

Disciplining and self-regulating the body on instagram: A Foucauldian discourse analysis of Fitfluencers in Turkey

Instagram'da bedeni disipline etmek: Türkiye'deki Fitfluencer'lar üzerine Foucaultcu bir söylem analizi

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Abstract

This study examines how discourses on sport and the body are constructed in the Instagram content of fitness influencers in Turkey and how these discursive constructions shape processes of subjectification. Drawing on Foucauldian discourse analysis, the study analyses content produced by four influencers with more than 100,000 followers between January and March 2026. The findings demonstrate that the body is constructed as a continuously regulated and improvable entity, while truth regimes are legitimised through scientific references, expert positioning, and follower's shared messages. Fitness discourse extends beyond exercise to organize everyday practices such as sleep, nutrition, and stress management, as well as religious practices such as Ramadan fasting. These discursive practices are intertwined with technologies of the self that encourage continuous self-monitoring and bodily regulation. Within this framework, individuals are constituted as responsible and self-regulating subjects expected to invest in and manage their bodies, while gendered discourses produce differentiated norms for male and female bodies. Overall, the study offers insights into how digital fitness culture operates as a digital-age terrain of subject formation through self-discipline and self-surveillance.

Keywords: Fitness influencers, Foucauldian discourse analysis, technologies of the self, subjectification, digital fitness culture

Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki fitness influencerların Instagram içeriklerinde spora ve bedene ilişkin söylemlerin nasıl kurulduğunu ve bu söylemsel inşaların özneleşme süreçlerini nasıl şekillendirdiğini ele almaktadır. Foucaultcu söylem analizine dayanan çalışmada, Ocak-Mart 2026 döneminde 100.000'den fazla takipçiye sahip dört influencer'ın içerikleri incelenmiştir. Çalışmanın bulguları beden bu söylemler içinde sürekli optimize edilmesi gereken bir nesne olarak inşa edilmekte olduğunu göstermektedir. Hakikat rejimleri bilimsel referanslar, uzmanlık konumlandırmaları ve takipçilerin paylaşılan mesajları aracılığıyla meşrulaştırılmaktadır. Fitness söylemi egzersizin ötesine geçerek uyku, beslenme ve stres yönetimi gibi gündelik pratikleri ve Ramazan orucu gibi dini pratikleri de kapsamaktadır. Bu söylemsel pratikler, kendilik teknolojileriyle iç içe geçerek sürekli öz-denetim ve beden yönetimini teşvik etmektedir. Bu bağlamda bireyler, bedenlerine yatırım yapması beklenen, kendi kendini gözetleyen ve öz-disiplinli özneler olarak kurulmakta; cinsiyetlendirilmiş söylemler kadın ve erkek bedenleri için farklı normlar üretmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Fitness influencerlar, Foucaultcu söylem analizi, kendilik teknolojileri, özneleşme, dijital fitness kültürü

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Introduction

The rapid proliferation of digital platforms has reshaped how meanings associated with the body, health, beauty, and physical fitness are produced and circulated in contemporary societies. On visually oriented platforms such as Instagram, sporting practice has shifted from an individual experience to a form of content that is produced, displayed, and commodified (Fuchs, 2010). Having a fit and athletic body has become closely intertwined with broader social markers of youth, beauty, and success, rendering the body a site of intensified cultural investment and normative regulation. This transformation is particularly visible in the rise of fitness influencer culture, where bodily practices are not only performed but also continuously evaluated, compared, and circulated in digital environments.

Understanding this transformation requires situating it within the contemporary neoliberal health discourse. As Crawford (1980) argues through the concept of healthism, being healthy has come to function as an individual virtue, while being unhealthy is increasingly framed as a sign of personal failure. Cederström and Spicer's (2015) notion of the wellness syndrome further elaborates this dynamic, demonstrating how self-optimization operates not only as a personal choice but also as a social imperative. Within this framework, sport and exercise-related content on social media has emerged as a key discursive vehicle for neoliberal health ideology in the digital sphere. In this context, fitness influencers emerge as key mediators who translate these broader neoliberal health imperatives into everyday practices and visible bodily performances on social media.

Fitness influencers, individual sports trainers who have gained significant visibility and followership through social media, have a significant role in this discursive field. In addition to giving advice on how to do exercise, they circulate disciplinary practices, bodily norms, and lifestyle

ideals. Training videos, body transformation narratives and self-optimization discourses have become part of everyday digital circulation (Abidin, 2015). They not only disseminate knowledge but also actively shape norms by naming certain bodily practices as desirable, achievable, and morally valuable.

