

Title: Fitspiration and Thinspiration: An Analysis of Social Media Content in Relation to Female Eating Disorders

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Anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa, two deadly eating disorders, have become more prevalent in recent decades. Most commonly found in females, these disorders eat away at the bodies and minds of young individuals, often resulting in extremely high mortality rates. Among those who suffer from anorexia, “1 in 5 deaths is by suicide,” according to 2019 data from the National Eating Disorders Association. The impulse to starve oneself can stem from a social construct of wanting to feel attractive and desirable. Social media, a platform used by many young women in America, feeds into this mindset. Within these networking sites, posts concerning fitspiration and thinspiration--content relating to fitness, physical attractiveness, and images of excessively thin young women--encourage users to alter the way they look in order to find comfort in their appearance. Angela Alberga, an assistant professor at Concordia University, notes that “both thinspiration and fitspiration websites showcased weight stigmatization, objectification, guilt-inducing messages about weight/body and dieting/eating restraint” (8). These ideals can trigger insecurity and lead females to become more self-conscious about their weight. This research project includes a survey I conducted on young women to assess the relationship between social media comparison, body image, and eating disorders. One respondent reports, “Starvation is a way to feel at peace in a world where I have such little control. My disorder now defines me, as I find hope in the stability of dieting.”

Works Cited

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