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Institute for Health and Care Improvement Research Showcase  
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# Instagram vs Reality: Perfectionistic Instagram Use and Body Dissatisfaction in Young Men

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## BACKGROUND

Perfectionistic self-presentation (PSP) is a multidimensional construct characterized by the desire to appear perfect to others (Hewitt et al., 2003).

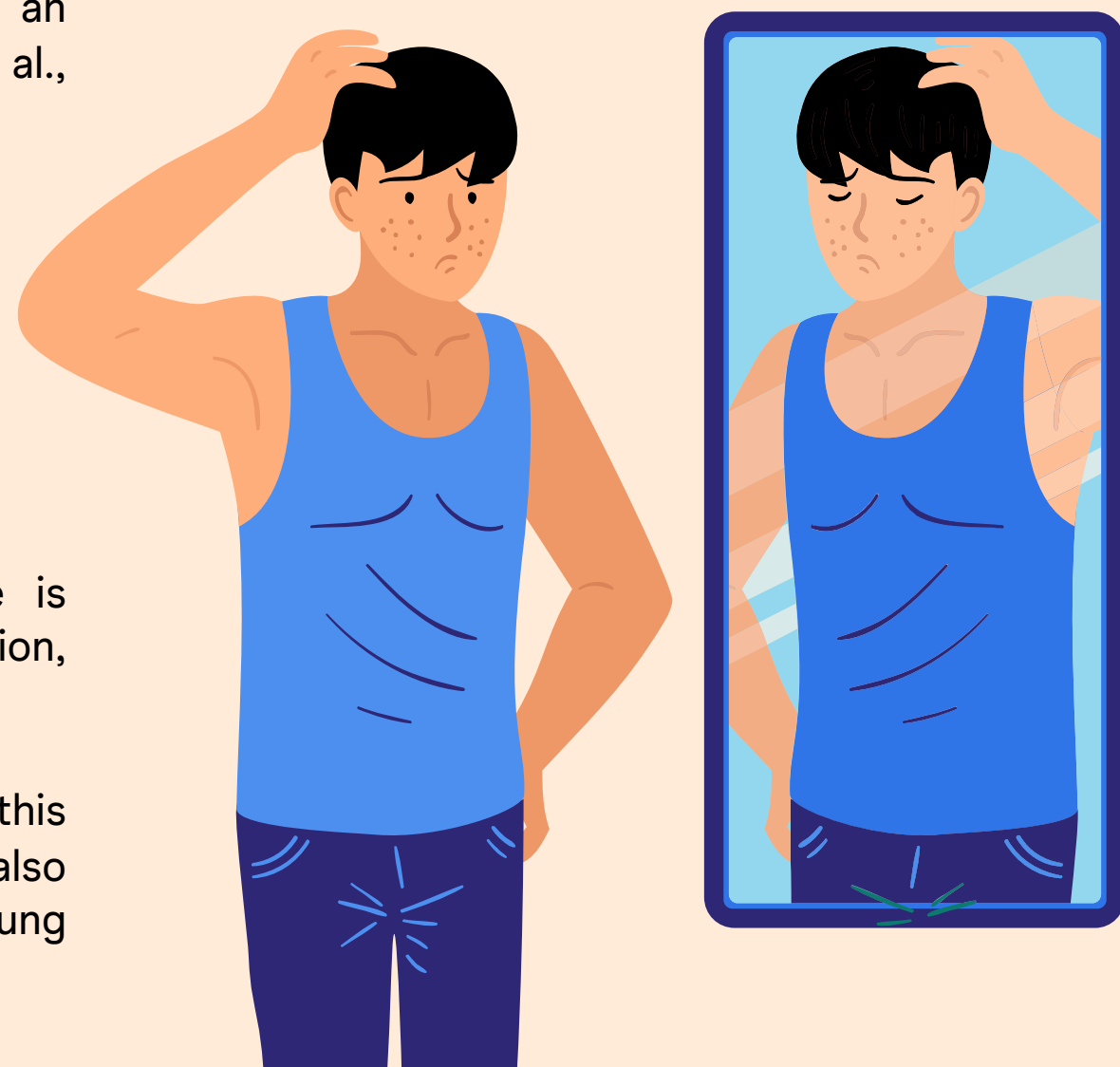
- 1) **Perfectionistic self-promotion** (overtly presenting your perfection to others).
- 2) **Non-display of imperfection** (concealing and avoiding the display of imperfection to others).