The relationship between sport, the body and digital culture has attracted growing attention across the social sciences. Drawing on Foucauldian perspectives, Markula (2003) established a foundational framework for the sociology of sport by demonstrating that sport simultaneously merges both technologies of domination and technologies of the self. Simanjuntak (2024) extended this framework to Instagram, pointing out that fitness content functions as a form of panopticism through which users internalize normalized bodily standards via social media visibility. In the Turkish context, Kavasoglu and Koca (2019) examined bikini fitness athletes on Instagram, revealing that the platform operates as a mechanism of bodily discipline and as a potential space for resistance against patriarchal norms. Despite this growing body of work, a significant portion of the current studies either adopt quantitative or mixed methods designs or focus mainly on body image, beauty standards and consumer culture. While existing studies have examined body image, consumer culture, and platform dynamics, fewer studies have systematically analyzed the discursive construction of subjectivity in fitness content from a Foucauldian perspective. Limited attention has been paid to how these discourses operate within specific cultural contexts and how they produce subjectivity through everyday digital practices such as fitness influencer content.

Moreover, Turkish scholarship on the body, health, and power relations examined via Foucauldian conceptual tools is limited, and no study has systematically addressed fitness influencer content as a site of subject formation. Bozok (2009) maintained that anti-ageing discourse

transforms the body and life into a permanent site of struggle and argues that health promotion advice reflects the modern relationship between body, power, and subjectivity. In a subsequent study, Bozok (2011) examined popular healthy living discourse as a form of biopolitical subjectification, showing that the rise of the molecular body has increasingly subjected individuals' self-understanding to the discourses and calculations of biopower. Bozok, Munar, and Kavasoğlu (2019) examined men's experiences of pilates as a gendered exercise in Adana, Turkey, which showed how patriarchal codes of masculinity shape men's engagement with and meaning making around sport. More recently, Sarıgöl (2024) problematized nutrition as an instrumentalized neoliberal practice, arguing that norms of correct and measured eating are constructed as achievable normalcy by neoliberal rationality, through which subject-bodies mutually govern one another. Despite these contributions, the role of fitness influencers as discursive agents in shaping bodily governance and subjectivity in Turkey remains underexplored.

This article explores how fitness influencer content in Turkey constructs sport and body management and how these constructions shape subjectivity. In doing so, it also attends to how these discourses operate through everyday digital practices and how they are articulated within local cultural contexts.

In this study, fitness influencers are conceptualized as individuals who combine a personal trainer identity with digital content production, primarily generating content around exercise, nutrition, and lifestyle. Their content is approached not simply as practical advice but as discursive formations that put bodily norms, disciplinary practices, and modes of subjectification into circulation. Accordingly, the fitness influencer is treated both as a content producer and as a discursive subject position.

Accordingly, the study seeks to address the following main research question: How are sport

and body management discursively constructed in the Instagram content of fitness influencers in Turkey? To further elaborate this inquiry, the analysis is structured around three interrelated dimensions. At the discursive level, the study asks how sport and body management are framed, legitimized, and normalized through recurring discursive patterns. At the technological level, it examines which technologies of the self are mobilized to regulate and optimize bodily conduct. Finally, at the level of subjectification, the study investigates what forms of subjectivity and subject positions are produced through these discursive and technological practices.

Theoretical Discussion: Foucault and Fit Bodies

Contemporary fitness culture constitutes a domain in which bodies, health practices, and subjectivities are produced and normalized through digital media environments. In this context, fitfluencer content plays a key role in circulating and stabilizing meanings attached to the body, positioning influencers as both relatable and aspirational figures (Abidin, 2016).

It is within this context that fitness content does not merely represent bodily practices but actively participates in defining what counts as a "good," "healthy," and "desirable" life. This requires an analytical framework capable of capturing not only representation but also the productive and relational nature of power. Drawing on Michel Foucault, this study conceptualizes power as a dispersed and productive set of relations that operate through knowledge production, everyday practices, and processes of subject formation. Rather than being imposed from above, power circulates through social interactions, shaping both what individuals do and how they understand themselves. Accordingly, this study organizes its theoretical framework around three interrelated dimensions that directly correspond to the analytical structure of

the methodology: discourse, disciplinary power and the normative body, technologies of self and self-surveillance and governmentality, subjectification and entrepreneurial subjects.

Discourse, Disciplinary Power and the Normative Body

At the discursive level, power operates through the production and circulation of knowledge, establishing regimes of truth that define legitimate bodies, practices, and lifestyles. For Foucault, discourse is not merely a medium of communication but a practice through which knowledge, power, and subjectification are relationally constituted. As Foucault (2002) argues, discourses systematically form the objects of which they speak. From this perspective, discourse does not reflect reality as it is but actively constitutes it by determining what counts as "true," "normal," or "possible."

