



## Perfect online self-presentation: DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE !

The relationship between perfectionism, perfectionistic online self-presentation and depression among French speaking African social media users

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### Abstract

Drawing from cross-sectional survey data, this study examined whether perfectionism relates with perfectionistic online self-presentation that in turn relates to depression. Additionally, we also examined whether differences exists between social media users and influencers. In total, ( $N = 789$ ) social media users from French speaking sub-Saharan Africa, among which ( $N = 109$ ) influencers, answered a self-administered online questionnaire distributed on Facebook and Twitter. The findings showed that perfectionism predicted perfectionistic online self-presentation and depression, but that perfectionistic online self-presentation only marginally mediated the relation between perfectionism and depression. Deeper analysis revealed that perfectionistic online self-presentation does predict physical depression, but not mental depression. No moderating effect of influencer status was observed. The study implications, limitations and further recommendations are discussed.

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## 1. Introduction

Contemporary social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat give social media users access to a wide range of features to edit, use filters and craft their persona when presenting themselves on social media. There are concerns that these new possibilities to redefine one's identity online might stimulate people to engage in perfectionistic online self-presentation (Casale, Fioravanti, Flett & Hewitt, 2015), which can be understood as the action of presenting oneself in a better light, in an attempt to get closer to one's ideal-self (Hewitt, Flett, Sherry, Habke, Parkin, Lam, & Stein, 2003). Social media users may, for example, excessively alter or enhance traits of their own personality or appearance when presenting themselves. As a result, individuals may feel bad about themselves because of the gap between their own appearance and the way their snapchat filter look like. There are concerns, for example, that the use of social media is connected to increased body image concerns (Fardouly and Vartanian, 2016), and may even lead to the development of new disorders such as *Snapchat dysmorphobia* (Ramphul & Mejias, 2018), where individuals strive to resemble their snapchat filters.

In this study, it is argued that one particular outcome of perfectionistic online self-presentation may be depression. Studies shown that social media use can lead users to feel dissatisfied with their life (e.g., Krasnova, Widjaja, Buxmann, Wenninger & Benbasat, 2015; Shakya & Christakis, 2017). Here, depression may arise from the perceived gap between one's reality and its virtual representation. This gap has already been proved to relate to negative psychological outcomes (Higgins, 1989). Hence, a first aim of this study is to examine whether perfectionistic online self-presentation predicts depression.

There is reason to assume that certain personality factors predispose individuals to present themselves more perfectly online. One such factor is perfectionism. This construct has

been difficult to define but according to the literature, perfectionists are usually concerned over their mistakes (Bums, 1980), rarely doubt about their own qualities (Bums, 1980; Hamachek, 1978), place a great value on their parents expectations (Patch, 1984) and are to a certain extent obsessed with order, precision and organization (Hollander, 1965). As perfectionism is a trait that pushes an individual to strive for perfection, it is likely that perfectionists will engage more in perfectionistic online self-presentation. The second aim of our study is to examine whether a perfectionistic online self-presentation mediates the relationship between perfectionism and depression. In other words, while the direct relationship between trait perfectionism and depression has been established in prior studies (e.g., Hewitt & Dyck 1986; Nelson, 1977) as well as the indirect effect (Mackinnon, Battista, Sherry, & Stewart, 2014), in this study it was anticipated that perfectionistic online self-presentation will partially mediate this relationship.

Finally, a third aim of this study is to focus on a particular group of social media users for whom the relationship between perfectionism and perfectionistic online self-presentation may be more outspoken: social media influencer. They are independent third party endorsers who can shape the audience by spreading their content on social media (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011). As social media influencers success rely to a great extent on their self-presentation, it could be assumed that the link between perfectionism and perfectionistic online self-presentation would be stronger for them. To this extent, a moderation effect of influencer status on the aforementioned relationship is expected.

***RQ: Does Perfectionistic online self-presentation mediates the relation between perfectionism and depression?***

This study is relevant for at least three reasons. First, it contributes to theoretical knowledge, by being among the first studies that investigates self-presentation online jointly with perfectionism and depression among social media users and influencers. Second, it focuses on a population that is understudied, namely that of French speaking African social media users. It is important to study the relationship between social media use and wellbeing in this population, as the issue of mental health is present, but still under considered. Finally, this study has practical relevance, as its insights may be valuable for clinicians treating heavy social media users with depression, and may raise awareness among the general public of the dangers of perfectionistic self-presentation strivings when applied online.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Online self-presentation

#### 2.1.1 Self-concept

Before we address why we assume a relationship between perfectionistic online self-presentation and depression, we first explain what online self-presentation is. To do that, we have to explore the notion of self-concept. Self-concept refers to how people conceptualize themselves, it is a reflexive activity (Gecas, 1982). Previous literature from Strauman & Higgins (1987) on the self-concept distinguished the domains to the standpoints of the self. With respect to the domains of the self, we can differentiate the “actual-self”, referring to the attributes yourself or someone else believes you *actually* possess, the “ideal-self”, referring to the attributes yourself or someone would like you to *ideally* possess, and the “ought self”, referring to the attributes that yourself or someone else believes you *should* possess. In this study, we will focus on the actual-self and the ideal-self. The standpoints of the self represent the two different point of views from which the self can be observed: from the viewpoint of oneself or the viewpoint of the other. Self-concept usually refers to the actual-self, as it is perceived from a person's own standpoint.

There may be a gap between how individuals perceive their actual-self and their ideal-self (Higgins, 1987). For example, someone may perceive himself as overweight in real life and may aspire to be slim. The experience of a discrepancy between how one perceives the actual-self and what one aspires as the ideal-self is called an Actual-Ideal self-discrepancy (Higgins & Strauman, 1985; Strauman & Higgins, 1987; Higgins, 1989). The aforementioned studies have also noted that such a self-discrepancy between one's actual and one's ideal self can result in an experience of emotional pain. The greater the discrepancy and the greater emotional distress

(Strauman & Higgins, 1987). One might be vulnerable to such distress because this particular discrepancy represent a psychological situation where individuals experience a nonattainment of their hopes and desires (Higgins, 1987). One example is given in a study by Bessenoff (2006) where women that were exposed to thin-ideal images of other women felt less satisfied with their own body, more depressed and also reported more negative moods and less self-esteem in comparison to women that were not exposed to the same images. This example clearly shows that the actual-ideal self-discrepancy is a feeling that can be prompted by the exposure to ideal selves that in turns reminds individuals that they fail to reach such ideal state. In the next sections we first discuss how people engage in self-presentation, and why they strive to present themselves perfectly, and then how this mechanism is exacerbated with the phenomenon of social media.

### ***2.1.2 Self-presentation and ideal self-presentation***

Individuals constantly engage in self-presentation to control the ways they are perceived by others (Ajzen, 2002). Self-presentation as a concept falls under the umbrella term of impression management (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). In 1959, Goffman defined self-presentation in terms of frontstage and backstage behavior. Frontstage self-presentation refers to a performance of the self that is bound in time and space and that occurs in front of a defined audience – for example, a lecturer who is teaching a class performs the role of teacher. Backstage self-presentation refers to when a person does not have to perform in front of an audience - for example, when the lecturer retreats to his/her office where he/she is alone and unobserved.

