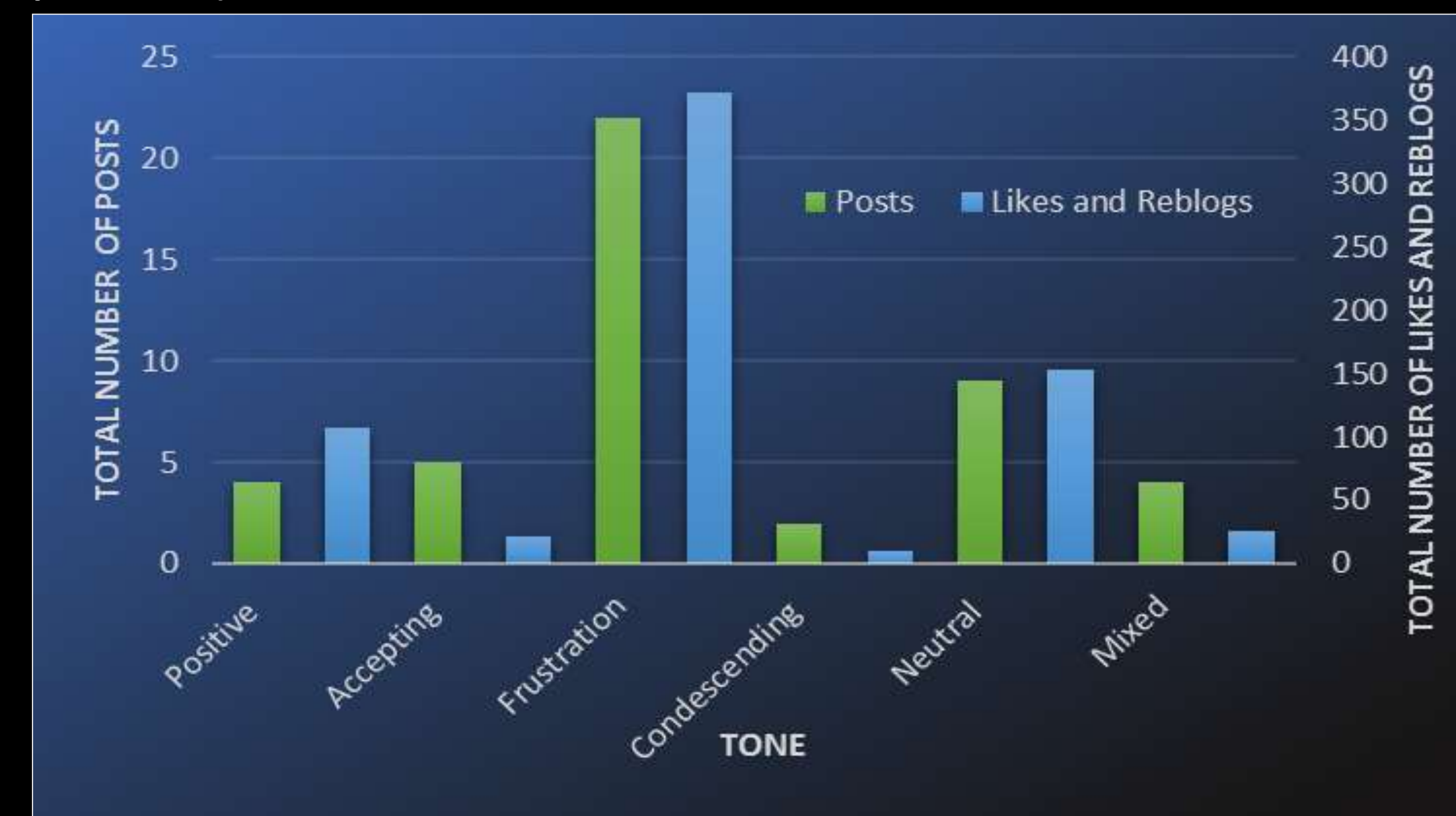


Figure 2. "Autistic" tag's total number of Posts and Likes and Reblogs by tone (41 posts total)