Central to this process is Foucault's concept of the regime of truth, referring to the mechanisms through which certain discourses are accepted as true within a given social field (Foucault, 1980). In fitness culture, this is visible in how specific bodily forms, dietary practices, and exercise routines are framed as scientifically valid and morally desirable. In this regard, fitfluencers emerge as key actors within these regimes by positioning themselves as knowledgeable and authoritative figures, legitimizing bodily norms through the language of expertise, personal transformation, and scientific data.

Foucault's concept of power-knowledge highlights how knowledge and authority are mutually constitutive in fitness discourse. Influencer content blends personal experience with scientific references, stabilizing the "fit body" as a marker of health and discipline. These discursive processes are further amplified by platform dynamics, where visibility, engagement, and algorithmic circulation shape which bodies and practices become dominant (Duffy, 2017).

Beyond the discursive level, Foucault's analysis of disciplinary power provides a crucial framework for understanding how fitness culture operates through the regulation of bodies. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault traces the emergence of disciplinary mechanisms that function not through direct coercion but through observation, normalization, and examination. As he argues, disciplinary power "produces subjected and practiced bodies, docile bodies" through the meticulous control of bodily activities, gestures, and time (Foucault, 1991, p. 138). Disciplinary power thus operates productively by shaping bodily practices, temporal routines, and self-monitoring mechanisms, rather than functioning as a merely repressive force.

In fitness culture, this is particularly evident in practices such as calorie counting, workout tracking, step monitoring, and before-and-after comparisons, all of which render the body visible, measurable, and open to continuous improvement. In digital fitness environments, this logic is reproduced through constant visibility, where individuals internalize normative standards and engage in continuous self-monitoring. The body thus becomes a site of continuous self-monitoring, where deviation from the norm is experienced not as external punishment but as personal failure. As Lupton (2016) observes, these practices are increasingly mediated through mobile applications, wearable devices, and platform interfaces that embed individuals within broader systems of visibility and comparison, where bodily performance becomes a publicly shareable and evaluable metric. Crucially, these disciplinary practices are inherently gendered. While disciplinary power targets all docile bodies, digital fitness discourse bifurcates these techniques along traditional gender binaries, where the male body is subjected to discourses of hyper-muscular performance and strength, and the female body is systematically monitored through the gaze of aesthetic slenderness and proportional form.

Technologies of the Self and Self-Surveillance

Foucault's later work introduces the concept of technologies of the self, referring to the techniques through which individuals act upon themselves to transform their bodies, behaviors, and identities in accordance with specific ideals. Technologies of the self refer to practices through which individuals act upon themselves to transform their bodies, behaviors, and identities (Foucault, 1988).

In fitness culture, these technologies are closely intertwined with disciplinary power, yet they operate at a different register, namely at the level of voluntary self-transformation rather than external constraint. Fitfluencers play a crucial mediating role in this process by translating abstract disciplinary norms into concrete everyday routines. Through detailed content that specifies what to eat, how to exercise, and how to structure daily habits, they provide actionable templates that guide individual self-work. As a result, fitness practices are not only lived but also displayed, reinforcing norms through repetition and visibility (Abidin, 2016).

In digital fitness culture, these technologies extend beyond the body to the construction of an optimized self, reinforced through transformation narratives, progress tracking, and continuous self-monitoring. The quantification of bodily experience through data, images, and narratives renders the body both a project and a performance, a site of ongoing self-optimization that must be continuously monitored, evaluated, and improved (Lupton, 2015).

Governmentality, Subjectification and the Entrepreneurial Subject

The third dimension of the theoretical framework draws on Foucault's concept of governmentality, which refers to the rationalities and techniques through which populations and individuals are governed. In his lectures at the

Collège de France, Foucault (2008, p. 226) argues that neoliberal governmentality produces a specific form of subjectivity, namely the entrepreneurial subject, who relates to the self as human capital to be invested in, developed, and optimized. This mode of governance operates not through direct coercion but by shaping the conditions under which individuals freely choose to govern themselves in accordance with prevailing norms and rationalities.

For Foucault, subjectification refers to the processes through which individuals come to understand and constitute themselves as kinds of subjects. Power is productive in that it does not merely constrain individuals but actively shapes their identities, desires, and modes of self-relation. This process is closely linked to governmentality in that individuals are guided to govern themselves in accordance with specific norms and rationalities, coming to experience this self-governance as an expression of freedom and autonomy rather than as a form of subjection.