Goffman (1959) observed that people in the frontstage typically perform a persona that is carefully crafted to convey or manage a certain impression, while in the backstage they perform a more intimate and realistic persona. Social interactions and the external environment seems to



be a key driver for this difference in self-presentation. It is argued that when individuals manage their behaviors or personas, they engage in impression management because of their need to belong (Baumeister, 2012; Leary & Baumeister, 2017), which implies that they desire to be part of a group, to be accepted. Such desire, according to Leary and Baumeister (2017) is a powerful and pervasive motivation, and such motivation could lead certain individuals to strive for a more enhanced self-presentation.

While self-presentation as a concept was originally developed in the context of face-to-face interactions, it still remains relevant in our contemporary networked societies (McLoughlin, & Lee, 2008) and especially with social media. People still feel the need to manage their self-presentation because of new characteristics proper to social media that are discussed in the next section.

### ***2.1.3 Online Self-presentation***

Information and communication technologies have reshaped our societies, among others by altering the way individuals relate or communicate with each other (Castells & Cardoso, 2006). One essential aspect in which they have shaped how individuals communicate with each other, is that they have introduced new ways of presenting oneself in the online world. It is relevant to introduce the concept of technological affordances here, to explain the new ways in which people can present themselves in online environments. Gaver (1991) said that technological features can constrain and enable human actions. These abilities of the technology are referred to as “technological affordances” (Greeno, 1994). One dominant technological affordance of contemporary social media environments is ‘editability’ (Walther, 2007).

Editability refers to the extent to which users can ‘edit’ content (e.g., text or image) before (and sometimes after) posting. The editability affordance is visible in the ample features

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of social media platforms via which users can carefully craft and enhance their self-presentation. The editability affordance is realized by the fact that a sender can use as much time as needed to prepare the content before posting it. This unlimited time allows a person to 'improve' the content and to get closer to perfection. Lastly, being in different locations while communicating online can suppress situational cues about a message. This lack of cues might lead the receiver to positive bias when interpreting a message (Walther, 2007). For example, one might only focus on the positive cues conveyed by a picture or an online post without knowing the hassle or the pain that such content implied. Thus, the editability affordance provides greater opportunities for enhanced and idealized self-presentation, and can be employed by every social media users. This enables social media users a greater control over their own image online, their own self-presentation.

Other features of online communication might reinforce the increasing need for ideal self-presentation. According to Hogan's (2010) work on self-presentation online, the conception of self-presentation defined by Goffman is outdated when applied to social media. Hogan (2010) proposed to distinguish the performances (Goffman, 1959) from the exhibitions. Goffman's performance was defined in terms of place, time and audience. While synchronous platforms, namely the ones that enable a real time conversation between sender and receiver (instant text messages, audio or video chat) allow users to engage in a performance in the sense of Goffman's (1959), asynchronous social media platforms that consists in platforms where senders and receivers of a message do not interact together in real time (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram...) differs as they are free from space, time and different audiences collapse together in one. As the audience is broader online and across different locations, the need for ideal self-presentation might be stronger. To the same extent, Hogan (2010) argued that today, an individual's timeline

on an asynchronous social media resembles more a list of artifacts from everyday life than a performance. Users do not show the whole performance anymore, but select highlights to display and thus engage in impression management and online boundary management. For example Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard and Berg (2013) followed by Batenburg and Bartels (2017) showed that people engage in online boundaries management strategies to manage respect and liking from their peers when their private and professional world collapse online. It shows that people are willing to thoroughly select who is allowed to view their content online, and who is not. Overall social media lead users to progressively engage in a selective self-presentation where they showcase highlights rather than the whole performance, thus filtering out cues that do not align with their ideal self-presentation. As we will argue below, the discrepancy between the actual-self and the ideal-self may become visible in the way people present themselves online.

The extant research on online self-presentation suggests that there are some aspects of people's personalities that may predispose them to engage in impression management in an enhancing or idealized fashion. Personality traits such as self-monitoring, machiavellism and affinity seeking were found to predict concerns for secondary goals that in turn predicted the use of self-presentation tactics on Facebook (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011). Other personality traits such as narcissism and self-objectification were found to predict the extent to which people edit the pictures they post online (Fox & Rooney, 2014), and low conscientiousness and high neuroticism predicted the use of self-presentation behaviors on Facebook (Seidman, 2012). These persons' enhanced self-presentations appear to become more of a cultural phenomenon with the widespread use of smartphones, social media, filters and other self-presentation related embedded options (Hogan, 2010). The next section of this framework will discuss one such

personality aspect, namely perfectionism, as a potential antecedent for engaging in perfectionistic online self-presentation.

## **2.2 Perfectionism**

Perfectionism can be understood as a personality trait characterized by “high standards of performance which are accompanied by tendencies for overly critical evaluations of one's own behavior” (Frost, Marten, Lahart & Rosenblate, 1990, p.2). Compared to non-perfectionists, perfectionists are more concerned over making mistakes, have higher personal standards, have typically dealt with greater parental expectations and criticisms, experience greater doubt about their actions, and show greater organization in their daily life and tasks (Frost et al., 1990).

Perfectionism is considered a stable personality trait.

Although an ostentatious manifestation of perfectionism might reflect an overall tendency to do things perfectly, previous studies acknowledged the fact that perfectionism signify striving to reach high expectations (Frost et al., 1990). Perfectionists perceive a distorted reality in which their goals are rarely entirely met. Previous studies associate perfectionism with irrational beliefs (Ellis, 2002). Irrational beliefs usually result from a perceived distortion of the environment and the way it influences a person's thinking (Nelson, 1977). Perfectionists might have internalized a misrepresented reality where they perceive themselves as less than what they really are and that makes them strive for perfection in an attempt for compensation.

The link between perfectionism and irrational belief is well described in Hamachek (1978)'s discussion on normal and neurotic perfectionists: While a normal perfectionist is someone who sets high standards for himself but feels free to derogate to these goals when the situation allows to do so, neurotic perfectionists hardly tolerate the possibility to make mistakes.

Neurotic perfectionists are never satisfied because they always focus on negative aspects. They are motivated by the fear of failure - while normal perfectionists focus on how to do things right and on their own strengths. Terry-Short, Owens, Slade and Dewey (1995) thus made a distinction between *positive perfectionism*, which is driven by the achievement of positive outcomes and *negative perfectionism*, which is a function of avoidance of negative consequences.

Hewitt et al. (2003) showed that expressing perfectionism in self-presentation could be understood as a maladaptive self-representational style. Sherry, Hewitt, Besser, Flett, and Klein, (2006) showed that perfectionism was a personality trait found among machiavellian individuals and such individuals were more likely to engage in self-presentation in response to perfectionistic demands. When perfectionists are concerned about societal expectations, they are also more likely to self-handicap in public, but not in private (Hobden & Pliner, 1995). Such findings indicate that perfectionists are concerned about impression management and are likely to engage in self-presentation. The more perfectionist a person is, the more that person will strive to do things perfectly, and these studies all showed that individuals with great levels of perfectionism are prone to perfectionistic self-presentation in general. This may also apply to online self-presentation. The editability of social media platforms enables people to easily suppress certain elements in their self-presentation that they are unwilling to disclose. As perfectionists are known to have high standards, and to be very critical about their own actions, performances and behaviors (Frost et al., 1990), perfectionists may be more likely to rely on the editability affordance of social media platforms to present themselves ideally online.

