

'Fitspiration' Trend and Eating Disorders

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The trend: #Fitspiration (the combination of words fitness and inspiration) is a growing trend on the Internet, depicting images that aim to motivate people to achieve healthier lifestyles through engagement in physical activity, self-care and a healthy dietary intake. The overall philosophy of fitspiration is empowerment and strength, promoting health, fitness and well-being rather than weight-loss and thinness, suggesting that fitspiration positively exerts social influence on the physical and mental health of a social media consumer (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2016). The images used to promote fitspiration show ideal fitness images and use both text and pictures to increase physical activity well-being of the consumer (Prichard, McLachlan, Lavis & Tiggeman, 2017).

The problem: Upon closer examination by Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2016), it was discovered that the trend only portrayed attractive, thin and toned men and women (though appearing as ordinary, casual people and not fashion models), creating a sense of identification and social comparison in the social media user accessing the images. It contributed to disturbed perception and dissatisfaction with one's body image and increased the incidence of eating disorders.

Implications:

Exposure to fitspiration images



Decrease in one's bodily satisfaction



Increase in negative mood



Potential eating disorder

Recommendations:

1. Have an open discussion about the fitspiration trend, its creation and behind the scenes to explain it as the images are often staged.
2. Emphasise that physical activity should be coupled with a healthy diet to achieve a balanced lifestyle
3. Discuss the myths of thin-body ideation in a non-judgmental way, as not many people are naturally slim and athletic as depicted in the images
4. Emphasise the high mortality rate from eating disorders and their complications
5. Refer to nutritionist/dietitian for discussion about nutrients the body needs and to a mental health team if further support is needed

Conclusion:

The fitspiration trend, although appearing motivating and beneficial, is increasing women's dissatisfaction with their body image and contributes to a rise of eating disorders. More discussion about what it encompasses is required.



Figure 1. Fitspiration. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/images/CkAQxu>

References:

- Prichard, I., McLachlan, A. C., Lavis, T., & Tiggemann, M. (2017). The impact of different forms of #fitspiration imagery on body image, mood, and self-objectification among young women. *Sex Roles*, 1-10. doi:10.1007/s11199-017-0830-3
- Tiggemann, M. & Zaccardo, M. (2016). 'Strong is the new skinny': A content analysis of #fitspiration images on instagram. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 1-9. doi:10.1177/1359105316639436

Rationale: Social media presence in one's life is ever growing, introducing new ideas, inspiring, allowing for instantaneous connection with anyone and allowing to follow trends and hashtags at one's convenience (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2016). One of the growing trends on the Internet is 'fitspiration' (the combination of words fitness and inspiration). The trend depicts images that aim to motivate people to achieve healthier lifestyles through engagement in physical activity, self-care and healthy dietary intake (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2016). As most New Zealanders use social media on a daily basis (Smith, Bell, Miller & Crothers, 2016), the potential consequence of the fitspiration trend is a decrease in one's bodily satisfaction and increase in negative mood, which can lead one to develop an eating disorder (Homan, McHugh, Wells, Watson & King, 2012; Prichard et al., 2017). A poster is a visually informative tool that offers key points in an eye-catching manner and is practical as a reminder to people.

PECOT Category	Information related to the question	Explanation
Population	Consumers of social media	With the instant availability of social media, trends are easier to find and follow. The fitspiration trend promoting the engagement in healthy behaviours such as exercise and healthy food intake should sway consumers away from eating disorders and promote healthier life choices
Exposure (intervention)	Social media users who follow fitspiration hashtags	I will be looking for articles/studies that have examined the influence of social media and the fitspiration trend on social media users to see what influence it has on the occurrence of eating disorders
Comparison (control)	People who do not use social media	I am interested to see whether people who do not use social media are less likely to develop an eating disorder
Outcome	To find out whether social media users have a higher rate of eating disorders compared to people who do not use social media	With the wide exposure to social media, promotion of body ideations such as fitspiration are easily accessible. I am interested to see the extent of social media influences on eating disorders.
Time	No particular timeframe, recent years	Social media been around for about ten or more years, and its influence grows every year

The PECOT question is therefore: Does the 'fitspiration' trend contributes to eating disorders?