IMPACT OF INFLUENCER CONTENT ON YOUTH BODY IMAGE
Body Positive Movement and Fitspiration on Instagram

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RESUMEN

Esta investigación analizó el impacto del contenido de Instagram de influencers Body Positive y Fitspiration en la imagen corporal de la juventud. Se partió de una encuesta a 377 jóvenes (16-25 años) y dos grupos focales (n=10). Asimismo, se realizó un análisis de contenido de 360 publicaciones de influencers. Según los resultados, la juventud consideró que este contenido repercute en la autopercepción corporal de la juventud, en especial el Fitspiration. Ambos tipos de publicaciones parecieron afectar más a las mujeres, y el tiempo en la red no resultó determinante. Las publicaciones analizadas estuvieron mediadas por el márquetin y presentaron rasgos de cosificación.

1. Introduction

At the time of writing, 30.2 million individuals in Spain are active users of social networks, representing 85% of the country's population (IAB, 2023). Among the younger demographic, specifically those between the ages of 18 and 24, the penetration rate stands at 93% (IAB, 2022). In less than a decade, there has been a shift in perspective from the idealisation of the "participatory" and "democratic" culture of networks (Jenkins, 2015) to a phase in which "connectivity" is valued, albeit with reservations regarding its potential as a democratising element. Social networks have become deeply embedded in the fabric of contemporary culture, giving rise to a new form of sociability shaped by digital platforms (Van Dijck, 2016). The post-pandemic context has been marked by a notable rise in mental health issues and eating disorders among younger demographics, with recent research pointing to social networks as a significant contributing factor (García Puertas, 2020; Ojeda-Martín et al., 2021). In order to gain insight into the body self-perception of young people, this research proposes to investigate the impact that content created by influencers on Instagram can have on users, given that this social network is strongly linked to visuals (Bard and Magallanes, 2021; Quevedo-Redondo and Portal, 2021). Furthermore, Instagram is the social media platform where the majority of influencers are followed (IAB, 2022; Pătraş and Todolí, 2022), and it has been identified as a platform where gender roles are reproduced in a notable manner (Cuenca-Piqueras et al., 2021).

In its broadest sense, an influencer can be defined as an individual who generates specific content on digital platforms within their area of expertise and facilitates communication with users (Pătraş and Todolí, 2022). It has been demonstrated that these individuals can influence the behaviour of their followers by motivating them to engage in specific actions (Marocolo et al., 2021; Toffoletti and Thorpe, 2020). Other authors define these figures as "prescribers for brands or products." In other words, they are the new opinion leaders that companies turn to in order to achieve a greater reach, given that young people turn to social networks before traditional media for information (Pilgrim and Bohnet-Joschko, 2019).

This study makes a contribution to the existing literature on the topic of Body Positive Influencer (BPI) cntent, which focuses on the defence of body diversity, and Fitspiration influencer (FI) content, which promotes physical exercise and a healthy lifestyle. These areas have been relatively little addressed in the Spanish literature.

1.1. Effects of Displaying Body Positive and Fitspiration Content in Networks

The earliest research examining the influence of Fitspiration and Body Positive content on social media users can be traced back to 2015 in Australia (Fardouly and Vartanian, 2015; Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2015). Subsequently, a number of face-to-face interviews and surveys have been developed that sample, in particular, young women (Manning and Mulgrew, 2022; Prichard et al., 2020). Furthermore, the methodology of content analysis has been employed to examine the publications disseminated on networks in relation to this topic (Carrote et al., 2017; Cohen et al., 2019b; Lehto y Sklar, 2022). It is notable that the majority of the literature consulted originates from Anglo-Saxon countries. Consequently, caution should be exercised when extrapolating the results to other countries. Moreover, most of the studies originate from departments of Sport and Health Sciences, followed by Psychology and Psychiatry, with contributions from departments of Social Sciences and Humanities being less prevalent.

A significant number of studies on Fitspiration content have highlighted that the primary objective behind the promotion of sports is to enhance one's physical appearance rather than promote health. This approach has been found to contribute to heightened body dissatisfaction among users (Carrote et al., 2017; Prichard et al., 2020; Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2015). Analyses of Fitspiration content have identified photographs in which bodies are highly objectified, particularly in the case of women but also in the case of men, which has resulted in users' self-objectification (Carrote et al., 2017; Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2015).

The notion of female beauty propagated by the Fitspiration movement is inextricably linked to a slim yet toned physique (Carrote et al., 2017; Tiggemann and Anderberg, 2020). However, the presence of pronounced musculature is typically perceived as a masculine trait. In contrast, the male ideal is characterised by well-defined abdominal muscles, a muscular back that is not overly

developed, and narrow hips (Carrote *et al.*, 2017; Tiggemann and Anderberg, 2020). In the case of women, full-body images or those focusing on the torso and buttocks are more prevalent, whereas men tend to prioritise images of their faces and muscular body parts (Carrote *et al.*, 2017; Tiggemann and Anderberg, 2020).

Some studies have indicated that internet users are more likely to compare themselves with their peers than with celebrities (Fardouly and Vartanian, 2015; Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2015). Nevertheless, there is a paucity of studies that examine the impact of Fitspiration content created by influencers. These figures occupy a position somewhere between peers and celebrities, which suggests that they could exert a significant influence.

