



## THE STANDARDS OF FEMININITY IN THE DIGITAL SPACE AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE SPIRITUAL-MORAL THINKING OF STUDENTS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF INSTAGRAM AND TIKTOK)

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20207586>

**Abstract:** In the context of digital communication and globalization, social networks, particularly the Instagram and TikTok platforms, have become a significant cultural arena for shaping and popularizing standards of femininity. This article analyzes the issues of conflict and harmony between the virtual representation of femininity and real social experience. Based on content analysis and a discursive approach, female images on Instagram and TikTok are examined from the perspective of aesthetic, behavioral, and identity criteria. The research findings reveal that the standards of femininity being formed in the virtual space directly influence gender roles, self-awareness, and social pressures in real life.

**Keywords:** standard of femininity, social networks, virtual image, identity, Instagram, TikTok, gender, digital culture.

**Introduction:** In modern society, digital technologies have fundamentally transformed the processes of human self-awareness, self-expression, and social identification. In particular, social networks have complicated the relationship between the real and virtual image of the individual. Instagram and TikTok platforms play a leading role in shaping the image of a woman due to their reliance on visual content. The standards of femininity manifested on these platforms are often presented in an idealized, aesthetically refined, and commercialized form.

This situation creates a discrepancy between women's real-life experience, physical appearance, and social roles, as well as their virtual image. Therefore, the philosophical and social analysis of the real and virtual dimensions of the female standard is becoming an urgent issue.

In the context of digital globalization, social networks are becoming an integral part of modern culture, exerting a powerful influence on the formation of personal identity, social roles, and gender perceptions. In particular, Instagram and TikTok platforms are emerging as leading digital platforms for developing and popularizing female standards due to their reliance on visual communication. On these platforms, femininity is often represented through images associated with aesthetic perfection, attractiveness, youth, and success. As a result, a complex conflict arises between the female experience in real life and the idealized images created in the virtual space.

From a socio-philosophical perspective, femininity is not a biological trait, but a socio-cultural construction. According to J. Butler's views on gender performativity, femininity is formed through constantly recurring social practices. Instagram and TikTok provide mechanisms that enhance this performance. Visual content, filters, editing technologies, and algorithmic recommendations transform femininity into an image that is demonstrated, evaluated, and consumed. In this process, the female body comes to the center as an aesthetic object and is legitimized through social confirmation (like, comment, subscriber).

This study is based on qualitative analysis, and the content related to femininity, popular on Instagram and TikTok platforms, was analyzed discursively and visually. The study examined posts and videos on open accounts, their titles, comments, and visual elements. During the analysis, an attempt was made to determine the aesthetic, moral, and social norms by which femininity is depicted, as well as the strategies for a woman's self-expression. Personal data was reviewed anonymously while adhering to ethical standards.

The results of the analysis show that the standard of femininity, which prevails on Instagram and TikTok, is often formed as an ideal image detached from real life. Content that emphasizes filtered faces, perfect body proportions, and a luxurious lifestyle defines femininity within narrow aesthetic criteria. This situation negatively affects women's attitudes toward their bodies and personalities, increasing self-comparison, internal dissatisfaction, and identification pressure. The desire to adapt to virtual standards, especially among young women, is becoming a source of psychological tension.

At the same time, the study showed that alternative models of femininity are also emerging on social media. Some content promotes natural looks, body positivity, motherhood experiences, professional growth, and cultural diversity. Such content serves as an alternative narrative against dominant feminine discourse, allowing women to find their voice and break stereotypes. Especially on the TikTok platform, there are more cases of deconstruction of female standards through ironic and critical approaches.

Analysis of the results shows that femininity in Instagram and TikTok exists in a borderline position between real and virtual space. On the one hand, virtual femininity acts as a mechanism of social control and regulatory pressure, while on the other, it creates new opportunities for women's self-expression and social activity. This process, as M. Foucault emphasized, clearly demonstrates the dual nature of power: restrictive and productive.

In conclusion, the standards of femininity formed in the digital space, particularly on social platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, have a complex and multi-layered impact on the spiritual and moral thinking of modern student youth. These standards are often manifested through visual idealization, stereotyping, and simulated reality, directly influencing an individual's self-awareness, self-identification, and the formation of their value system.

Research indicates that the artificial reinforcement of gender stereotypes and social roles causes internal conflict, social pressure, and psychological tension in an individual. In the digital space, this process intensifies, creating a distinction between the "ideal" and "real" versions of the female image. As a result, the relativity of values, orientation toward appearance, and consumer thinking may intensify in the students' minds.

At the same time, the peculiarity of the digital media environment - its speed, visibility and interactivity - directly and continuously affects the thinking of young people. This sharply increases the need for a critical perception of the content provided by the media. An insufficient level of media literacy leads to the penetration of manipulative content, stereotypes, and misinformation into the mind.

From the perspective of philosophical education, an effective way to solve this problem is to develop students' reflexive thinking, critical approach, and ethical evaluation skills. Furthermore, the standards of femininity emerging on Instagram and TikTok reflect the complex and multi-layered nature of modern female identity. Feminism is now becoming not only a product of real social experience but also a phenomenon that is reproduced through digital discourse and visual culture. An in-depth analysis of this process is of great scientific importance for the development of feminist research, digital philosophy, and gender policy.

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