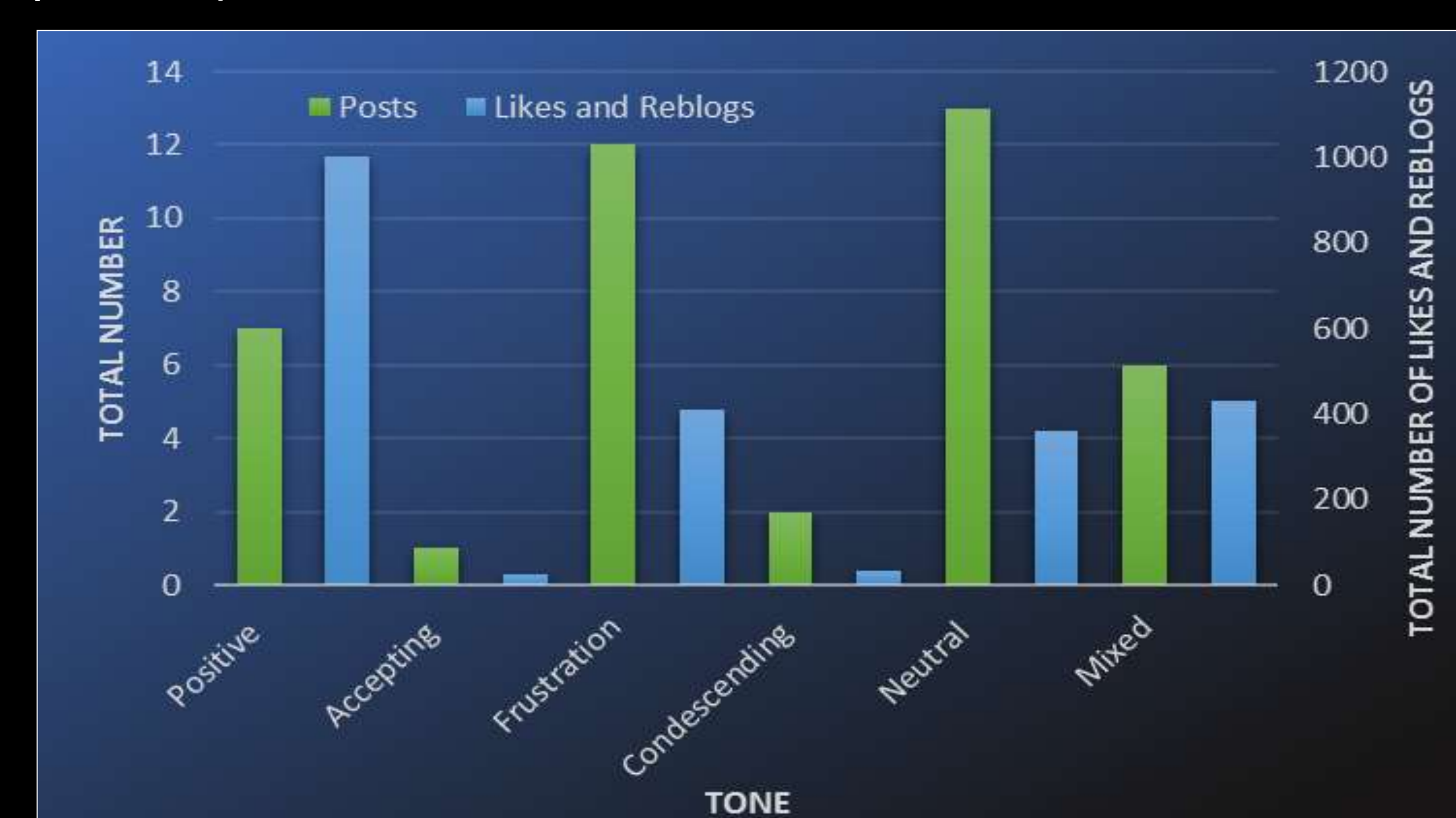


Figure 3. "Autism Spectrum Disorder" tag's total number of Posts and Likes and Reblogs by tone (39 posts total)