The existing research on influencers' Fitspiration content indicates that these figures foster dependency relationships through content that prioritises physical appearance and the use of communication techniques that portray physical exercise and diet as indispensable factors for attaining body perfection and happiness (Pilgrim and Bohnet-Joschko, 2019).

Regarding the Body Positive content disseminated by influencers, there is a paucity of literature in comparison to research addressing this issue from a more comprehensive standpoint. The majority of studies concentrate exclusively on the female population. Some of this research posits that this content represents a previously underrepresented bodily diversity and conceptualises beauty in a broad manner (Cohen et al., 2019b; Lehto and Sklar, 2022). Conversely, other analyses conclude that these images serve to reinforce gender stereotypes, even as they seek to expand the boundaries of normative and traditional femininity (Schettino *et al.*, 2022; Streeter, 2021). Consequently, numerous Body Positive spaces have been identified as perpetuating patterns that they ostensibly seek to dismantle (Manning and Mulgrew, 2022; Rodgers et al., 2022). Additionally, the movement has been found to be less diverse than its proponents claim. Most bodies studied are those of cisgender women who do not have visible disabilities, are young, white, and exhibit features of objectification (Manning and Mulgrew, 2022).

It is highlighted that the body, particularly the female body, remains a focal point of the ongoing discourse, with the market and advertising sectors having co-opted this narrative and rendered it devoid of meaningful content (Darwin and Miller, 2020; Manjarrés, 2021). Similarly, various strands of the Body Positive movement have been identified (Darwin and Miller, 2020). It has been argued that it is unhelpful to apply a single label to such a diverse movement, given that the most radical and unconventional proposals are eclipsed by more mainstream positions (Manjarrés, 2021).

While some studies posit that exposure to such images enhances body self-appreciation (Cohen et al., 2019b), others identify sexualised Body Positive images, which are associated with elevated rates of body surveillance and negative body satisfaction in internet users (Schettino *et al.*, 2022). In line with this, it has been demonstrated that the consumption of content related to appearance has a greater impact on users' self-perception of body image than the amount of time spent on networks (Cohen *et al.*, 2019a).

1.2. Self-Perception of Body Image in the Digital Age

Instagram is a social network that re-signifies contemporary visual construction and encourages cultural and social analysis of the photographs shared there (Manovich, 2021). In this visual space, the gaze of the self and the gaze of the other operate through mechanisms of self-regulation. This space is characterised by appearance, the hegemonic ideal of beauty, gender stereotypes and a capacitative and Western gaze (Bard and Magallanes, 2021; Darwin and Miller, 2020).

In this digital space, structured around "ways of seeing" (Berger in Bard and Magallanes, 2021, p. 5), the body serves as the primary tool for self-promotion. Images are generated with the intention of being seen, and spaces of visibility are created. This is exemplified by the alternative gaze on bodies proposed by the Body Positive movement. This interplay of gazes implies the social comparison that has already been identified in traditional media in relation to the impact on audiences, particularly women, of the representations of male and female ideals of beauty. Over the past decade, this phenomenon has begun to be applied to studies on social networks, with a particular focus on how internet users perceive their own body image.

The social comparison theory posits that human beings possess an innate drive to compare themselves with others and evaluate themselves, particularly in the absence of objective measures

(Festinger, 1954). As a result, when an individual compares their physical appearance to the idealised representations presented in traditional media and digital platforms, they internalise these ideals as personal goals. However, upon realising the impossibility of achieving them, body dissatisfaction develops (Carrote *et al.*, 2017; Prichard et al., 2020; Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2015).

In contrast, the theory of objectification offers a complementary perspective. It acknowledges that individuals, particularly women, are socialised through media representations wherein the ideal of beauty and the objectification of bodies are pervasive. This phenomenon results in self-objectification, whereby individuals come to understand that their value is contingent upon their physical appearance (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). It has been linked to a range of mental health issues, including eating disorders, depression and anxiety, beyond body dissatisfaction or shame (Cohen et al., 2019a; ; Vendemia *et al.*, 2021).

Furthermore, research has demonstrated that these representations foster self-demand and promote individual accountability with regard to one's self-image (Darwin and Miller, 2020). This ongoing monitoring of the subject's body in an environment of pervasive norms is connected to the criticism put forth by post feminism, which asserts that contemporary neoliberalism exploits the bodies of women and encourages them to organize and manage their daily lives in a manner that optimizes their self-image while perpetuating traditional gender roles (Gill, 2007). This ongoing endeavour requires not only the cultivation of physical appearance but also the development of psychological capabilities (ibidem).

Another line of feminist theory highlights the dichotomy faced by bodies socialised as feminine, situated between the polarities of "objectification" and "feminine empowerment" (Cuenca-Piqueras *et al.*, 2021). In this context, studies from the LGTBIQ+ community highlight the potential for dissident and empowered gender representations, such as some femme femininities, to be misinterpreted as reinforcing gendered ideals of beauty (Streeter, 2021).

2. Objectives

This article aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To find out whether young Instagram users compare their body image with peers or, rather, with influencers.
2. To examine young Instagram users' consumption of Body Positive and Fitspiration content.
3. To study how time spent using social networks influences the impact of Body Positive and Fitspiration content on young people's body self-perception.
4. To examine and categorise the content of the publications of the main Spanish Body Positive and Fitspiration influencers.

