

# New study analyzes 'thinspiration' images of women on social media sites

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Some of the most popular social media sites are filled with images of extremely thin women that might be harmful to those who view them—whether they are seeking them or not, according to research from the University of California, Davis. The images were often cropped to remove heads or focus on just a few body parts.

Doctoral candidate Jannath Ghaznavi and associate professor Laramie Taylor in the Department of Communication examined about 300 photographs from Twitter and Pinterest postings that used the terms "thinspiration" and/or "thinspo" to tag images and ideas promoting extreme thinness and often casting eating disorders in a positive light.

Their paper "Bones, body parts, and sex appeal: An analysis of #thinspiration images on popular social media" was recently published in *Body Image: An International Journal of Research*.

"Imagine a teenage girl or even a [young woman](#) looking for inspiration using terms such as 'attractive,' 'fit,' or 'pretty,'" Ghaznavi said. "She will likely find images of headless, scantily clad, sexualized women and their body parts."

Images from Twitter, popular among younger audiences, were most likely to be cropped to remove heads and focus on specific [body parts](#) compared to Pinterest, according to the study.

The content analysis cannot speak to the effects of viewing the [images](#),

the researchers concede, but they point to studies that have shown repeated exposure to such content can result in [body dissatisfaction](#) and disordered eating attitudes.

"A young woman looking at these image may think that's what she should look like," Ghaznavi said. "That could prompt these girls and women to resort to extreme dieting, excessive exercise or other [harmful behaviors](#) in order to achieve this thin ideal."

**More information:** *Body Image: An International Journal of Research*, [www.sciencedirect.com/science/ ... ii/S1740144515000303](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../ii/S1740144515000303)

Provided by UC Davis

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