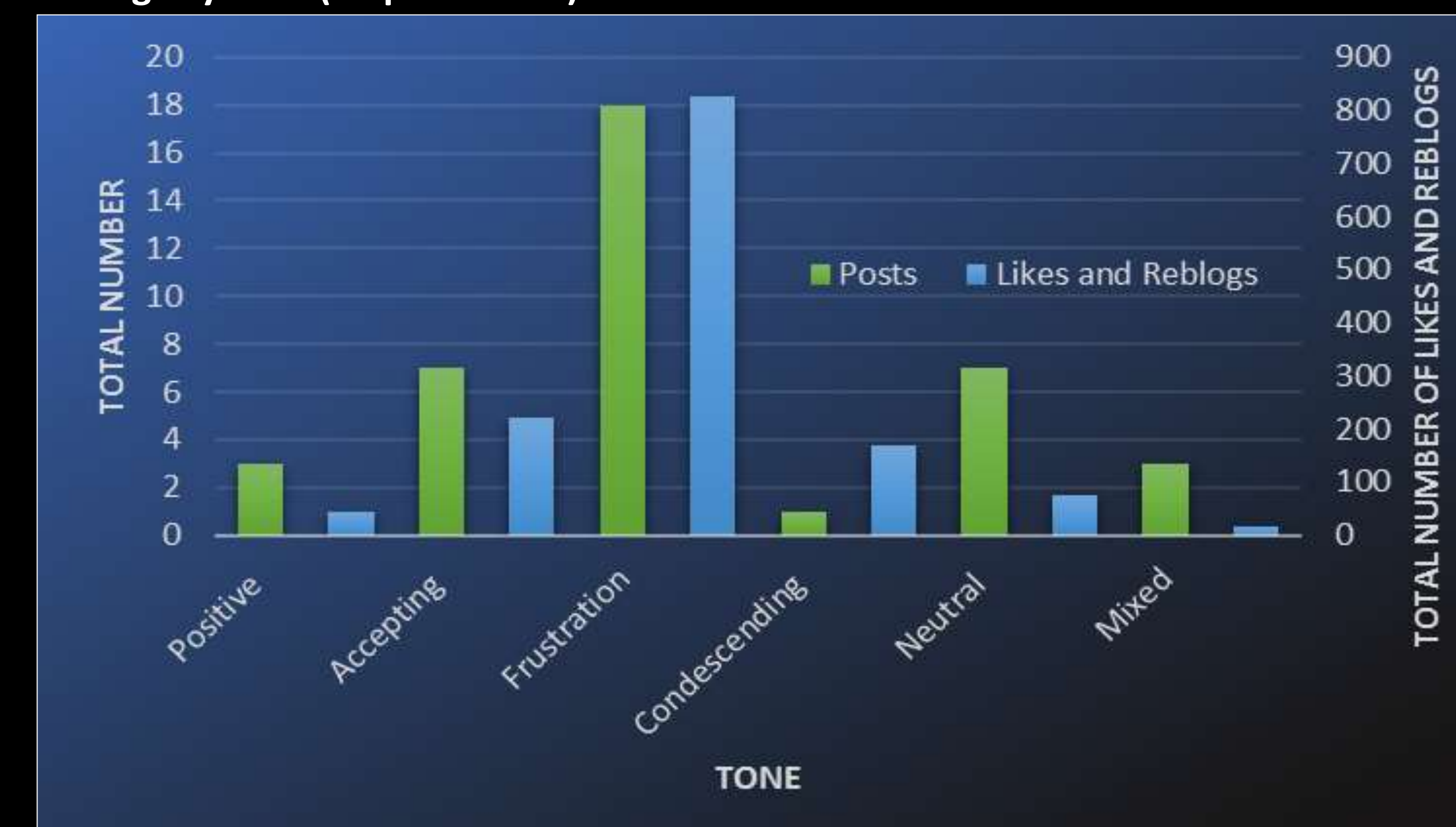


Figure 4. "ASD" tag's total number of Posts and Likes and Reblogs by tone (35 posts total)



Figure 5. "Actually autistic" tag's total number of Posts and Likes and Reblogs by tone (42 posts total)