3. Methodology

This research is based on a methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1970), comprising a survey of individuals aged 16-25, two rounds of focus groups with people of the same age, and a content analysis of the principal Spanish influencers on the topics of fitspiration and body positivity.

3.1. Survey

In order to gauge public opinion and attitudes, the study employed a non-random quota sampling technique and a synchronous survey targeting individuals between the ages of 16 and 25, representing a population of 4,202,599 (INE, 2022). The survey was open for responses from 4 April to 4 May 2023 and was progressively expanded through the use of the "snowball" methodology. Ultimately, a response rate of 377 young people was attained, thereby exceeding the sample size required to achieve a 90% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, which equates to 271 responses.

The questionnaire was administered via self-completion using Survio online software, which was purchased during the month in which the survey was open for completion. The survey was comprised primarily of closed questions and attitude scales, which were employed to assess the impact of content published by influencers identified as belonging to the Body Positive movements and Fitspiration, as well as to ascertain their stance on the beauty ideal on social media.

Table 1. Survey questionnaire

Questions	Answers
How old are you?	16-18 / 19-25
Which gender do you identify with?	Male / Female / Non-binary / Prefer not to say
Training	PCPI (Programa de Cualificación Profesional Inicial;Initial Vocational Qualification Program / ESO (Educacion Secundaria Obligatoria;Compulsory Secondary Education) / Bachillerato (Optional High School) / FP (Formación Profesional;VET, Vocational Education and Training) / University / Other
Social networks you use the most (choose two)	Instagram / TikTok / Twitter / Facebook / Facebook / YouTube / Pinterest / Snapchat / LinkedIn/ Other
How much time do you spend online each day on the social networks you use the most?	< 30 min / 30 - 60 min / > than 1 h / > than 2 h / > than 3 h
What do you tend to use the networks for? (Please indicate two main uses)	Self-expression / Entertainment / Self-Profesional Promotion / Browse profiles / Other
Do you trust the recommendations of *influencers*?	Never / Occasionally / Sometimes / Very often / Always
Do you know any *influencers* who advocate physical exercise and/or healthy eating?	Yes / No / Don't know - No answer
If you remember them, could you point out one or two names?	Write one or more words...
"The content of these *influencers* affects how I view my body image..."	Never / Occasionally / Sometimes / Very often / Always
Do you think *influencers* influence the body image that centenials (generation Z) have of themselves?	Yes / No / Don't know - No answer
Do you know of any *influencers* who advocate the acceptance of different body types (fat, stretch marks, cellulite, acne, etc.)?	Yes / No / Don't know - No answer
If you remember them, could you point out one or two names?	Write one or more words...
"This content affects how I view my body image..."	Never / Occasionally / Sometimes / Very often / Always
"If I do, the person I most compare my body image to via social media is..."	Friends / Family / Acquaintances / Strangers / Influencers / Celebrities
Indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: "Social networks make non-normative bodies visible".	Strongly Agree / Agree / Indifferent / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

Source: Amondarain, 2024.

To gain further insight into the sample composition segmented by socio-demographic variables, we will examine the following information.

Table 2. Distribution of the sample according to gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	104	27,60%
Female	268	71,10%
Non-binary	5	1,30%
I prefer not to say	0	0%
Total	377	100%

Source: Amondarain, 2024.

Table 3. Distribution of the sample according to ethnicity (Posetti *et al.*, 2020)

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
Latina	158	41,90%
White	205	54,40%
Black	2	0,50%
Asian	2	0,50%
Gypsy	1	0,30%
Indigenous	1	0,30%
Mixed ethnic groups	4	1,10%
I prefer not to say	4	1,10%

Source: Amondarain, 2024.

Table 4. Distribution of the sample according to age

Age group	Frequency	Percentage
16-18	55	14,60%
19-25	322	85,40%
Total	377	100%

Source: Amondarain, 2024.

Table 5. Distribution of the sample according to education

Training	Frequency	Percentage
Initial Vocational Qualification Program (PCPI)	0	0%
Secondary Education (ESO)	15	4%
High School (Bachillerato)	44	11,70%
Vocational training (FP)	25	6,60%
University	287	76,10%
Other	6	1,60%
Total	377	100%

Source: Amondarain, 2024

3.2. Focus Groups

The survey methodology was complemented by the collection of qualitative data through the administration of open-ended questionnaires to 10 young people in the form of group interviews conducted on 3 and 8 May 2023. The participants were divided into two groups in order to replicate the method and extend its validity. As with the survey, the objective was to gain insight into the role of gender in the adherence to the ideals of the Body Positive movement and Fitspiration. The topic guide, upon which the open-ended questionnaire was constructed (Hernández-Sampieri et al., 2010), was based on the following thematic axes: self-perception of body image, publications by Body Positive and Fitspiration influencers on Instagram, the phenomenon of social comparison and social network consumption habits.

3.3. Content Analysis

The content of the most influential Spanish Body Positive and Fitspiration accounts on Instagram was subsequently examined and categorised. To identify the most prominent accounts within this field, the search term "top Instagram accounts of Body Positive/Fitspiration influencers in Spain" was entered into the primary search engines (Google, Bing and Yahoo!). The crawl was conducted in February 2023 from a public library monitor and from a private browser to avoid any potential bias resulting from the influence of cookies and previous search histories. This type of purposive sampling is consistent with the sampling methods employed in previous content analyses conducted on this same topic (Cohen et al., 2019b; Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2018).

