



#Instagramization. Examining the role of Instagram on eating disorders symptoms among young men

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Abstract

Introduction: Instagram use for images-related activities focused on physical appearance has been positively associated with eating disorders (EDs) symptoms among women and girls (González-Nuevo et al., 2021); however, despite notable evidence of women’s susceptibility to physical appearance pressures, it remains less clear whether these associations could be generalized to men. As more recent works highlight the importance of studying EDs among men (e.g., Murray et al., 2017), including potentially divergent etiological pathways (Allen et al., 2016), examination of the different predictors of EDs to capture the unique experiences of men is needed (Schaefer et al., 2021). *Methods:* Participants were 150 men (mean-age=23; SD=4.20), who completed a questionnaire containing the Instagram Image Activity Scale (IIAS; Di Gesto et al., 2020), the Body Compassion Scale (BCS; Policardo et al., 2022), and the Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire (EDE-Q; Calugi et al., 2017) (we considered EDE-Q subscales: Restraint, Eating, Shape, and Weight Concerns). Hierarchical regression and mediation analyses were performed. *Results:* Regressions showed that both Instagram use for appearance-related activities and body compassion significantly predicted Restraint ($\beta_{\text{Instagram}}=.15$; $p<.05$; $\beta_{\text{Body Compassion}}=-.43$; $p<.001$), Eating Concerns ($\beta_{\text{Instagram}}=.07$; $p>.05$; $\beta_{\text{Body Compassion}}=-.47$; $p<.001$), Shape Concerns ($\beta_{\text{Instagram}}=.14$; $p<.05$; $\beta_{\text{Body Compassion}}=-.55$; $p<.001$), Weight Concerns ($\beta_{\text{Instagram}}=.13$; $p>.05$; $\beta_{\text{Body Compassion}}=-.49$; $p<.001$). Notably, with the inclusion of body compassion in the regression models, the significance of the Instagram use decreased. Mediation analyses showed that body compassion mediated the relationship between Instagram use and all the EDs symptoms (Restraint: $z=2.16$, $p<.05$; Eating Concerns: $z=2.83$, $p<.001$; Shape Concerns: $z=2.60$, $p<.001$; Weight Concerns: $z=2.41$, $p<.01$). *Discussion:* These findings may be useful for planning tailored prevention and intervention programs providing information about possible risks and protective factors implicated in EDs symptoms among men. Social media literacy training aimed at increasing a healthier use of Instagram for appearance-related activities, fostering the development of



compassionate attitude towards one's body, could be beneficial for the prevention of the onset of concerns involved in eating disorders in men.