In the context of fitness culture, governmentality operates through the responsabilization of individuals, that is, the process by which health, bodily appearance, and physical performance are reframed as matters of personal choice and individual responsibility rather than structural or social conditions. As Foucault (2008, p. 226) elaborates, neoliberal governance works through freedom by redefining the subject as an entrepreneur of the self, inciting individuals to invest in their bodies, capacities, and lifestyles as sites of capital formation and value production. Within this framework, achieving or failing to achieve the "fit body" is constructed as a reflection of personal effort and moral character rather than as a product of structural conditions. Moreover, digital fitness discourse demonstrates a high degree of cultural adaptability, seamlessly embedding its self-optimization imperatives into local routines and traditional tem-

poralities. Rather than disrupting culturally specific periods such as Ramadan fasting, the discourse of self-governance dynamically rearticulates these traditional practices, transforming them into compatible phases where bodily discipline and lifestyle management can be continuously maintained without interruption.

In this regard, fitfluencers occupy a central role by embodying and promoting the entrepreneurial subject. Acting as role models, experts, and guides, they demonstrate disciplined and self-optimizing lifestyles while fostering mediated intimacy that encourages self-reflection and self-regulation, akin to Foucault's notion of pastoral power. In this way, individuals actively participate in their own governance, aligning their conduct with dominant norms under the guise of autonomy. This dynamic is further reinforced by aspirational labour (Duffy, 2017), whereby individuals invest time and effort into producing idealized selves in line with the demands of digital visibility and self-branding.

Taken together, these three dimensions show that power relations in fitfluencer culture are multi-layered and relational, and they do not operate through direct coercion. Instead, they work through the production of regimes of truth, the normalization of bodily practices, and the shaping of self-disciplining and entrepreneurial subjectivities. This framework enables an analysis of fitness content as a form of governance rather than mere representation.

Method

This study investigates how sport and body management are discursively constructed in fitness influencer content in Turkey and how these constructions are articulated through technologies of the self and processes of subjectification. The study also adopts Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) as its methodological framework, as the research places the relationships between discourse, power, and subjectification at

its center. Data were collected through purposive sampling of publicly available Instagram content spanning a three-month period from January to March 2026. The researcher followed the four selected influencer accounts throughout this period without any interaction, maintaining a non-participatory observer role. Data recording combined field notes taken during observation sessions with screenshots of selected content units for closer discursive analysis. Follower comments were not collected as independent data sources. However, follower messages that influencers themselves shared within their posts were included as part of the influencer-produced material. Since all content was publicly accessible and no interaction with account holders or followers took place, the study raises no issues of informed consent in line with established ethical guidelines for research on publicly available social media content. The Foucauldian approach examines discourse not merely as a medium of communication but as a practice through which knowledge, power, and subjectification are relationally constituted (Foucault, 2002). The primary analytical focus of this study is therefore twofold: identifying how discursive formations construct sport and body management and how they contribute to the production of subjectivity and subject positions, as well as examining how body management is presented as a regime of truth. Accordingly, fitness influencer content is conceptualized not only as visual or linguistic data but as discursive formations that are part of a specific regime of truth as well. This perspective allows the study to examine fitness influencer content as a site where bodily norms and subjectivities are actively constructed rather than merely represented.

The analytical framework is organized around three dimensions through which power relations operate. The first concerns the discursive level, examining the normative frameworks and bodily definitions embedded in fitness content. The second concerns the technological and practical

level, analysing the routines and disciplinary practices individuals apply to their own bodies as technologies of the self. The third concerns the level of subjectification investigating what forms of subjectivity and subject positions these discourses and practices produce. This multi-layered approach is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Analytical Framework of the Study

Analytical Layer	Discursive Formation	Primary Focus
1. Discursive Level	Discipline and the Normative Body	Fitness culture, healthy body ideals, aesthetic standards
2. Technological/Practical Level	Self-Surveillance and Technologies of the Self	Routine, self-tracking, performance measurement
3. Subjectification Level	The Entrepreneurial Subject and Responsibilization	Construction of the entrepreneurial, responsible, and disciplined subject

Guided by this framework, each piece of content was analysed in relation to all three dimensions, with attention to how regimes of truth are constructed and legitimized through expertise, personal experience, and scientific data and how bodily practices and temporal routines are shaped through self-monitoring mechanisms and what subject positions are produced within these discourses.

The primary rationale for the sampling strategy was to analyse fitness discourse through accounts with wide reach and high influence potential. Therefore, accounts with 100,000 or more followers were included. This threshold ensures higher visibility and discursive impact. The discourses under analysis function not just at the level of individual communication but as structures that circulate and produce effects across a broad digital audience.