As stated by Cohen et al. (2019b), all links were extracted from the initial page of each search engine, where the most frequently visited websites can be found. A total of 24 unique links were obtained from FI, of which 7 were duplicates and 12 pertained to other types of influencers (travel, beauty, lifestyle, etc.). Links published prior to 2019 were excluded from the analysis (n = 1), resulting in a final sample of 4 web articles and 59 FI profiles, of which 25 were duplicates.

The inclusion of profiles was not determined by the number of followers, but was determined by three criteria: (1) content closely related to the movement (n = 12), (2) level of activity on the social network (minimum 150 posts and the most recent post within three weeks of sampling) (n = 0), and (3) Spanish as the main language (n = 0). The number of accounts that met these criteria was 22, of which 14 were operated by women and 8 by men. Of the 22 profiles, the most frequently mentioned on the various websites were selected, with the aim of achieving gender parity.

Table 6. Selected *Fitspiration Influencers*

Name	User	Followers	Typology (Geyser, 2022)
David Marchante	@powerexplosive	1,1M	Mega *influencer*
Rubén García	@rvbengarcia	503 thousand	Macro *influencer*
Sergio Peinado	@sergiopeinadotrainer	1,6M	Mega *influencer*
Patry Jordan	@gymvirtual_com	2M	Mega *influencer*
Vikika Costa	@vikikacosta	1M	Macro *influencer*
Rosa López	@rosaloopeez_	140 thousand	Macro *influencer*

Source: Amondarain, 2024.

In terms of searching for BPI content, 26 unique links were obtained. Of these, nine were duplicates and six were about other types of influencers. Links published prior to 2019 were excluded from the analysis (n = 2), resulting in a final sample of nine web articles and 72 BPI profiles. Of these, 16 were duplicates. As with the FIs, the inclusion of profiles was determined by three criteria: (1) content closely related to the movement (n = 24), (2) level of activity on the social network (n = 7) and (3) Spanish as the primary language (n = 11). The accounts that met these criteria amounted to eight, and all of them belonged to women. Of the eight profiles, those that were named the most times and that were most related to the content to be analysed were selected for further analysis.

Table 7. Selected *Body Positive Influencers*

Name	User	Followers	Typology (Geyser, 2022)
Raquel and Lidia	@soycurvy	35.5 thousand	Micro *influencer*
We Lover Size	@weloversize	484 thousand	Macro *influencer*
ReiShe	@reiishe	114 thousand	Macro *influencer*
Nona Spinola	@nonaspinola	97.6 thousand	Micro *influencer*
Miren Jaurne	@soymimixxl	91,4 mil	Micro *influencer*
Lidia Juvanteny	@lidiajuvanteny	6.6 mil	Nano *influencer*

Source: Amondarain, 2024.

The final 30 posts of the influencers' feeds, whether images or videos, were selected as the unit of analysis. In the case of image carousels, the unit of analysis was limited to the initial photographic representation of the carousel. A total of 360 posts were subjected to analysis, with an attempt made to elucidate the dominant themes and the most prominent frames of each type of content. Additionally, the concept of beauty as it pertains to the content and the characteristics of objectification were also examined. The principal variables of the content analysis protocol are presented below.

Table 8. Content analysis protocol

Variables	Values
Female beauty ideal (Tiggemann and Anderberg, 2020; Carrote, Prichard and Lim, 2017)	Yes / No
Male beauty ideal (Tiggemann and Anderberg, 2020; Carrote, Prichard and Lim, 2017)	Yes / No
Attributes contrary to the ideal of beauty	Cellulite / Stretch Marks / Fatness / Acne / Body Hair / Deformities / Amputations / Other
Traits of objectification (Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2018)	Focus on a specific part of the body / Sensual or sexually suggestive pose / No facial display / Exercise in swimwear / None / Other
Membership of the *Body* Positive movement	Yes / No
Body Positive movement typology (Darwin and Miller, 2020)	*Mainstream* / Fat / Radical / Neutral
Frames Body Positive (Tylka, 2018)	Acceptance-love of the body / Broad conceptualisation of beauty / Care of the body-itself / Internalised positivity / Protective image for users' self-perception / Individual solution / None / Other
Membership of the Fitspiration movement	Yes / No
Topics *Fitspiration* (Marocolo *et al.*, 2021)	Nutrition-food / Diet / Physical exercise-sport / Medicine / None / Other
Frames Fitspiration (Boepple *et al.*, 2016)	Physical exercise for appearance / Toned-muscled body ideal / Slim body ideal / Restrictive diet / Stigmatisation of the fat or thick body / Guilt about food / None / Other

Source: Amondarain Moreno, 2024.

4. Results

## 4.1. Influencer Content #Fitspiration and #BodyPositive on Instagram

In terms of the content analysed in relation to Fitspiration, it was found that 85% of the posts shared on Instagram were about movement. The primary focus of the content analysed was exercise or sport (65%), followed by nutrition or food (56%) and diet (5%). The data indicates that men posted a greater number of videos and images related to exercise and sport (65 vs. 56), as well as nutrition

and food (38 vs. 18). In contrast, female users of the platform engaged with content related to dietary habits to a greater extent, despite this being the least prevalent topic overall (6 vs. 3).