In sum, it is important to point out that social media provide *all* users the tools to enhance their self-presentation, which according to some results in a general increase of online self-

presentation standards (Hogan, 2010). However, on top of this general tendency, users likely differ in the extent to which they possess perfectionism as a trait, and this personality trait may predict the extent to which they present themselves ideally online. Hence, we expect that:

**H1:** Trait perfectionism positively predicts perfectionistic online self-presentation.

### 2.3 Depression

Idealized online self-presentation may not be without consequences; studies suggest that it relates to psychological distress (Besser, Flett & Hewitt, 2010).

Previous study on self-presentation have already pointed out its detrimental effect on wellbeing. Among them, studies have shown that perfectionistic self-presentation relates to social anxiety among youths (Flett, Coulter, & Hewitt, 2012), and anxiety among children (Hewitt, Blasberg, Flett, Besser, Sherry, Caelian ... & Birch, 2011) and adults (Hewitt et al., 2003; Mackinnon et al., 2014). Besides anxiety, studies have also shown evidence for a link with depression among children and adolescents (Hewitt et al., 2011), but also adults (Hewitt et al., 2003). Further investigations revealed that the different dimensions of perfectionistic self-presentation, namely perfectionistic self-promotion, non-disclosure of imperfection and non-display of imperfection have also been found to all relate to different extent with anxiety and depression (Hewitt, Habke, Lee-Baggle, Sherry, & Flett, 2008). People displaying high perfectionistic self-presentations have also been found to be more vulnerable to distress in general, and depression more particularly (Besser et al., 2010). The association with anxiety and depression have been explained by the fact that individuals will not be able to keep their perfect mask indefinitely and will have to display signs of imperfection at some point, and this could influence others approval and acceptance (Hewitt et al., 2003).

Perfectionistic self-presentation relates to depression mostly because it is a physical manifestation of trait perfectionism, and a number of studies also shown the impact of such personality trait on depression. First, among children, Hewitt et al (2002) found that the dimensions of perfectionism, namely self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism both relates to depression and anxiety. He also found that when self-oriented perfectionism interacts with social stress, it could predict anxiety. On the other hand, when it interacts with achievement, stress and social stress, it could predict depression. Others variables such as self-silencing were proved to relates to depression when in interaction with perfectionism (Flett, Besser, Hewitt, & Davis, 2007). A study from Hewitt and Dyck (1986) revealed that perfectionist behaviors are concomitant of depression, but another one exposed that this relation could also happen over time (Hewitt, Flett & Ediger, 1996).

While most studies showed the direct effect of perfectionism and perfectionistic self-presentation on depression, there is one that attempted to prove the indirect effect of perfectionism through perfectionistic self-presentation. A three waves study, conducted over a period of 130 days by Mackinnon and Sherry (2012) found evidence for the mediating effect of perfectionistic self-presentation between perfectionistic concerns and subjective wellbeing, but not for perfectionistic strivings.

A pertinent question is whether perfectionistic *online* self-presentation mediates the relationship between perfectionism and depression. Perfectionistic self-presentation might induce depression because of one's relation to the self and/or the peer group: When individuals present themselves in a perfectionistic way, they engage in perfectionistic self-promotion (Hewitt et al., 2003) and thus, materialize a version of themselves that tends toward their ideal-self (Hogan, 2010). This new, enhanced version of the self, however, might remind the individual of the

discrepancy (Higgins, 1987) between its real persona and the persona displayed online. Based on Higgins (1987)'s work on self-discrepancies, it could be argued that the constant awareness of such gap results in negative psychological outcomes. This is because the perceived discrepancy between the actual-self and the ideal-self could induce emotional pain as a person realizes again and again that he/she failed to reach this ideal state. Such emotional pain includes dejection-related emotions, unfulfilled desires and frustration (Higgins, 1987) absence of positive outcomes, disappointment, and sadness (Strauman & Higgins, 1987).

Based on this line of reasoning and on the previous studies aforementioned, we propose the two following hypothesis.

**H2a:** Perfectionistic online self-presentation positively predicts symptoms of depression

**H2b:** Perfectionistic online self-presentation partially mediates the relationship between trait perfectionism and symptoms of depression

## **2.4 The moderating role of Influencer status**

One particular category of internet users that might be prone to engage in an ideal online self-presentation is that of social media influencers. According to Freberg et al. (2011), a social media influencer “represents a new type of independent third party endorser who shapes audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media”. They are of many types and treat different topics. On social media, artists, bloggers, curators, businessmen and even more could all be considered social media influencers due to the fact that their activity depends to a great extent on their audience. Because social media influencers rely on their audience to pursue their online activity, they might be prompted to engage above-average in



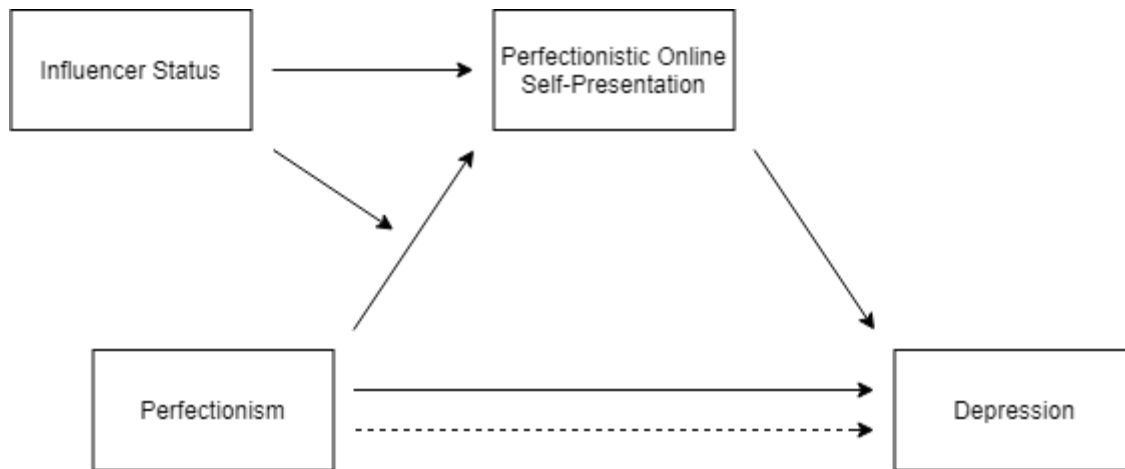
ideal online self-presentation in order to appear competent and likeable to the audience, seek its social approval and ensure the success of their activity (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005).

Counter to the general opinion, social media influencers success is not solely defined by the size of their audience but more by the level of engagement of their online community (Romero, Galuba, Asur, & Huberman, 2011; Cha, Haddadi, Benevenuto, & Gummadi, 2010). Following this logic, it becomes obvious that influencers are constantly under pressure to stimulate their community by providing engaging content. Such reason could justify perfectionistic strivings and concerns among influencers. In order to succeed in keeping their audience engaged, they might engage to a greater extent in online self-disclosure, and such self-disclosure may be more likely to be enhanced.