Table 2. Frequency of Analyzed Post Types

Username	Reels	Posts	Stories	Total
Direnkartaltr	2	85	16	103
Oykubasar	0	24	10	34
Mertkoksuren	3	72	17	92
Gozdekalem	0	10	4	14

In order to achieve gender balance, the sample was structured to include two female and

two male influencers. This decision was made in order to make potential variations in fitness discourse along gender lines visible and to enable a comparative analysis. Another key criterion was that the selected influencers engage in both content production and economic activities such as coaching services, online programmes, camp organizations, and product promotion. This criterion made the analysis of how fitness discourse functions both as a cultural and economic field possible.

The number of content units varied across accounts, as some influencers posted more frequently and produced more thematically relevant content than others. Reels and stories were included on an availability basis, as these content types are ephemeral in nature and were incorporated into the dataset when encountered during the observation period. This variation reflects purposive sampling principles in qualitative research, where analytical depth is prioritized over numerical equivalence rather than a quota-based selection logic. Content selection followed an initial screening phase based on predefined thematic criteria (e.g., body transformation, discipline, and health practices), followed by iterative coding to ensure analytical consistency. The analysis focused on content that explicitly addressed these themes, with particular attention to how knowledge production and user experience were articulated within the content. During the analysis, both linguistic and visual elements employed by influencers were analysed in relation to the three analytical dimensions outlined above. Regarding researcher positionality, the researcher is an active social media user familiar with Turkish digital fitness culture. This familiarity facilitated recognition of recurring discursive patterns in the data. To minimize the risk of interpretive bias, analytical decisions were consistently guided by the Foucauldian framework and reviewed reflexively throughout the analysis process.

Findings

This section examines 243 content units collected from Turkey-based fitness influencers on Instagram between January and March 2026, analyzed through the framework of Foucauldian discourse analysis across three analytical dimensions: the discursive dimension, the technologies of the self-dimension, and the subjectification dimension. The findings demonstrate that fitness influencer content constitutes a multi-layered structure of power that directs the individual not only at the bodily level but also at the cognitive level especially through the everyday routines.

Discursive Dimension: Regimes of Truth and the Construction of the Disciplined and Self-Regulating Body

According to Foucault, every discursive field produces its own distinctive regime of truth that regulates what counts as 'true', 'normal', or 'scientific' (Foucault, 1980). When the fitness content under analysis is examined from this perspective, it becomes evident that the body is constituted not merely as a biological entity but as a discursive object that must be transformed, displayed, and legitimized according to standards. This regime of truth operates through several interconnected discursive patterns in the content that was analyzed. The most visible one of these patterns is the before-after narrative. Supported by expressions such as "a 2-month transformation", these visuals represent the body through two temporally divided moments: an inadequate past and a transformed present. Viewed through Foucault's conceptualization of confession (1978), this discursive pattern can be interpreted as a form of digital confession. The old body is displayed as a sign of prior inadequacy and lack of control, while the new body is turned into a subject who has transformed and rendered itself governable. In this way, the body

is framed as a project that can be transformed in a short time, establishing a normative imperative that orients the individual toward active participation in this transformation. Mert Köksüren's post titled "The Transformation That Makes People Ask: What Happened to You? The Story of Fevzi Bey", supported by before-after visuals, is a concrete example of this pattern: "Sometimes the best motivation is not talking but achieving. During the process in which Fevzi Bey lost 15 kilos and regained his health, the reactions he received from those around him were the greatest proof of his success... Don't just talk, do it and show it. Real change is registered the moment people start asking you: What has happened to you?" (@mertkoksuren). Here, the old body is constituted as an image of inadequacy that makes recognition difficult, whereas the new body is turned into the document of social recognition and success.

The second fundamental discursive pattern is the discourse of the "debunking myths". In the examined content, in addition to positioning themselves as giving exercise advice, influencers act as discursive authorities who expose and correct widespread general knowledge errors. The following statement from a post by Diren Kartal clearly illustrates this pattern: "A small reminder: caffeine can suppress appetite slightly, but squeezing lemon into your coffee makes no contribution to weight loss, it only ruins the taste of your coffee. The only way to lose weight is to create a calorie deficit" (@direnkartaltr). This position is highly significant from the perspective of Foucault's concept of power-knowledge (Foucault, 1980). By determining what counts as 'real' knowledge and what counts as 'false' knowledge, the influencer settles into a position of discursive authority, and followers are transformed into subjects who must be re-educated in the face of this authority.

The legitimacy of this authority position is largely secured through scientific discourse. References to biological concepts such as the

cortisol hormone, metabolic rate, and fat storage mechanisms in the content analyzed position body management within an objective and technical field of knowledge. The following statements from one of Mert Köksüren's video posts are a concrete manifestation of this legitimation strategy: "When you are under stress, the cortisol hormone rises. And the body receives a signal that says, there is danger. It stores fat in the safest place: the abdominal region. The belly cannot melt without lowering cortisol. And this cannot be solved with calorie counting alone!" (@mertkoksuren). Here, the concept of cortisol functions both as a biological reality and as a scientific reference that legitimizes influencer authority. Within the framework of Foucault's power-knowledge relation, this practice operates as a key means through which fitness discourse stabilizes and reinforces its truth claims. Scientific knowledge is transformed into a tool of power, while the influencer is positioned as both the disseminator and the interpreter of this knowledge.