It is noteworthy that all FIs have established one or more companies with a focus on the fitness and/or food industry. The majority of these individuals operate virtual spaces through which they disseminate their expertise in these domains. It is evident that all the influencers utilised their Instagram profiles for the dual purpose of disseminating information about their businesses and sharing details of their daily routines.

The images and videos analysed revealed that the ideal of a fit, toned or muscular body was the predominant frame (39%). The second most prominent frame was physical exercise for appearance (16%), with this theme being primarily exemplified by the challenges presented by a number of the FIs in advance of the forthcoming summer season. This was exemplified by the following statements made in various videos by a number of FIs: "We are starting the summer challenge [...] so that you can give the best of yourself" (video by @Vikikacosta) and "Results now, otherwise, the summer will come and we run out of time. (video by @sergiopeinadotrainer). Subsequently, health and wellness values were presented (16%), as exemplified by the following statement: "If your knees hurt, you can perform simple exercises to strengthen them and relieve the pain" (video by @gymvirtual_com). This was followed by the stigmatisation of the fat or thick body (12%), as evidenced by the following statement: "Burn fat anywhere with this full body workout without equipment" (video by @rvbengarcia). Finally, the individual solution was presented (11%).

Figure 1. *Frames Fitspiration* (Boepple *et al.*, 2016) according to the *influencer*'s perceived gender
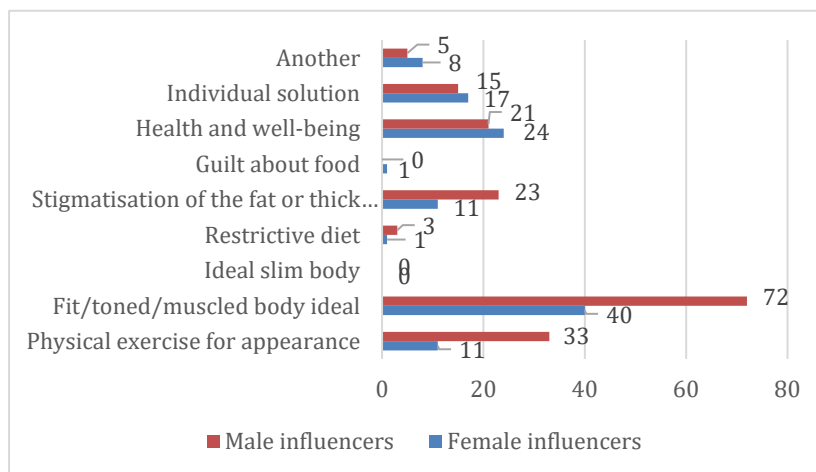
Source: Amondarain, 2024.

With regard to the Body Positive content, only 36% of the respondents indicated that they subscribed to the movement. A significant proportion of the interactions were related to self-expression or the promotion of clothing and beauty products, particularly in the cases of @nonaspinola and @reiishe. Additionally, @soymimixxl utilised her account to disseminate information about her podcast. However, among the content deemed to align with the movement, internalised positivity was the most prevalent theme (57%), followed by acceptance and love of one's own body (30%), a broad conceptualisation of beauty (7%), and self-care (6%). In general terms, videos about plus-size clothing were particularly prevalent, with the objective of conveying internalised positivity to followers.

A total of 61% of the publications were related to Fat Body Positive, 36% to Mainstream Body Positive, and the remaining 3% to Radical Body Positive. In other words, over half of the BP content addressed fat body diversity, which is to be expected given that none of the BPIs studied met the weight requirements of the female beauty canon. In contrast, the Mainstream Body Positive movement posits that self-love frees women from the constraints of aesthetic and cultural expectations (Manjarrés, 2021). The representation of this stream was consistent with the frame of acceptance and

love for one's own body (30%), as evidenced by the profiles of @soycurvy and @lidiajuvanteny ("The only person who has to validate herself is you," in a video by @soycurvy). Additionally, the minimal representation of the radical current, which asserts the elimination of patriarchal structures of oppression from intersectional feminism as a crucial step in overcoming aesthetic violence (Manjarrés, 2021), was noteworthy. This perspective was discerned solely within the content of the @weloversize account. This profile was characterised by the publication of vindicatory stories by anonymous individuals. Furthermore, no publications could be identified that aligned with the Neutral Body Positive movement. This trend asserts that the focus on the body should be eliminated and that it should be assigned a neutral value within interpersonal relationships (ibidem).

While 94% of the subjects in the Fitspiration content exhibited characteristics aligned with the beauty ideal, 82% of the subjects in the BP content did not. The primary attribute that was incongruent with the beauty ideal was being overweight (78%), followed by the presence of stretch marks (9%) and cellulite (7%), which were less prevalent.

In accordance with the variables on objectification proposed by Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2018), FI content was associated with this phenomenon primarily through the focus on a specific body part (21%), followed by sensual or sexually suggestive poses (20%), exercising in swimwear (4%) and the absence of facial features (3%). The number of sensual or sexually suggestive posed posts shared by FIs was higher than that of the comparison group (27 images vs. 24), as was the number of posts featuring non-face-viewing content (5 vs. 1). However, a greater proportion of their content focused on a specific body part (24 images vs. 15). Despite this, there were identical numbers of images featuring both subjects engaged in exercise activities while wearing swimwear (4).