We can say that being an influencer might place one in a position where he/she has to strive for a certain form of perfection in order to keep its activity alive. Such perfection could materializes in a physical form in their self-presentation online, thus making them striving for a perfect image. Among perfectionists, influencers could be expected to strive to a greater extent in perfectionistic online self-presentation.

Influencers thus may be more prone to engage in perfectionistic online self-presentation for reasons such as gaining in popularity, promoting their activity, generating income, or simply continuing to exist on the internet. Based on the idea that an influencer is a particular social media user driven by the popularity of its online activity, we could propose the following hypothesis.

**H3:** The relation between perfectionism and perfectionistic online self-presentation is moderated by influencer status, such as the relation is stronger for influencers.



*Figure 1.* Conceptual model. This figure illustrates the underlying design of this study

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Participants

The target group for this study was French speaking social media users from African countries. Data were collected with a self-administered cross-sectional survey distributed with a snowball sampling method on mainly Facebook and Twitter. The Facebook post containing the link to the questionnaire was shared 300 times and commented on 100 times, while on Twitter, the main tweet of the thread designed to spread the questionnaire was seen more than 21500 times and yielded more than 1000 engagements. In total, 1178 individuals took the survey. Among these individuals we counted a total of 31 nationalities. After removing incomplete answers the sample size was 875 respondents. As this study focuses on African respondents only, the 79 non-Africans participants were removed. The final sample thus consisted of 789 respondents. Among those, 24 African nationalities were present, with Benin, Cameroon, Ivory Coast and Togo counting the largest numbers of respondents. In total, 61.6% of the respondents were female, 37.7% were male and 7 participants did not wish to disclose their gender – given that these were few and that we wished to include gender into our analyses as a control variable, these individuals were excluded from the analyses. The mean age of participants was 25 years old ( $M = 25.31$ ,  $SD = 5.00$ ,  $Median = 25.00$ ) and 87.4% of the respondents achieved at least a university degree level or higher. All participants reported using at least one social media platform at least once per week.

### 3.2 Measures

#### *Perfectionism*

Perfectionism was assessed using a scale drawn from previous work of Frost et al. (1990) and Hewitt and Flett (1991). The 12 items perfectionism scale developed for this study consisted of 9 items retrieved from Frost et al. (1990), two from Hewitt and Flett (1991), and one newly created item. The 12 items measured four aspects of perfectionism that are agreed upon in the literature, namely having high personal standards, being concerned over making mistakes, having dealt with high parental expectations and having dealt with parental criticisms. Examples of such items are: “I set higher goals than most people”, “I should be upset if I make a mistake”, “My parents have expected excellence from me” and “I rarely felt like I could meet my parents’ standards”. Overall, the reliability analysis showed a Cronbach alpha of .64, and even if this value is below the required .70, we agreed to proceed further analysis as perfectionism is defined as a concept that is made of different dimensions. The items were answered using a 5 points Likert scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. The complete list of items, the sources and the original items wordings associated can be found in Table 1.

*Table 1.* Perfectionism scale items, original wordings and original scales associated

Perfectionism Scale items
<p>I expect to perform better than most people in my daily tasks  <i>Retrieved from Frost et al., (1990) - I expect higher performance in my daily tasks than most people</i></p> <p>I set higher goals than most people.  <i>Retrieved from Frost et al., (1990)</i></p> <p>I do not aim for perfection in my work  <i>Retrieved from Hewitt &amp; Flett (1991) - I never aim for perfection in my work</i></p>

It is important to me that I be thoroughly competent in everything I do.

*Retrieved from Frost et al., (1990)*

The fewer mistakes I make, the more people will like me

*Retrieved from Frost et al., (1990)*

I should be upset if I make a mistake.

*Retrieved from Frost et al., (1990)*

People will probably think less of me if I make a mistake

*Retrieved from Frost et al., (1990)*

If I do not do well all the time, people will not respect me.

*Retrieved from Frost et al., (1990)*

My parents have expected excellence from me

*Retrieved from Frost et al., (1990)*

My parents readily accepted that I could make a mistake

*Inspired from Hewitt & Flett (1991) - Those around me readily accept that I can make mistakes too*

My parents did not accept that I receive bad or below-average grades

*Retrieved from Frost et al., (1990) - As a child I was punished for doing things less than perfect*

I rarely felt like I could reach my parents standards

*Retrieved from Frost et al., (1990) - I never felt like I could meet my parents standards*

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### ***Perfectionistic online self-presentation***

The perfectionistic online self-presentation scale in this study was derived by using three items from the Perfectionistic Self-presentation scale developed by Hewitt et al. (2003) and five items from the Perfectionistic self-presentation scale - Junior form developed by Hewitt et al. (2011). Exemplary items are namely “I strive to look perfect to others”, “I don’t really care about being perfectly groomed” and “It is okay to admit mistakes to others”. All 8 items were adapted to reflect *online* self-presentation on social media platforms, and covered two aspects of perfectionistic self-presentation, namely the display of perfection, and the non-disclosure of

imperfection. Further analysis showed a Cronbach alpha of .78 indicating that the scale is reliable. The items were answered using the same 5 points Likert scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. The complete list of items, sources and original items wordings corresponding can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Perfectionistic online self-presentation scale items, original wordings and original scales associated

Perfectionistic Online Self-Presentation Scale items
I always have to look as good as I can on social media <i>Retrieved from Hewitt et al., (2011) - I always have to look as good as I can</i>
I have to look like I always do things perfectly on social media <i>Retrieved from Hewitt et al., (2011) - I have to look like I always do things perfectly</i>
I strive to be perfect on social media <i>Retrieved from Hewitt et al., (2003) - I strive to look perfect to others</i>
I don't care about being perfect on social media <i>Retrieved from Hewitt et al., (2003) - I don't really care about being perfectly groomed</i>
I think a lot about mistakes that I have made on social media <i>Retrieved from Hewitt et al., (2011) - I think a lot about mistakes that I have made in front of other people</i>
I feel bad about myself when I don't look perfect on social media <i>Retrieved from Hewitt et al., (2011) - I feel bad about myself when i make mistakes in front of other people</i>
I should always keep my problems away from social media <i>Retrieved from Hewitt et al., (2011) - I should always keep my problems secrets</i>
I think it is okay to admit a mistakes on social media <i>Retrieved from Hewitt et al., (2003) - It is okay to admit mistakes to others</i>

### *Depression*

Depression here refers to the display of symptoms of a mild or moody depression. The depression scale used in this study was constructed drawing from the Carroll rating scale for depression I (Carroll, Feinberg, Smouse, Rawson, & Greden, 1981) and the Radloff scale for depression (Radloff, 1977). The scale was made of 12 items that together assessed mental but also physical symptoms of depression. All item questions of the depression scale referred to the two previous weeks. Mental symptoms of depression referred to aspects such as moodiness and anxiety and were assessed with items such as “I was down” or “I was worried”. Physical symptoms of depression concerned sleep-related issues and retardation and were made of items such as “I slept restless” and “I felt without energy”. A factor analysis confirmed that the 12 items clustered together in two factors reflecting either the mental, either the physical depression. Table 7 displaying the factor loadings can be found under appendix 2. These factors together explain 60% of the total variance; *KMO's* = .91 and Bartlett's test ( $p < .001$ ) was significant. We combined the mental and physical depression items for our primary analyses. Overall the combined depression scale yielded a Cronbach alpha of .90 indicating a good reliability of the scale. Further analyses established the reliability of the subscales with mental depression yielding a Cronbach alpha of .88 and physical depression, a Cronbach alpha value of .84. These 12 items were answered using the same 5 points Likert scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. A list of items, with sources and original items wordings can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Depression scale items, original wordings and original scales associated