The collective dimension of the regime of truth is constituted by "testimonials from followers" posts. The circulation of follower messages shared by influencers and transformation stories ensures that the practices are verified through individual experiences, reinforcing the legitimacy of the discourse through the testimony of the community. The following message from one of Öykü Başar's "testimonials from followers" posts is a concrete example of this mechanism: "Hello teacher, today I wore a pair of trousers that I could not wear because they were too tight, and I would like to thank you very much." The relationship this follower establishes with their own body points to a subject position that acknowledges that success has become possible through the guidance of the influencer. This dynamic aligns with Foucault's concept of normalizing judgment. Truth does not originate only from the expert but from individuals who have internalized and reproduced the discourse.

Technological and Practical Dimension: Technologies of the Self and Self-Surveillance

Foucault's concept of technologies of the self describes practices that an individual employs to bring about a specific transformation in their own body, thoughts, and behaviors (Foucault, 1988). When the fitness content examined is evaluated from this conceptual framework, it becomes apparent that these contents constitute a comprehensive set of technologies of the self that directs the individual toward continuously working on their own body and that extends across all layers of everyday life.

The fundamental element of this set is the discourse of process, discipline, and awareness. Expressions such as "step-by-step progress" and "improvement every day" position body management not as an immediate transformation project but as a practice articulated to the continuity of everyday life. The following statements from one of Mert Köksüren's posts are a typical expression of this discourse: "What matters is first cleansing the fat from the body. Give yourself a little chance. This only requires a process. You will not be on a diet for the rest of your life. Don't blow it out of proportion and get moving." (@mertkoksuren). Here, body management is constituted not as an instant transformation but as an ongoing disciplinary practice the individual must patiently internalize. Considered through Foucault's concept of "docile bodies" (1991), this discourse constitutes a contemporary reconfiguration of disciplinary power in digital environments. The body is transformed into a domain that must be managed and optimized not only during workouts, but at every hour of the day.

The most striking manifestation of this transformation is the problematization of the body through everyday life practices. Expressions such as "if your belly folds when you sit" encourage the individual to evaluate and question their

own body in a sporting environment or while sitting at a desk, eating, or resting. Mert Köksüren's post titled "Why Is Your Belly Not Going Away? Because You Don't Drink Water" is a direct expression of this pattern. The body is transformed into an object that must be monitored not only at the gym but at every moment of the day, in terms of water consumption, sleep time, and stress level. Moreover, the "how to get your body in shape before summer" content that recurs seasonally across all accounts examined demonstrate that bodily surveillance is also reinforced by calendrical pressure. The body is now considered as a project that must be kept ready not only on a daily but also on a seasonal basis. Read together with Lupton's (2016) framework on digital self-tracking, this pattern points to a digital internalization of Foucauldian panopticism. In place of an external authority that monitors the individual, a continuous mechanism of self-surveillance emerges. This dynamic is actively constructed and maintained by the individual.

A key driver of this panoptic structure is the quantification of the body. The systematic sharing of calorie calculations, training durations, repetition counts, and body measurements reconstitute the body as a measurable and improvable object. The following statement from one of Gözde Kalem's training posts is a solid example of these practices: "We have 18 minutes, with maximum effort and minimum rest... Our training score is the number of rounds and repetitions in the remaining time" (@gozdekalem). Here, performance is not constituted as a subjective experience, but a measurable output reduced to a numerical score. Evaluated from the perspective of Foucault's concept of "anatomy-politics" (1991), this quantification practice is the concrete instrument through which disciplinary power internalizes and legitimizes, through a quantitative language, the surveillance it maintains over the individual's own body. The body is

no longer primarily felt. It is measured, calculated, and continuously evaluated through numerical indicators.