Regarding body-positive content, it was found that a higher proportion of objectification was associated with a focus on a specific body part (37%), although the majority of these photographs focused on the face. The use of sensual or sexually suggestive poses was identified as the second most frequent frame in a lower percentage of FIs (12%), with the omission of the face being the third most frequent frame in a lower percentage of FIs (6%).

1. Set of images. *Body Positive* (left) and *Fitspiration* (right) content.

From left to right, @lidiajuvanteny, @weloversize, @vikikacosta and @rvbengarcia.

Source: Amondarain Moreno, 2024.

4.2. Results of the Survey and Focus Groups

The results demonstrated that Instagram was the social network with the highest absolute prevalence (87.5%), followed by TikTok (48.8%) and, to a lesser extent, Twitter (25.7%) and YouTube (25.2%). The respondents indicated that they primarily utilise social networks for entertainment purposes and to follow influencers (94.2%). A smaller proportion of respondents indicated that they also use social networks for other purposes, including browsing profiles (26.8%), self-expression

(18.6%), other activities (11.5%), and professional promotion (6%). Furthermore, 30% of respondents indicated that they spend more than two hours per day on the networks.

As illustrated in Table 9, when the last three values in the table are multiplied by the percentage of responses, it becomes evident that males reported spending a greater amount of time on social networks than females (154.83 hours for males vs. 151.51 hours for females). With regard to age, the same exercise demonstrates that 16-18 year-olds also reported spending a greater number of hours per day on social networks (161.8 h vs. 150 h).

Table 9. Daily time spent on networks by gender and age

Weather	Men	Women	16-18 years	19-25 years
< 30 min	2,88%	4,10%	1,82%	4,35%
30 - 60 min	10,58%	19,40%	16,36%	16,77%
> 1 h	34,62%	25%	27,27%	28,26%
> 2 h	35,58%	27,99%	29,09%	30,12%
> 3 h	16,35%	23,51%	25,45%	20,50%

Source: Amondarain, 2024.

The respondents indicated a similar level of awareness of both FIs and BPIs (85.1% and 84.1%, respectively). However, gender emerged as a significant predictor of this variable. Both male and female respondents indicated a similar level of familiarity with FIs, with a reported rate of 85% in both cases. However, only 64.42% of respondents indicated that they were aware of BPIs. Nevertheless, 91.42% of female participants indicated that they were aware of them. The aforementioned data is in alignment with the perspectives articulated by some young individuals in the focus group: "I was previously unaware of the term 'Body Positive' [...] I had no knowledge of any influencers who uploaded content of this nature" (Pablo, 17 years old, focus group II). "More than not knowing Body Positive men, I am unfamiliar with heterosexual Body Positive men. However, I have seen gay men on TikTok and Twitter, where they are often sexualised" (Iosu, 24 years old, focus group II).

With regard to the influence of BPI content, Table 10 illustrates that it has a considerably greater impact on women (77.24%) than on non-binary individuals (60%) and men (42.31%). Furthermore, the impact of PPI content is more pronounced among the white population (72.2%) in comparison to the Latino population (62.34%) and the 19-25 age group (69.25%) in comparison to the 16-18 age group (56.36%). "By showing the body in a more natural and less aestheticised way, it can facilitate greater acceptance of the body and a more normalised perception of it" (Ane, 24 years old, focus group I participant). "Frequently, one may concur with the tenets of the Body Positive movement, observe the presence of bodies that deviate from conventional norms, and fully accept these bodies, yet still be unable to accept one's own body in the same manner" (Raquel, 23 years old, focus group I).

Table 10. Impact of *PPI* content by gender, ethnicity and age

Periodicity	Man	Woman	Non-binary	Latina	Blanca	16-18 years	19-25 years
Never	57,69%	22,76%	40%	37,34%	27,80%	43,64%	30,75%
Have you ever	24,04%	33,21%	40%	25,32%	35,12%	21,82%	32,30%
Sometimes	11,54%	27,99%	0%	23,42%	22,93%	18,18%	23,92%
Very often	4,81%	12,69%	20%	10,13%	11,71%	14,55%	9,94
Always	1,92%	3,36%	0%	3,80%	2,44%	1,82%	3,12%

Source: Amondarain, 2024.

In terms of the daily time spent on social networks, the impact of BPI content is found to be lower for users who utilise these platforms for less than half an hour or between half an hour and an hour a day. It is noteworthy that the impact is observed in 45.45% of internet users who spend more than one hour, 18.18% of those who spend more than two hours and 27.27% of those who spend more than three hours. This indicates that once the one-hour consumption threshold is surpassed, the impact appears to be independent of the time spent on social networks.

Table 11. Impact of *PPI* content in relation to daily network usage time

Weather	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Very often	Always
< 30 min	4,07%	4,31%	4,60%	2,50%	0%
30 - 60 min	12,20%	18,97%	18,39%	22,50%	9,09%
> 1 h	31,32%	27,59%	21,84%	27,50%	45,45%
> 2h	31,71%	34,48%	31,03%	20%	18,18%
> 3 h	22,76%	14,66%	24,14%	27,50%	27,27%

Source: Amondarain, 2024.