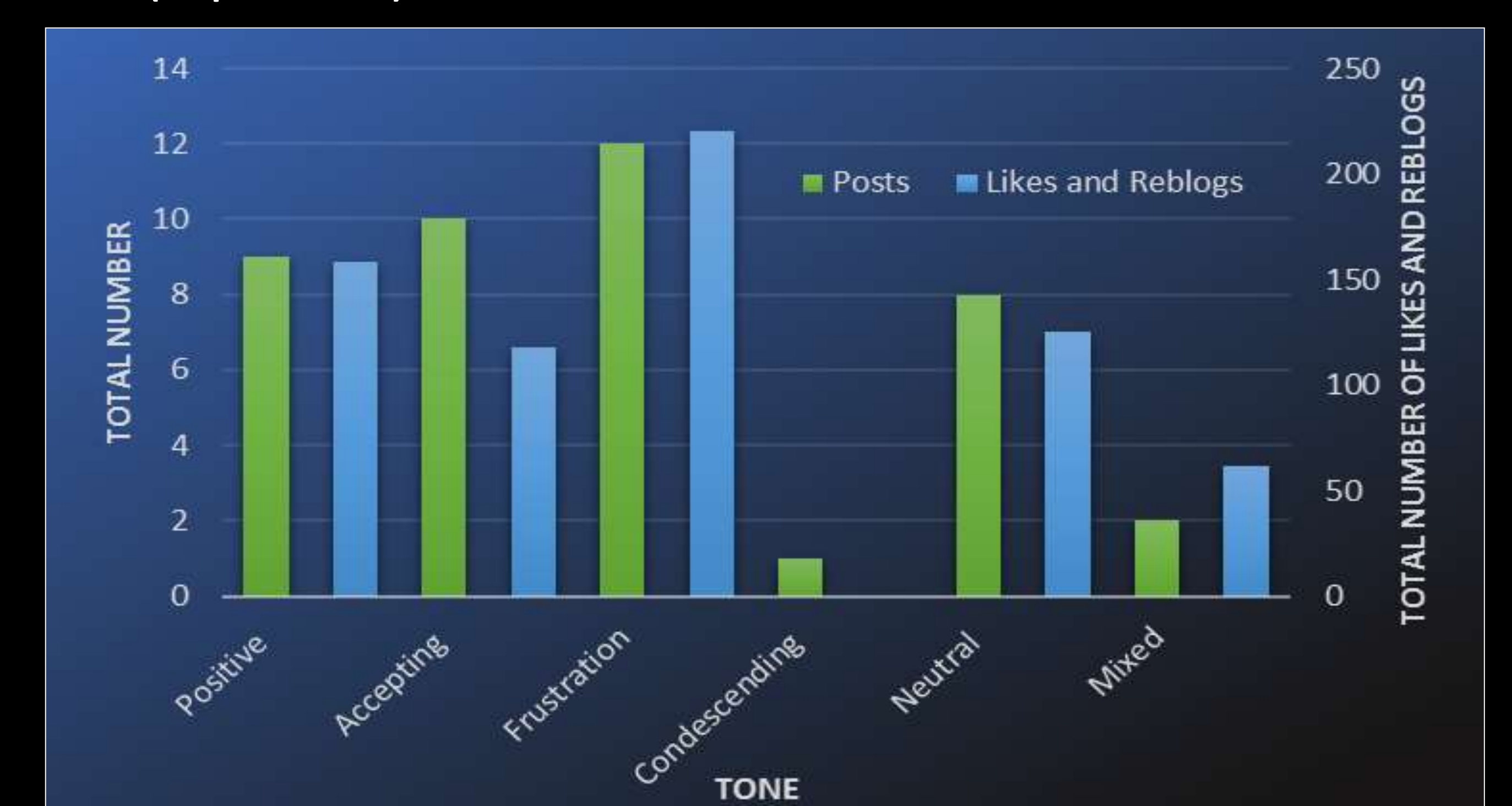


Table 1. Top 20 words found on all Tumblr posts (N) cumulatively (N=203)

Word	Count	Word	Count
autistic	1120	time	151
autism	766	person	149
people	552	make	148
like	460	asd	144
culture	304	life	136
think	193	something	133
adhd	176	special	132
feel	173	need	129
stimming	172	want	128
disorder	164	ask	127

Conclusions

DOMINANT TONE: "frustration"

MAJOR THEMES : "the desire to understand one's self when one has autism" and "relating themselves to others with and without autism".

❖ Understanding how society and media portray and perceive autism affecting the views of those with autism, and how society can intervene to prevent people

❖ With this knowledge, we would suggest that Tumblr send a notification with information about autism to users who search autism related tags to prevent users from seeing, at the forefront, a primarily frustrated point of view about autism, rather than greater societal issues.

References

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