The scope of technologies of the self-expands to cover domains such as sleep patterns, stress management, and everyday habits. Mert Köksüren's cortisol post is a clear indicator of this expansion: "Phone before sleep? Irregular sleep? Constant stress, high tempo? The body interprets this as a state of physiological threat. Without proper sleep, breathing, walking, balanced protein, and hormone-friendly nutrition, the abdominal region is resistant" (@mertkoksuren). Fitness discourse thus moves beyond the boundaries of exercise and is transformed into a comprehensive life prescription that also encompasses the individual's sleep patterns, stress management, and everyday habits. This expansion is further evidenced by nutritional guidance in everyday cultural contexts. Gözde Kalem regularly shares fitness-oriented recipes, while Mert Köksüren addresses dietary practices during Ramadan: "I definitely want you to have suhoor, do not eat too fatty or too many carbohydrates at suhoor" (@mertkoksuren). Such content indicates that fitness discourse extends beyond secular daily practices into religiously and culturally defined temporal frameworks and positions the body as an object of optimization even within sacred times. This inclusion demonstrates that rather than conflicting with traditional values, digital fitness discourse dynamically adapts to and absorbs local cultural temporalities. By reframing Ramadan routines through the lens of nutritional timing and metabolic maintenance, the influencer culture successfully harmonizes religious practices with the continuous demands of neoliberal self-governance, ensuring that the project of body management remains uninterrupted. As Dilts also highlights (2011), fitness discourse is thereby transformed into a domain of ethical practices directly articulated with the rise of neoliberal subjectivity.

Subjectification Dimension: The Entrepreneurial Subject and Responsibilization

Foucault conceptualizes subjectification as a dual process in which individuals are both subjected to power relations and simultaneously constituted as subjects who actively shape their own identities and modes of existence within these relations (Foucault, 1982). The fitness content examined can be read as a concrete manifestation of this doubly significant process. Discursive frameworks and technologies of the self, operating together, produce a particular form of subject. This subject is an individual who continuously monitors, develops, and optimizes their own body. However, the findings clearly show that this subject is constituted not merely as an individual pursuing a bodily project but also as an entrepreneurial subject (Rose, 1999) who invests economically in this process and transforms their body into a form of embodied capital.

The most visible manifestation of this subject form is the presentation of fitness practices within a marketized structure. Online coaching services, camp programs, and product promotions signal that body management has become intertwined with an economic field. Gözde Kalem's camp promotion post is a good example of this marketization: "The awaited news has arrived and our 29th camp begins on March 2nd. Fire Camp Plus+ and Fire Camp Conditioning additional package options are continuing at full speed... Come and welcome spring with FIRE energy through this 6-week online camp. It is suitable for anyone who is women-oriented, who wants to share good energy, and who wants a sustainable fit life with love and respect within the team" (@gozdekalem). The expression "29th Camp" clearly points to an institutional continuity, while "additional package options" points to the commodified structure of the service. Evaluated from the perspective of Foucault's analyses of subjectification and self-regulation (Fou-

cault, 2007, 2008), this structure operates effectively within a framework of self-regulation and subjectification. Here, the individual is an entrepreneur who must invest both time and economic resources in developing their body, while failure tends to be associated not with structural reasons but with individual inadequacy. This dynamic becomes particularly visible at this point: social inequalities and structural constraints are invisible while the individual is held entirely responsible for their own body and health. This dynamic aligns with Byung-Chul Han's critique of the neoliberal performance society. Han (2019) argues that in neoliberal society, the individual who fails does not question the system but holds themselves responsible and feels shame, and that this is precisely where the intelligence of the neoliberal regime manifests itself, as it forecloses resistance. Neoliberalism transforms the oppressed subject into a free entrepreneur of the self, in which everyone is simultaneously the self-exploiting worker of their own enterprise and both master and slave (Han, 2020). In Han's (2023) concept of the achievement society, individuals carry their own labour camp within themselves, functioning at once as prisoner and guard, victim and perpetrator, rendering exploitation possible without domination. Fitness influencer discourse operates precisely through this logic: the body becomes a site of voluntary self-exploitation, in which the failure to achieve the ideal physique is experienced not as a structural condition but as a personal moral shortcoming, effectively neutralizing any critical engagement with the power relations that produce these norms.

Foucault's own articulation of this project is illuminating in this context. As he states: "I would like to say first, what has been the goal of my work during the last twenty years. It has not been to analyze the phenomena of power, nor to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis. My objective, instead, has been to create a his-

tory of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (Foucault, 2016, p. 57). Fitness influencer discourse constitutes precisely one of the contemporary channels of this process of subject-making in the digital age.