The survey findings indicate that FI content has a greater impact on women (79.85%) than on men (59.62%), although both genders are comparatively more affected by FI content than by BP content. These posts appear to have a similar impact regardless of ethnicity. However, it is notable that a higher proportion of white respondents reported being affected 'some of the time' (34.63%) compared to Latinas, who reported being affected 'sometimes' at a higher rate (30.38%). Additionally, images and videos disseminated by FIs appeared to exert a greater influence on individuals aged 19-25 (74.22%) compared to those aged 16-18 (72.73%), although the discrepancy diminished in this instance. It is noteworthy that 19-25 year olds reported being "always" affected by this content in 4.35% of cases, whereas 16-18 year olds reported a rate of 0% in the same regard. For example, "I look at 'what abs this guy has', 'I would like to have them', but I don't think 'I wish I had them'. I don't care about my physique, I think I have a good physique" (Pablo, 17 years old, focus group II). "Influencers don't influence me when it comes to how I see myself. When I see them, I say 'I wish I had that person's body', even though I'm not unhappy with mine" (Hugo, 17 years old, focus group II).

Table 12. Impact of *FI* content according to gender, ethnicity and age

Periodicity	Man	Woman	Non-binary	Latina	Blanca	16-18 years	19-25 years
Never	40,38%	20,15%	40%	25,32%	25,37%	27,27%	25,78%
Occasionally	38,46%	32,84%	20%	32,28%	34,63%	30,91%	34,78%
Sometimes	15,38%	29,85%	40%	30,38%	23,90%	34,55%	24,53%
Very often	3,85%	12,69%	0%	8,86%	11,71%	7,27%	10,56%
Always	1,92%	4,48%	0%	3,16%	4,39%	0%	4,35%

Source: Amondarain, 2024.

In a similar manner to BPI content, FI content exerts a diminished influence on the self-perception of body image among internet users who dedicate less time to social networking. Similarly, the images shared by this category of influencers exert a greater influence on users who utilize the networks for more than one hour per day (42.86%). Those who utilise the networks for a period exceeding two and three hours, respectively, indicate that this content invariably exerts an influence upon them (21.43% in both cases). Once more, when consumption exceeds one hour, the impact does not appear to be associated with the amount of time spent on social networks.

Table 13. Impact of FI content in relation to daily network usage time

Time	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Very often	Always
< 30 min	2,04%	4,65%	6,12%	2,63%	0%
30 - 60 min	17,35	15,50%	20,41%	10,53%	14,29%
>1 h	28,57%	27,13%	30,61%	18,42%	42,86%
>2 h	28,57%	32,56%	25,51%	39,47%	21,43%
>3 h	23,47%	20,16%	17,35%	28,95%	21,43%

Source: Amondarain, 2024.

Unanimity is very high regarding the perception of whether influencers impact Generation Z's (centennials) body image (93.1%). Additionally, 51.2% of respondents believe that having a good image is essential to becoming an influencer. "The fact that everyone on social media looks super perfect affects us a lot. In the end, you only show what you want to show. You're not going to show the day you look bad or feel down" (Lúa, 16 years old, focus group II). "Peer comparison has always existed, but with social media, the comparison is no longer among equals. On social media, everyone portrays a specific ambition for their body, even for their lifestyle" (Raquel, 23 years old, focus group I). "It definitely influences our generation. A lot of people have started going to the gym just because they want a physique like the ones they see on social media, often following questionable methods recommended by big influencers" (Hugo, 16 years old, focus group II).

54.1% of respondents admitted to trusting health and beauty recommendations from influencers "occasionally," while 32.8% said they do so "sometimes." Cross-referencing the data reveals that women are more likely than men to follow such recommendations "occasionally" (54.89% compared to 50.96%, respectively). Additionally, white individuals are more inclined to trust these recommendations (55.88%) compared to Latino individuals (52.23%). Young people aged 19-25 are also more likely to follow recommendations "occasionally" (57.19%) than those aged 16-18 (36.36%).

When it comes to education, respondents who are pursuing or have completed vocational training (FP) are the most likely to trust recommendations "occasionally" (60%), followed by university students (54.9%), high school students (Bachillerato) (51.16%), and secondary school students (ESO) (20%).

"There are some influencers who have degrees and training and provide advice from an objective perspective. But there are others who are only looking for results and upload the typical video like 'abs in 30 days'" (Olaya, 21, focus group II). "Fitspiration influencers give you a set of instructions that, no matter how closely you follow them, don't guarantee you'll achieve that body" (Ane, 24, focus group I). "We don't realise that, many times, there's a business behind it" (Iosu, 24, focus group II).

Regarding social comparison, most respondents reported comparing themselves more with acquaintances (33.7%) and friends (31.3%) than with influencers (22.8%) or celebrities (12.2%). However, when considering gender differences, men compare themselves more with friends (47.12%) and acquaintances (31.73%), while women are more likely to compare themselves with acquaintances (34.33%), followed by influencers (25.75%) and friends (24.63%). In terms of age groups, young people aged 16-18 compare themselves more with friends (38.18%) than acquaintances (27.27%). Conversely, those aged 19-25 reverse this order, comparing themselves more with acquaintances (34.78%) and, secondly, with friends (30.12%). "If it's a friend, acquaintance, or family member, it's easier to compare yourself with them, because if they are experiencing something when they're in the same circumstances as you, why aren't you experiencing it too?" (Iñigo, 23, focus group I). "Influencers are unattainable figures or ones we don't fully believe in because they use Photoshop or only show body parts that benefit them in projecting a certain image" (Elena, 20, focus group I).