Depression scale items
I was down <i>Retrieved from Radloff (1977) - I felt depressed</i>
I had a bad mood <i>Retrieved from Carroll et al., (1981) - I feel in good spirits</i>
I felt sad <i>Retrieved from Radloff (1977)</i>
I was worried <i>Retrieved from Radloff (1977) - I felt fearful</i>
I found it difficult to focus <i>Retrieved from Carroll et al., (1981) - I can concentrate easily when reading the papers</i>
I was frustrated <i>Retrieved from Radloff (1977) - I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me</i>
I had troubles getting asleep <i>Retrieved from Carroll et al., (1981) - I take longer than usual to fall asleep at night</i>
I slept restless <i>Retrieved from Radloff (1977) - My sleep was restless</i>
I lied awake often <i>Retrieved from Carroll et al., (1981) - I wake up often in the middle of the night</i>
I felt without energy <i>Inspired from Carroll et al., (1981) "Retardation" construct</i>
I felt slow and dull <i>Retrieved from Carroll et al., (1981) - I am so slowed down that I need help with bathing and dressing</i>
I could not get going <i>Retrieved from Radloff (1977)</i>



### *Influencer status*

A four questions instrument assessed whether participants fall into the criteria defining social media influencers. A first question, namely “What is the size of your online community?” aimed at assessing the number of friends and followers of participants. A threshold value of 4000 followers has been selected according to the targeted environment and the African online francophone environment, thus assessing the credibility of such influencers. A skip logic routed respondents that provided a number below 4000 directly to the next section of the questionnaire as they were not eligible for the three other questions of the set. In total, ( $N = 230$ ) participants reported to have a community equal or above 4000 followers. On average, such participants reported to have a community of 7439 followers and friends on social media ( $M = 7439.13$ ,  $SD = 3674.92$ ). A second item question “Do you exert an activity online?” aimed at distinguishing participants that are present on social media for personal purposes only, from the ones that run an activity that justify their online community. Such activity could be running a blog, a business that relies on social media, being an artist and even more. Responding “no” to this question routed the participants to the next section of the questionnaire. Overall, ( $N = 118$ ) participants reported to exert an activity online. The third question “Does this activity requires you to disclose yourself?” aimed to know whether the participant while exercising its online activity was displaying content that depicts personal opinions or details. Such disclosure could be done in the form of texts, media content, opinions or any other medium that transcribes one’s point of view, opinion or personality. For this question, ( $N = 86$ ) respondents reported to disclose themselves for the purpose of their online activity. The last question of the set “Does this activity generate income?” was designed to know whether this online activity was profitable or not. It is

well known that certain influencers generate incomes with their activity, and it is here assumed that a financial retribution might be a sufficient pressure to push such influencers to engage in a more ideal self-presentation to get the approval of their audiences and in turn ensure the profitability of their activities. In total, ( $N = 75$ ) respondents declared to earn a revenue through this activity. A final check question was added at the end of the set in order to confirm the influencer status of a participants, they were directly asked “Are you an online social media influencer?” to give them the opportunity to provide the researcher a confirmation about their status. In total, ( $N = 57$ ) participants reported to be social media influencers. Finally, after inspection of the responses, an overall score was computed and it appeared that ( $N = 109$ ) participants verified minimum three of the four conditions to be considered online social media influencers and were then kept for further analyses.

As the target group for this study consists of French speaking respondents, the present questionnaire was translated from English into French. A translation of the scales items can be found under appendix 1.

### **3.3 Procedure**

The questionnaire was distributed on social media to the participants via viral posts on Facebook and Twitter mainly. After clicking on the survey link, participants read a brief introduction that provided information on the study, ensured anonymity and confidentiality of data handling, and mentioned that by continuing, they agreed to have been informed sufficiently and that they were willing to participate in the study. Demographic questions were then asked, followed by the questions on perfectionism, the influencer status, the perfectionistic online self-presentation and

depression. At the end of the survey, participants were thanked, and an email address was provided for further inquiries.

### **3.4 Analyses**

In order to understand the relation between the main constructs of the study, a moderated mediation model analysis (Hayes, 2012) was performed with the PROCESS Macro in SPSS. Model 7 was used for the analysis with perfectionism as independent variable (X), perfectionistic online self-presentation as mediator (M), depression as independent variable (Y) and the influencer status as moderator (W). Age, gender and educational level were added as covariates.

#### 4. Results

The descriptive information with respect to the measures can be found in Table 4. The scores for perfectionism and depression on average are slightly above the neutral value (3 = neither agree nor disagree) while the ones regarding perfectionistic online self-presentation are below the neutral value. It is important to remind that a higher score indicates a higher degree of perfectionism, perfectionistic online self-presentation and depression. It is also worth noting that while perfectionism hardly register extreme score values as minimum and maximum, perfectionistic online self-presentation minimum is the lowest possible and the maximum is close to the highest value of the scale. Depression's minimum and maximum scores both coincides with the extremes values of the provided response scale.

*Table 4.* Descriptive statistics for the measures of perfectionism, perfectionistic online self-presentation and depression

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
<b>Predictor variables</b>					
Perfectionism	789	3.43	.48	1.83	4.75
Perfectionistic Online Self-Presentation	789	2.80	.73	1.00	4.88
Depression	789	3.31	.85	1.00	5.00

The first hypothesis guiding this study states that trait perfectionism positively predicts perfectionistic online self-presentation. The results showed a significant, positive relationship

between perfectionism and perfectionistic online self-presentation ( $b = .52, p < .001$ ). This result implies that the more perfectionist a person is, the more this person will engage in perfectionistic self-presentation on social media. These findings thus confirm the first hypothesis **H1**.

With respect to the control variables, it is relevant to note that there was also a negative main effect of age on perfectionistic online self-presentation ( $b = -.013, p = .007$ ): older individuals engage less in perfectionistic online self-presentation than younger individuals. Gender also predicted perfectionistic online self-presentation ( $b = -.24, p < .001$ ): Interestingly, men reported engaging more in perfectionistic online self-presentation than women. No relation between educational level and perfectionistic online self-presentation ( $b = -.01, p = .78$ ) was found.

The second hypothesis stated that perfectionistic online self-presentation is a positive predictor of depression (H2a), and thus partially mediates the relationship between trait perfectionism and depression (H2b). The model showed a significant direct relationship between perfectionistic online self-presentation and depression ( $b = .09, p = .045$ ), thus supporting the hypothesis **H2a**, although we should note that the p-value can be considered as marginally significant.

With respect to the mediation analysis, a significant effect of perfectionism on depression through perfectionistic online self-presentation has been found. The 95% confidence interval surrounding the indirect effect of perfectionistic online self-presentation did not span zero for influencers  $b = .06, CI [.00; .12]$  and non-influencers  $b = .04, CI [.00; .09]$  which indicates a significant indirect effect. Such results provide support for **H2b** stating that perfectionistic online self-presentation marginally mediates the relation between perfectionism and depression.

