

Study shows link between photo filter use and muscle dysmorphia among teens, young adults

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A new study conducted by researchers at the University of Toronto has unveiled a significant association between the use of photo filters on

social media and increased symptoms of muscle dysmorphia among adolescents and young adults in Canada. This study, which analyzed data from 912 participants from the Canadian Study of Adolescent Health Behaviors, emphasizes the growing concern over the impact of digital image manipulation on body image and mental health.

The findings are [published](#) in the journal *Body Image*.

The research reveals that the use of photo filters, commonly found on apps like Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok, is linked to greater muscle dysmorphia symptomatology, a condition marked by an obsessive preoccupation with muscularity, body dissatisfaction, and social and functional impairment, particularly among boys and men.

"It was clear in our study that frequent use of photo filters is associated with higher levels of muscle dissatisfaction and overall muscle dysmorphia symptoms," says Kyle T. Ganson, Ph.D., MSW, the lead author on the study. "Notably, gender plays a significant role, with boys and men who use photo filters exhibiting greater drive to increase their muscularity and social and occupational functioning challenges compared to girls and women in the study."

The findings highlight the critical need for awareness and interventions targeting the negative effects of photo filter use on body image. With the rising popularity of [social media](#) platforms that encourage digital image manipulation, it is crucial to address how these technologies influence self-perception and mental health, particularly among vulnerable youth populations.

"Our study sheds light on the often-overlooked impact of photo filter use on muscle dysmorphia, especially among boys and men," says Ganson. "As digital image manipulation becomes more advanced and widespread, it is essential to understand and mitigate its potential harm on body

image and [mental health](#)."

The study calls for further research to explore the mechanisms driving the association between photo filter use and [muscle](#) dysmorphia.

Additionally, there is a need for media literacy programs that educate young people about the potential risks of digital image manipulation and promote healthier [body image](#) practices.

More information: Kyle T. Ganson et al, Use of photo filters is associated with muscle dysmorphia symptomatology among adolescents and young adults, *Body Image* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.bodyim.2024.101750](#)

Provided by University of Toronto

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