Lastly, responses are divided between those who agree with the statement that social media makes non-normative bodies more visible (34.7%) and those who do not (35.9%). A smaller percentage remain indifferent (18.6%), strongly agree (7.7%), or strongly disagree (3.2%). "They make them visible in the sense that they provide a perspective we haven't had until now. Social media

has somewhat democratised this but hasn't normalised non-normative bodies" (Ane, 24, focus group I).

As observed in the content analysis, the focus groups also highlighted that BPI content is particularly associated with Fat Body Positive, and that Instagram's algorithm heavily influences the images and videos users see: "The vast majority of the time, they focus mainly on addressing fatphobia [...] I don't think they're really focusing on diversity," (Elena, 20, focus group I). "I see that on social media, the algorithm draws you into a very harmful cycle. The more you explore a certain profile, the harder it is to leave that virtual world" (Olaya, 21, focus group II).

Finally, although this study did not analyse the connection between exposure to influencer content and Eating Disorders (EDs), it is worth noting that four out of six participants in the two focus group rounds admitted to having experienced or currently experiencing an ED. They also reported having or having had a harmful relationship with influencers, particularly Fitspiration influencers: "During lockdown, my friends and I followed Fitness influencers to create a routine, and we ended up developing an unhealthy relationship with exercise and food. The worst part is you don't even realise it" (Olaya, 21, focus group II).

5. Conclusions

The empirical work carried out led to the formulation of a set of objectives in relation to the impact of the content of Fitspiration (FI) and Body Positive (BPI) influencers on young people's self-perception of body image. The overwhelming prevalence of Instagram use among young people, followed by TikTok, confirmed the relevance of focusing the research on this social network.

The study's initial findings indicate that the majority of young people engage in self-comparison primarily with their friends and acquaintances, rather than with influencers or celebrities. As other studies have indicated, the socialisation of young people tends to be oriented more towards their peer group, with whom they share similar life circumstances. The figure of the influencer or celebrity may be perceived as unattainable or distant, yet this does not negate the considerable impact their content has on young people.

Indeed, as highlighted by previous studies, both Body Positive and Fitspiration content shared by influencers on Instagram can influence the self-perception of body image among some young people. There was significant unanimity regarding young people's perception that influencers' posts resonate with centennials' body image of themselves. By emphasising others rather than oneself, this variable appeared to balance the high number of young men who claimed not to be affected by Fitspiration or Body Positive content.

An analysis of the data indicates that both types of content, particularly Fitspiration content, have a more pronounced impact on women. Additionally, young women are more inclined to adhere to the recommendations of influencers and have been found to engage in self-comparison with these individuals. This aligns with the findings of previous research, which suggests the presence of a gender bias.

The traditional socialisation of feminised subjects through media representations has been characterised by the prevalence of ideals of beauty, comparison and the objectification of bodies. This is now evident in other spaces, including social networks. This fact appears to influence the fact that the mechanisms of social comparison are more active among them, as the aesthetic pressure is greater. Consequently, the majority of research conducted to date has focused on young women as a sample group, given that they are perceived to be more exposed to this type of phenomenon. However, it is vital that future research continues to explore the impact of these publications on the configuration of masculinities and the new ways of constructing masculine gender.

In alignment with prior research, the duration spent on social networks does not appear to be a significant determinant of the influence of this content on young people's body self-perception, particularly when compared to the content consumed that is related to appearance. Nevertheless, a diminished impact has been observed among users who access social media for less than half an hour per day or between half an hour and an hour per day.

Regarding content analysis, as other studies have also revealed, Fitspiration content focused on physical exercise and appearance-based dieting, while displaying a concerning degree of sexualisation, particularly among female influencers. This highlights the need for further research on this topic, as

objectification can lead to self-objectification among social media users, and studies have pointed out a link between social media use and the rise of eating disorders.

On the other hand, the feminisation of BP content may explain the limited awareness of young men. The complete lack of identification with male BP influencers could be attributed to gender stereotypes that discourage men from sharing their insecurities, feelings and the more vulnerable aspects of their lives. However, BP posts were not as diverse and advocacy driven as expected. More than half of the content that identified as BP did not align with the movement's core principles. This research found that much of this content focused on self-expression and the promotion of self-love, and similar to Fitspiration content, its communication was mediated by marketing strategies.

However, these findings may be influenced by the methodology used to identify the sample of influencers, as the initial links came from well-known beauty and lifestyle magazines such as Vogue, Glamour, Telva and Vanitatis. This is in line with Manjarrés' (2021) thesis that advertising and the market have appropriated the Body Positive discourse. As a result, more disruptive and advocacy-oriented proposals are overshadowed by mainstream proposals that fit more comfortably into the social order. For future research, it would be interesting to replicate this content analysis with influencers who identify with Radical Body Positive or Neutral Body Positive movements and compare the results.

In terms of research limitations, it is important to note that this study did not reach a significant sample of males, young people under the age of 19, or those currently enrolled in secondary education (ESO) or vocational training (FP). In addition, social desirability bias may have influenced the high number of young men who reported that Fitspiration and BP content did not affect them. Finally, the analysis focused on consecutive images from the Instagram profiles of leading Spanish influencers, without considering other time periods, which may have influenced the results obtained.

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