

Intersectionality in the discourse of body positivity activists on Instagram

In recent years, body positivity has become a popular phenomenon on social media. As a social movement that challenges mainstream media's beauty standards and increases the visibility of marginalized bodies, body positivity is now a prominent research topic (e.g., Brathwaite & DeAndrea, 2022; Sastre 2014). However, studies that focus on the discursive and linguistic features of body positive social media posts are still needed. In our work-in-progress paper, we compare the discourse of body positivity activist Instagram accounts in Finland and the United Kingdom. More specifically, we study body positivity discourse from an intersectional perspective. Previous research has criticized the body positivity movement for focusing mostly on white, young, cis-gendered and able-bodied women, which is why more intersectional perspectives are required (Gibson, 2019; Griffin et al., 2022).

In a multimodal discourse analysis of body positivity content published on six Instagram accounts, we investigate how influencers and/or activists articulate their particular intersectional identities and politics. Since previous studies have established that the body positive posts on Instagram feature predominantly white women with normative bodies (e.g., Griffin et al. 2022), we focus specifically on influencers/activists who are plus-size and BIPOC. Our data include all visual and linguistic material posted on the chosen accounts in 2022.

Our study illustrates the complex intersections of embodiedness, gender, sexuality and ethnicity in social media and the ways in which they tie up with body positive identity politics. In addition, we show how these intersections are discursively constructed in the contexts of Finland and the UK.

References

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