With respect to the control variables, we found that age ( $b = -.03, p < .001$ ) and gender ( $b = .40, p < .001$ ) directly predicted depression, with older and female individuals reporting more depressive symptoms than younger and male individuals.

The final hypothesis stated that the relationship between perfectionism and perfectionistic online self-presentation would be moderated by the influencer status. The results of the moderation analysis showed no significant relationship direct between influencer status and perfectionistic online self-presentation ( $b = -.08, p = .27$ ), and no moderation effect of influencer status on the relation between perfectionism and perfectionistic online self-presentation ( $b = -.12, p = .40$ ). These findings do not support the third hypothesis **H3**: influencer status does not affect the extent to which an individual engages in perfectionistic online self-presentation.

The results are summarized in Figure 2 and in Tables 5 and 6.

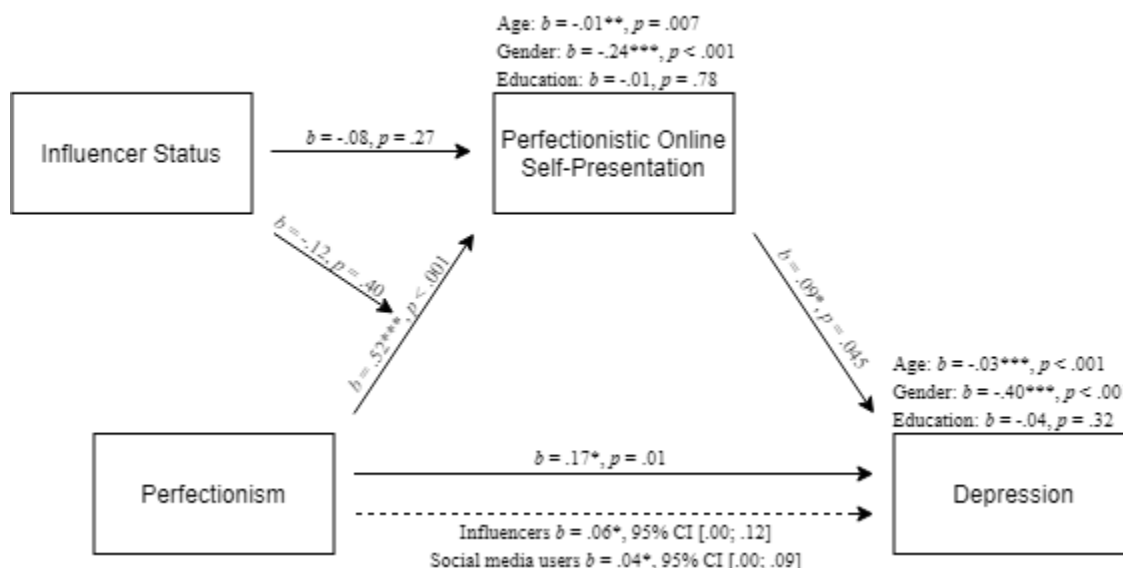


Figure 2. Results of the moderated mediation main model with age, gender and educational level as covariates

Table 5. Moderation mediation analysis - Direct effects on perfectionistic online self-presentation

Antecedent	Perfectionistic Online Self-Presentation					
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Constant	3.58	.18	19.35	.00	3.21	3.94
Perfectionism	.52***	.05	10.38	.00	.43	.62
Influencer	-.08	.07	-1.11	.27	-.22	.06
Interaction	-.12	.14	-.84	.40	-.39	.16
Age	-.01**	.01	-2.69	.01	-.02	-.00
Education	-.01	.04	-.28	.78	-.08	.06
Gender	-.24***	.05	-4.82	.00	-.34	-.14

$R^2 = .18***$   
 $F(6, 782) = 28.26, p < .001$

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 6. Moderation mediation analysis - Direct effects on depression

Antecedent	Depression					
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Constant	3.27	.28	11.81	.00	2.73	3.81
Perfectionism	.17*	.07	2.53	.01	.04	.30
Perfectionistic online self-presentation	.09*	.04	2.01	.05	.00	.17

Age	-.03***	.01	-4.31	.00	-.04	-.01
Education	-.04	.04	-1.00	.32	-.13	.04
Gender	.40***	.06	6.48	.00	.28	.53

$$R^2 = .09***$$

$$F(5, 783) = 14.59, p < .001$$

---

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Given that a factor analysis of depression separated mental depression from physical depression, we explored in a further analysis whether the marginal significant relationship between perfectionistic online self-presentation and depression may be the result of a difference in the strength of the relationship with mental versus physical depression.

When the Mental depression subscale was considered, the relationship between perfectionistic online self-presentation and depression disappeared ( $b = .04, p = .43$ ). However, when the physical depression subscale was considered, the relation between perfectionistic online self-presentation and physical depression reached greater significance ( $b = .13, p = .005$ ), showing a mediation effect of perfectionistic online self-presentation.

The mediation analysis, confirmed these results. While the 95% confidence intervals about mental depression did cross zero for both influencers  $b = .02$ , CI  $[-.04; .10]$  and non-influencers  $b = .02$ , CI  $[-.03; .07]$ , the same confidence intervals did not traverse zero when the physical depression scale was considered for influencers  $b = .00$ , CI  $[-.02; .17]$  and non-influencers  $b = .07$ , CI  $[-.02; .12]$ .

Moreover, in the model with physical depression, including this mediator led the relationship between trait perfectionism and physical depression to become non-significant ( $b = .12, p = .12$ ), suggesting not just a partial, but a full mediation effect for physical depression. It



is worthwhile to also note that the relationship between gender and depression is positive for mental depression (i.e., females reported greater mental depression symptoms), but negative for physical depression (i.e., males reported greater physical depression symptoms).

Results are shown in Figures 3 and 4. The full results regarding the direct effects of the moderated mediation analyses can be found in appendix 2 (cf. Tables 8 and 9 with respect to mental depression, and Tables 10 and 11 with respect to physical depression).

