# Plan Overview

*A Data Management Plan created using DMPonline*

**Title:** Shaped by the Feed: Investigating the Impact of Idealized Bodies on Highly Visual Social Media on Male Identity Formation and Body Ideals

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**Template:** DCC Template

**Project abstract:**

This project investigates how highly visual social media (HVSM) platforms such as Instagram, influence identity development, self-concept clarity, body dissatisfaction, and body modification behaviors among adolescent males aged 13–19. Drawing upon Eriksonian identity theory, social comparison theory, objectification theory, and contemporary neuropsychological models of valuation and self-processing, the project explores how repeated exposure to idealized muscular male body types shapes adolescent self-concept and body appraisal. Existing literature suggests that adolescents with lower self-concept clarity may be particularly vulnerable to upward social comparison, internalization of muscular ideals, and body dissatisfaction, yet male-focused research remains limited compared to the extensive body of work on females.

The project adopts a four-part mixed-methods design. First, a scoping review will systematically map current evidence regarding HVSM, male identity development, body image, and social comparison processes. Second, qualitative focus groups and interviews will explore adolescent males' lived experiences of HVSM, identity exploration, and body-related pressures. Third, a large cross-sectional survey will examine relationships between HVSM use, self-concept clarity, social comparison orientation, body dissatisfaction, and drive for muscularity. Finally, a pilot functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) study will investigate neural responses to idealized versus non-idealized male body imagery in adolescents with high and low self-concept clarity.

The project aims to identify psychological and neural mechanisms underlying vulnerability and resilience to appearance-focused social media environments. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to the growing field of male body image research, refine current models of adolescent identity formation in digital contexts, and provide evidence that may inform future interventions targeting body dissatisfaction, harmful body modification behaviors, and social media literacy among young males.

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**Copyright information:**

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## Data Collection

### What data will you collect or create?

The study will collect quantitative and qualitative data relating to body image concerns, identity formation, social media use, and neuropsychological markers in young male adolescents aged 13–19 years. Data will include questionnaire responses, demographic information, behavioural task outcomes, reaction time measures, and neuropsychological assessment scores. Where appropriate, anonymised interview or focus group transcripts may also be collected. Data formats will include CSV, XLSX, SPSS (.sav), audio recordings (WAV/MP3), and text-based transcripts (DOCX/PDF).

### How will the data be collected or created?

Data will be collected through online and in-person assessments using validated psychometric questionnaires and neuropsychological testing tools. Surveys may be administered using Gorilla, while behavioral task data will be recorded using specialist psychology software (i.e., fMRI). Audio recordings from interviews will be transcribed manually or using approved transcription software. Standardised protocols and operating procedures will be used to ensure consistency and data quality across all stages of collection.

## Documentation and Metadata

### What documentation and metadata will accompany the data?

Comprehensive documentation will accompany the dataset, including data dictionaries, codebooks, questionnaire templates, participant information sheets, consent forms, and methodology notes. Metadata will describe file structures, variable names, coding schemes, collection dates, and software versions used. Documentation will follow University of Plymouth research data guidance to ensure the data are understandable and reusable.

## Ethics and Legal Compliance

### How will you manage any ethical issues?

In regards to ethics approval, data collection for the project will only start after obtaining ethical approval of the University of Plymouth Faculty of Health Ethics and Integrity Research Committee. For the neuroimaging study, a unique code will be assigned to each participant. The code will be created using information only identifiable by the participant to preserve anonymity. For the focus groups and interviews, managing power dynamics through creating a safe and non-judgmental environment inviting participants to share experiences freely. Also, the researcher will consistently check in with participants to ensure that they are comfortable, able, and willing to continue with the study. For the participants under 18, parental consent is necessary. A guardian information sheet will be provided, outlining study purposes, procedures, potential risks, benefits, confidentiality, and data use. Once this is approved, an assent form will be provided to the minor participant. The assent form will use age-appropriate language, briefly explaining what the study involves and emphasizing that they can withdraw from the studies at any time. For the fMRI task, participants will be screened for MRI safety according to the BRIC MRI safety adults and children questionnaire - research participants with confirmation of safety by a trained radiographer. Participants and guardians will be thanked and debriefed after each study. For the qualitative interviews and cross sectional study, at the end of participation, all individuals will receive a sheet containing information about mental health and counselling support services, including school wellbeing services and relevant youth support organizations. Good safeguarding practice guidance for vulnerable populations (children) also recommends considering DBS screening.

### How will you manage copyright and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issues?

Intellectual Property and copyright arising from the research will be owned by the University of Plymouth in accordance with institutional policy. Any third-party materials or copyrighted assessment tools will be used under appropriate licences or permissions. Data shared publicly will be anonymised and released under a suitable licence where appropriate.

## Storage and Backup

### How will the data be stored and backed up during the research?

Research data will be stored securely on encrypted University of Plymouth servers and approved cloud storage systems (i.e., OneDrive) with regular automated backups. Portable devices used during data collection will be encrypted and password protected. Backup copies will be maintained in separate secure locations to minimise the risk of data loss. The information will only be accessible to the principal researcher and supervisors.

### How will you manage access and security?

Access to identifiable data will be restricted to authorised members of the research team through password-protected systems and role-based permissions. Anonymised datasets will be stored separately from participant identifiers. All data handling will comply with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, and University of Plymouth data security policies.

## Selection and Preservation

### Which data are of long-term value and should be retained, shared, and/or preserved?

Anonymised datasets, codebooks, methodological documentation, analysis scripts, and final research outputs will be retained for long-term preservation due to their potential value for replication, secondary analysis, and future research. Raw identifiable data will only be retained for as long as necessary under ethical and legal requirements.

### What is the long-term preservation plan for the dataset?

Data of long-term value will be deposited in an appropriate institutional or discipline-specific repository following project completion. Files will be preserved in open or widely used formats such as CSV, TXT, PDF/A, and DOCX where possible. Data will be retained in line with University of Plymouth retention policies, typically for a minimum of 10 years.

## Data Sharing

### How will you share the data?

Anonymised datasets and supporting documentation may be shared through the University of Plymouth research repository or other trusted repositories following publication of the study findings. Data sharing will comply with ethical approvals, participant consent agreements, and funder requirements. Metadata describing the dataset will be publicly available even where access to the full data is restricted. Findings may also be presented to body of students/professionals during neuroscience and/or social psychology conferences.

### Are any restrictions on data sharing required?

Restrictions may apply to sensitive or potentially identifiable data involving minors and mental health or body image concerns. Personally identifiable information will not be shared publicly. Access to some datasets may require controlled access procedures, data sharing agreements, or approval from the principal investigator.

## Responsibilities and Resources

### Who will be responsible for data management?

The principal investigator and supervisory research team at the University of Plymouth will be responsible for overseeing data management throughout the project lifecycle. Responsibilities include secure storage, ethical compliance, data quality assurance, documentation, preservation, and data sharing activities.

**What resources will you require to deliver your plan?**

Resources required include secure university storage infrastructure, encrypted devices, approved survey and data collection software, statistical analysis software (e.g., Coevidence), transcription support if required, and access to institutional data repositories. Time and training for research staff in data protection and research data management practices will also be necessary.