



INTRODUCTION

- Orthorexia Nervosa (ON) involves a pathological fixation on healthy eating (Bratman, 1997)
- Social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok) strongly influence diet and fitness trends
- These trends often idealise diet, wellness, and fitness standards
- They also promote rigidly healthy diets and unrealistic body ideals, which may **encourage** or **reinforce** ON tendencies (Horowitz, 2022)
- This content analysis examined how health-focused social media content generated by **qualified professionals** and **unqualified health influencers** reflects ON tendencies.



METHODOLOGY

- N = 300 posts sampled from Instagram and TikTok (2025)
- Posts identified using hashtags: **#nutrition**, **#clean eating**, **#healthy lifestyle**
- Codebook developed using inductive and deductive coding
- Content coded for: eating behaviours, body image, exercise, and information credibility.



RESULTS



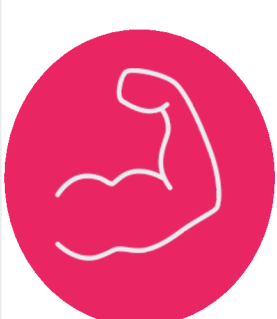
78%

of content creators lacked relevant health/nutrition qualifications



75.3%

of posts promoted supplements or superfood consumption



63%

of videos contained body objectification messaging



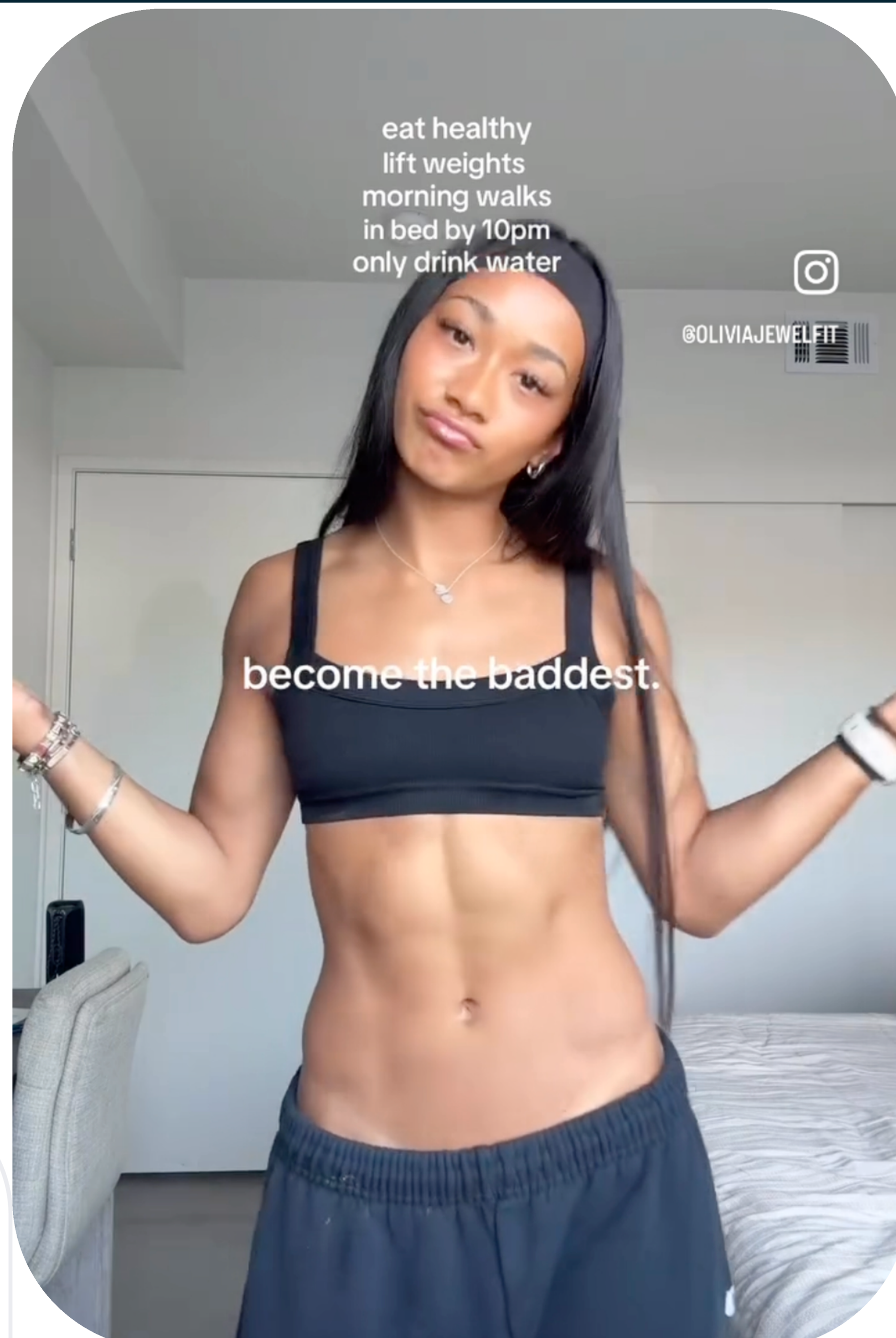
28.7%

of posts imposed food rules/restrictions

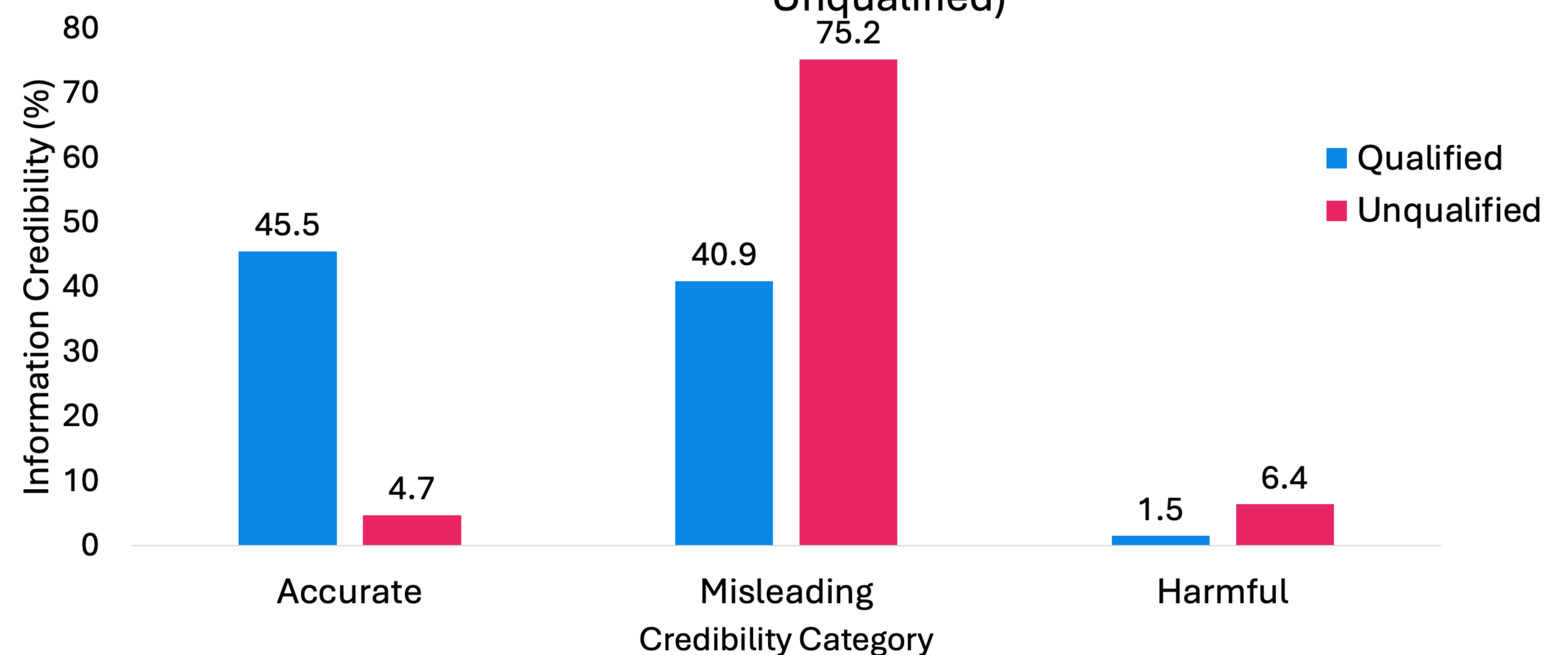


19.7%

of posts used moralised language surrounding food



Health Information Credibility by Content Creator Type (Qualified vs. Unqualified)



DISCUSSION

- Instagram and TikTok content promote idealised, rigid, and aesthetic-focused lifestyles through messaging that reflects key ON characteristics
- Health content often equates a physically fit appearance with being healthy
- Food is frequently moralised as “good” or “bad”
- Unqualified influencers dominate health messaging, and often share misleading information



IMPLICATIONS

- Social media presents potentially damaging messaging that reflects ON tendencies
- Need for better regulation of social media health content
- Educate influencers about the potential harms of sharing misleading information
- Encourage evidence-based content creation from health professionals



CONCLUSION

The unrealistic and perfectionistic pursuit of health online aligns with ON’s characteristic dietary rigidity

Greater reliance on evidence-based information is essential for reducing harms associated with ON-related messaging

KEY TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

Health-focused social media frequently promotes unrealistic body ideals and rigid dietary practices that reflect ON behaviours. Critical evaluation of online content and greater reliance on evidence-based information are essential for reducing potential harms associated with ON-related messaging

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References

1. Bratman, S.(1997). Orthorexia nervosa .Yoga Journal,136, 42-50
2. Horowitz, R.(2022).How do Instagram’s clean-eating hashtags influence Orthorexia Nervosa and the sense of self in self-identified Orthorexia Nervosa tendencies: a mixed methods study (Doctoral dissertation, London Metropolitan University)