Gender emerges as an inseparable dimension of this subjectification process. In the content examined, the discursive frameworks addressed to female and male bodies differ in distinct ways. The male body is evaluated along the axes of strength, performance, and volume, while the female body is subjected to a normative evaluation through aesthetics, slenderness, and form. Gözde Kalem's camp promotion framing of "women-oriented, sharing good energy, sustainable fit life" and Mert Köksüren's training content focused on "maximum effort, strength, and performance" are concrete indicators of this differentiation. While content addressed to the female body is constructed through energy, aesthetics, and lifestyle, content addressed to the male body is shaped through physical capacity, endurance, and measurable performance. This distinction corresponds to Hargreaves' (1994) findings on gendered bodily norms in the sports domain, and it clearly reveals that fitness discourse reproduces and reinforces gender inequalities. In this context, digital fitness culture does not merely reflect biological differences, it systematically reconfigures gendered expectations to serve the demands of the neoliberal achievement society. While the entrepreneurial subjectification of the male body is driven by the visible accumulation of physical capital through strength and muscular performance, the female body is responsabilized through a commodified rhetoric of 'well-being,' form, and collective aesthetic energy. Consequently, both genders are compelled to optimize themselves, yet they are disciplined through starkly differentiated normative paths. This differentiation demonstrates that fitness influencer discourse not only governs bodies but also reproduces gendered

norms through distinct regimes of bodily evaluation.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that fitness influencer content constitutes the individual not merely as a subject working on their own body but as a multi-layered subject who continuously updates their knowledge, organizes their lifestyle in a comprehensive manner. Considered through Foucault's analyses of power and subjectification (2007, 2008), fitness discourse functions as a mechanism of power that directs the individual toward self-governance without directly coercing their behavior. This dynamic cannot be reduced to either external pressure or individual choice. The subject is produced within this discourse as both the object and the active carrier of power relations within digital fitness culture.

Conclusion

This study investigates how sport and body management are discursively constructed through Instagram fitness influencer content in Turkey and how these constructions contribute to the production of particular forms of subjectivity. Drawing on Foucauldian discourse analysis, the findings demonstrate that fitness influencer practices operate as a complex discursive system that simultaneously regulates bodily conduct, organizes everyday life, and produces self-regulating subjects. The study offers insights in three areas: a Foucauldian analysis of fitness influencer content in the Turkish context the interconnected operation of regimes of truth, technologies of the self, and subjectification processes in digital fitness discourse and the rearticulation of fitness discourse through locally embedded cultural dynamics, including culturally specific temporalities such as Ramadan.

At the discursive level, fitness influencer content establishes a regime of truth in which the

body is constructed as a disciplined, self-regulating, and continuously optimized project, presented not as one possible way of relating to the body but as a self-evident norm. The body is actively produced through repetitive visual and textual practices such as before-after transformations, scientific explanations, and myth-debunking patterns. A key finding is that truth claims are stabilized not only through expert figures but also through participatory mechanisms such as follower testimonials, pointing to the distributed and circulatory nature of truth production in social media environments.

At the level of technologies of the self, fitness influencer content promotes a form of continuous self-surveillance extending far beyond exercise. The body is constituted as an object to be monitored and regulated across multiple domains of everyday life, including sleep, nutrition, stress, and culturally specific practices such as Ramadan fasting, leading to a shift from embodied experience to quantified self-monitoring. This process operates through self-regulation rather than direct external control: the absence of explicit coercion points not to a lack of power but to its reconfiguration, in which individuals voluntarily adopt and internalize disciplinary practices, consistent with Foucauldian conceptions of power as productive and relational.

At the level of subjectification, fitness influencer discourse constructs individuals as responsible agents expected to continuously invest in and improve their bodies. This is closely intertwined with the commodification of fitness practices through online coaching, training programs, and nutritional products. The body becomes a form of embodied capital requiring temporal and economic investment, while failure is attributed to individual shortcomings rather than structural conditions. Subjectification is further shaped by gendered discourses: male bodies are evaluated through performance and strength, female bodies through aesthetics and

form, reproducing existing gender norms while presenting them as natural and desirable.

A distinctive contribution of this study is its focus on the Turkish context. The integration of fitness practices into temporalities such as Ramadan and the emphasis on community and collective energy in certain influencer narratives demonstrate that digital fitness culture in Turkey operates through a hybrid structure in which dominant discursive patterns are negotiated with local cultural codes.

Taken together, the findings support a central argument: fitness influencer content on Instagram functions as a powerful discursive mechanism producing disciplined, self-regulating, and continuously optimizing subjects. This governance operates through normalization, visibility, and self-monitoring practices that encourage individuals to actively participate in their own regulation, making fitness influencer culture a contemporary site of subject formation in which the body becomes both the object and the medium of power relations.

Despite these contributions, the study has limitations. The analysis draws on a small sample of influencers over a specific time period, which may limit generalizability. Future research could expand the sample, include different platforms, or adopt comparative cross-cultural approaches to further explore the dynamics of digital fitness discourse.

In conclusion, fitness influencer practices in Turkey are not merely about promoting health or exercise but are deeply embedded in the production of subjectivity, the regulation of everyday life, and the reproduction of social norms. By bringing together Foucauldian theory and empirical analysis of social media content, the study demonstrates how power operates in contemporary digital cultures.

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