These dimensions of PSP are related to three components of male body dissatisfaction, in an offline context (Hicks et al., 2022; Grugan et al., 2023; Patarinski et al., 2023).

- 1) **Drive for muscularity**
- 2) **Drive for low body fat**
- 3) **Desire for greater height**

PSP in the context of Instagram use is negatively associated with body satisfaction, in young women (Milson & Madigan, 2024).

However, it is unclear whether this perfectionistic Instagram use may also contribute to body dissatisfaction in young men.



## AIMS

- I aimed to examine the relationships between dimensions of PSP (in the context of Instagram use) and body dissatisfaction, in young men.
- I expected that PSP on Instagram would be a positive predictor of male body dissatisfaction.

## METHOD

### Participants

- 262 male participants, aged 18-34 years (M = 23.03, SD = 4.68).
- Participants were recruited by opportunity sampling, via social media platforms.

### Measures

#### The Perfectionistic Self-Presentation Scale

(Hewitt et al., 2003).  
27 item self-report measure revised for the context of Instagram use.

#### The Male Body Attitudes Scale

(Tylka et al., 2005).  
24 item self-report measure.

- Distributed on Qualtrics.



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## RESULTS

**Table 1.**  
*Bivariate Correlations, Means, Standard Deviations and Cronbach's Alphas.*

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Perfectionistic Self-Presentation</b>					
1. Perfectionistic Self Promotion					
2. Non-Display of Imperfection		.83***			
<b>Body Dissatisfaction</b>					
3. Drive for Muscularity	.23***	.31***			
4. Low Body Fat	.14*	.10	.41***		
5. Height	.32***	.32***	.32***	.28***	
M	40.34	40.22	3.40	3.36	3.03
SD	13.54	12.53	1.06	1.20	1.46
Cronbach's Alpha	.90	.87	.88	.93	.71

Note. N = 262. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . \*  $p < .05$ .

**Table 2.**  
*Summary of Multiple Regression*

	R <sup>2</sup>	β
<b>Model 1 (Drive for Muscularity)</b>		
1. Perfectionistic Self Promotion	.096***	-.174
2. Non-Display of Imperfection		.368***
<b>Model 2 (Low Body Fat)</b>		
1. Perfectionistic Self Promotion	.020	.182
2. Non-Display of Imperfection		-.052
<b>Model 3 (Height)</b>		
1. Perfectionistic Self Promotion	.110***	.191
2. Non-Display of Imperfection		.156

Note. N = 262. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

## DISCUSSION

- Both dimensions of PSP on Instagram were associated with drive for muscularity (most importantly, non-display of imperfection) and a desire for greater height.
  - Aligning with previous work (Hicks et al., 2022; Grammas et al., 2009; Grugan et al., 2023; Konings, 2020; Milson et al., 2024; Patarinski et al., 2023).
  - Expanding on previous work, by examining perfectionism beyond trait components and by suggesting that PSP predicts drive for muscularity and height, in an online context.
- At odds with expectations, perfectionistic self-presentation did not predict a desire for low body fat.
  - One explanation may be that these effects could flow in the reverse direction, as previous research suggests that women who are less satisfied with their bodies may be more likely to promote perfection on Instagram (Milson et al., 2024). Longer term follow ups are needed to confirm temporal precedence.

### Limitations and Future Research

- Cross-sectional design** - longitudinal data required to understand temporal precedence (Caruana et al., 2015).
- Self-report measures** - the desire to appear flawless may pose a challenge for acquiring accurate self-evaluations. Controlled experiments could be used.

Overall, our findings offer initial support for examining perfectionistic self-presentation on Instagram, and its utility in understanding the body satisfaction of young men.