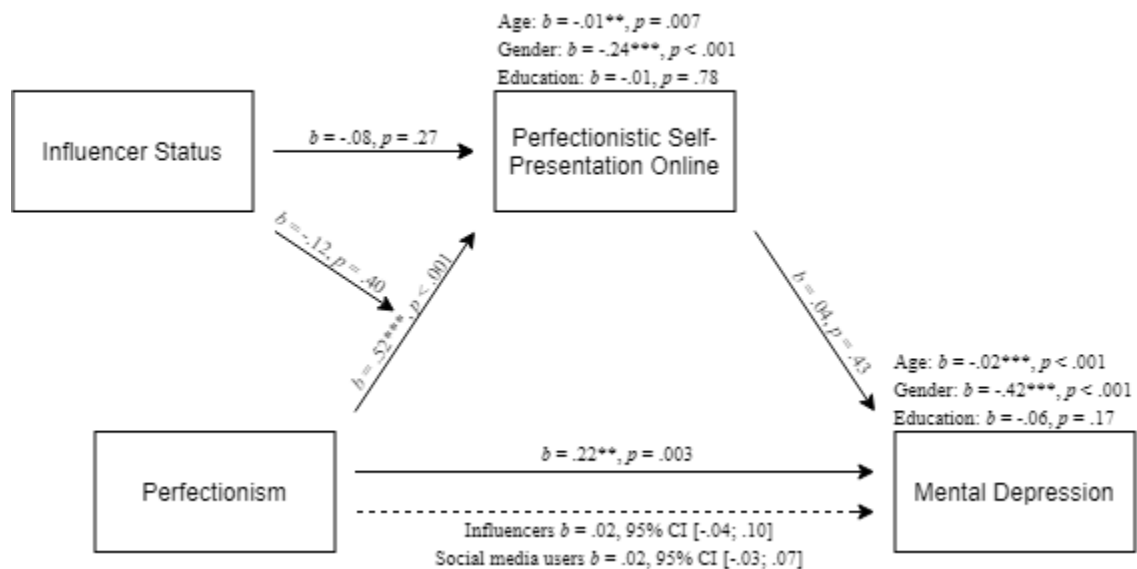


Figure 3. Results of the moderated mediation model with mental depression including age, gender and educational level as covariates

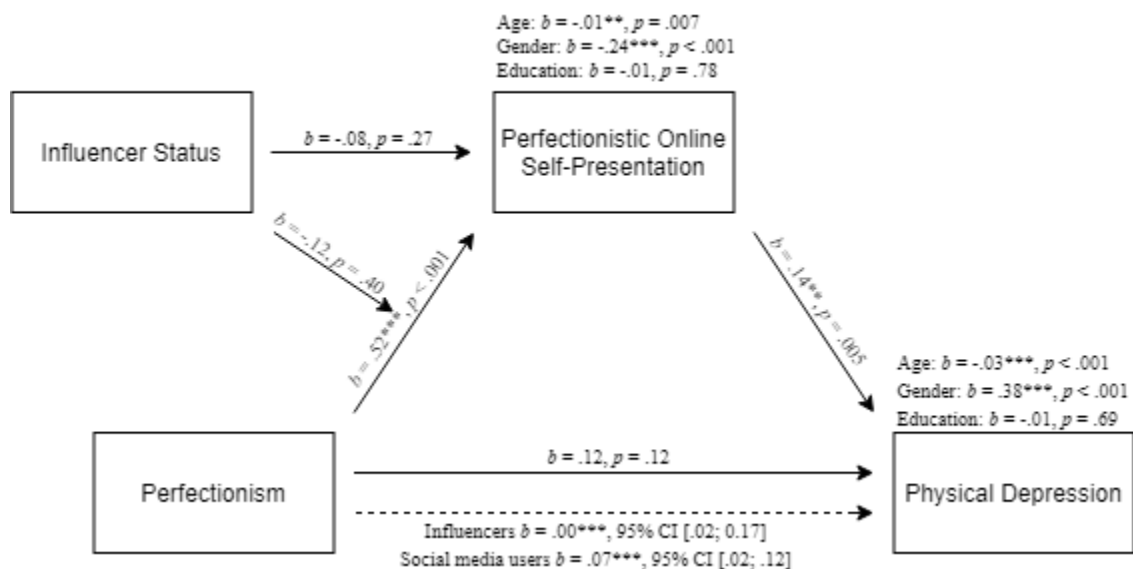


Figure 4. Results of the moderated mediation model with physical depression including age, gender and educational level as covariates

Overall, based on the results, we first found confirmation for H1 such that the more perfectionists engage more in perfectionistic online self-presentation. We then found support for H2a, the more perfectionistic online self-presentation, and the more depression. We also found that perfectionistic online self-presentation marginally mediates the relation between perfectionism and depression thus providing support for H2b. Such mediation fully occurs when considering physical depression and disappears entirely in the case of mental depression. Finally we did not find support for H3 as being an influencer does not affect the strength of the relationship between perfectionism and perfectionistic online self-presentation.

## 5. Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the mediating role of perfectionistic online self-presentation in the relationship between perfectionism and depression among French speaking African social media users. Additionally, it explored the moderating effect of being an influencer on the relationship between perfectionism and perfectionistic online self-presentation.

The results supported our expectation that the more perfectionist individuals are, the more likely they are to present themselves online in a perfectionistic fashion (**H1**). This finding goes in line with the findings from previous studies on perfectionism showing that perfectionists are striving for greater performance in everyday life (Stoeber & Kersting, 2007; Stoeber & Rambow, 2007). When presenting themselves, perfectionists are more likely to engage in perfectionistic self-promotion, as well as to not disclose their imperfection (Hewitt et al., 2003; Hewitt et al., 2011). Such non-disclosure of imperfection might originate from the fact that perfectionists are more subject to critical self-evaluations and might present a greater concern over mistakes (Frost et al., 1990). While these former studies have established the relationship between perfectionism and perfect self-presentation in the offline world, this study is among the first to identify that this pattern also extends to the online world.

With respect to the hypothesized relationship between perfectionistic online self-presentation and depression (**H2a** and **H2b**), the present study found support for a positive, albeit weak relationship. These results align with previous studies that link perfectionistic self-presentation to psychological distress (Hewitt et al., 2008), social anxiety (Mackinnon et al., 2014; Flett et al., 2012) and depression (Hewitt et al., 2003)

Interestingly, however, when differentiating between mental and physical depression, we found no relation between perfectionistic online self-presentation and symptoms of mental depression. We assumed that perfectionistic online self-presentation could be understood as a way to get closer to one's ideal-self, but that - once this ideal-self was materialized online - it would make the individual constantly aware of the gap between its actual-self and its ideal-self, activating the actual-ideal self-discrepancy (Higgins & Strauman, 1985; Strauman & Higgins, 1987; Higgins, 1989), which in turn causes psychological distress in the form of frustration, sadness and dejection-related emotions (Higgins, 1987; Strauman & Higgins, 1987).

Such result seemed to imply that presenting oneself in a perfect fashion online might not be a sufficient reason to elicit actual and ideal self-discrepancy. Even with an enhanced version of the self materialized online, individuals might not necessarily suffer from the comparison between their actual and their ideal selves online. On the other hand, the correlation with physical depression indicates that engaging in perfectionistic online self-presentation might be a tiresome enterprise. As we previously agreed that such activity might be time consuming because the editability affordance lends social media users more time to craft their messages, it seems logical to say that users spend more time on social media. These findings are in line with the literature associating the excessive social media use and sleep related issues (Shochat, Flint-Bretler & Tzischinsky, 2010; Espinoza & Juvonen, 2011). This finding is also in line with previous studies associating the time spent on social media directly (Twenge, Joiner, Rogers & Martin, 2018) to depression, and also indirectly through sleep related issues (Lemola, Perkinson-Gloor, Brand, Dewald-Kaufmann, & Grob 2015). Perfectionistic online self-presentation appears to be a draining practice that consumes time and energy and that lead users to a state of physical exhaustion. Such results could also be juxtaposed with the literature and the current debate

linking social media use and burnout (Han, 2018) among young adults, reinforcing the evidence that social media plays a role in the depletion of young adults' physical resources.

From the results, social media users should understand that perfectionistic strivings in social media self-presentation are very likely to induce negative psychological outcomes either directly via the mechanism of self-discrepancy (Higgins, 1987), or indirectly via a detrimental effect on their sleeping time (Lemola et al., 2015). This finding also imply that the time spend on social media might reduce the time allocated to other activities such as sleeping for example (Van den Bulck, 2004). It also implies that differences might exist between the populations studied - African social media users - and the western populations used in previous studies on the same topic. Future studies would gain from investigating these differences in depression types and in cultural backgrounds by designing studies including participants from different cultures.

Regarding the role of the influencer status, the results showed that no differences could be observed between regular social media users and social media influencers with respect to the strength of the relationship between perfectionism and perfectionistic online self-presentation (**H3**). These findings goes counter the expectations of the study as among perfectionists, influencers were expected to display a greater level of perfectionistic online self-presentation due to the nature of their activity. It is important to remind that perfection implies not only the fact that an individual might look perfect, but also the fact that he/she might look more attractive, clever, interesting, funny, and to the same extent, perfectionism can be materialized through text or media content (pictures, videos etc...). Perfection here refers to any of these characteristics that might be enhanced when presenting oneself online. Such results do not allow to draw conclusions on the moderating role of the influencer status as the lack of significant difference

might be the result of the choices made in the influencer status assessment, or simply in the real absence of differences between influencers and social media users. Future studies could shed more clarity on this phenomenon by defining more rigorous methods when separating influencers from regular users. The threshold of 4000 followers adopted in this study could have drawn a blurry boundary between social media influencers and regular users as 230 individuals in total reported to possess a community equal or above 4000 followers, while only 109 were used for the influencers-related analysis. It is possible that greater figures might yield different results as it is not uncommon nowadays to find regular social media users with online communities equal or above 4000 followers without being influencers themselves. The differences in audiences between influencers and social media users might not have been pronounced enough to justify a difference in the results.

Overall, the findings on perfectionism and its relationship with perfectionistic online self-presentation have implications for regular social media users, but also for influencers. The perfection social media users strive for might result from irrational beliefs (Ellis, 2002), namely a distorted perception of reality (Nelson, 1977) that encourages one to achieve greater results than expected. The same applies to social media influencers. Even if their online activity requires to keep their community engaged, this could be best done by striving for authenticity rather than perfectionism. Authenticity expressed online, can be a predictor, but can also have beneficial effects on well-being (Eagly, 2005). While perfectionistic online self-presentation might encourage the community to perceive the influencers in a perfect or an unrealistic fashion, authenticity might help to attract more people in an online setting (Henderson, & Bowley, 2010) thus increasing online success.

It is relevant to mention that several relationships were observed between the control variables and both perfectionistic online self-presentation and depression.

Age has been found to relate with perfectionistic online self-presentation as the younger individuals were more prone to engage in such behavior in comparison to older individuals. This could be explained by the greater acquaintance of younger users with social media technologies (Pfeil, Arjan & Zaphiris, 2009) that induces more familiarity with the online culture, self-presentation tactics included. Regarding depression, results found lower levels of depression among older participants compared to younger ones. This correlates with the findings of Jorm (2000) that previously found that aging was associated with a lower susceptibility to anxiety and depression.

Concerning gender, differences were also found and interestingly, while previous research on gender differences in self-presentation online stipulates that women spent 10 percent more time on social media and are found to be more active in the composition of their profiles (Haferkamp, Eimler, Papadakis & Kruck, 2012), male participants in this study were found to engage more in perfectionistic online self-presentation than females. The gender differences were also present with respect to depression, showing that women are more likely to develop depressive symptoms than men. This finding is in accordance with Hankin, Abramson, Moffitt, Silva, McGee, & Angell's (1998) findings that placed late adolescent women at a higher risk for depression than young men.

Overall, these results showed that perfectionistic online self-presentation fully mediates the relation between perfectionism and physical depression only. No mediation of perfectionistic online self-presentation were found between perfectionism and mental depression. These results

might differ from previous studies findings on mental depression, anxiety and social media use due to the fact that western societies were usually the ones investigated. Such difference might be attributed to cultural differences between western and African societies. African cultures could be considered to be collectivistic cultures because they are mostly characterized by feelings of solidarity and concerns for others (Hui, 1988), while western societies are mostly based on individualism due to the fact that they show less concern and sharing than collectivistic cultures (Hui & Triandis, 1986), and exhibit more self-centered attitudes such as narcissism (Foster, Campbell & Twenge, 2003). In collectivistic cultures, studies have shown lower levels of loneliness (Burholt, Dobbs & Victor, 2018), and a more positive attitudes towards sharing others' burdens and troubles (Hui, 1988). For this reason, it could be assumed that the prevalence of mental depression among African populations is relatively lower compared to individualistic societies.

These findings overall provide interesting insights on the differences between the two types of depression, and the way they relate to two different cultures. They also raise the societal question regarding burnout and shed more light on the interplay between social media use, perfect self-presentation online and wellbeing.

### ***Limitations and future studies recommendations***

This study succeeded in revealing novel insights on perfect self-presentation and depression among a population that is understudied. Nonetheless, this study has a few limitations that are important to highlight. First, the reliance on self-report measures might increase the likelihood that participants gave social desirable answers. As participants were asked to assess themselves on the extent to which they present themselves perfectly online, and the level of feelings of



depression they experience, the risks for participants to respond in a socially desirable manner are quite high. This idea is reinforced by the fact that collectivistic cultures are known to be concerned with loss of face (Hui & Triandis, 1986), thus increasing the chances to respond in a socially desirable manner. Future studies may benefit from using a different data collection approach, one that could reduce the risks of socially desirable answers, for example experimental research or a more qualitative, ethnographic approach in which participants' social media posts can also be integrated into the analysis.

Second, even if the threshold value for the online community used in this study allowed to reach over a hundred of social media influencers, such measure could be improved. Future studies would gain better insights in drawing clearer boundaries between users and influencers, and this could be done by targeting social media influencer with larger community sizes. The lack of cross cultural studies on the topic should give rise to more studies in the future to better understand how different population relates to the question of perfectionistic online self-presentation. Finally more research on online self-presentation and the way it related to mental health issues should attempt to understand the differences among cultures as previous studies already showed that collectivistic cultures differs from individualistic cultures on this aspect.

## **6. Conclusion**

This research contributes to the existing scholarship on online self-presentation. It provides new insights on the way perfectionistic online self-presentation relates to depression. It focuses on an understudied population, namely that of sub-Saharan Africa and thus sheds some light on the way perfectionistic online self-presentation relates to depression in this population. The findings of this research also raised new questions on the differences between cultures with respect to such effect on the one hand, and on the different types of depression that relates to social media use. Further studies should address these questions to provide a better understanding. This study also attempted to investigate differences in self-presentation between social media regular users and influencers. The present study findings discourage the adoption of perfectionistic behaviors when presenting oneself online. It encourages further researches on self-presentation among influencers.

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## 8. Appendix

### Appendix 1: Translated questionnaire Items

#### *Perfectionism*

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#### Perfectionism Scale items

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Je dois être plus performant(e) que la plupart des gens dans mes tâches quotidiennes  
*I expect to perform better than most people in my daily tasks*

Je définis des objectifs plus élevés que la plupart des gens  
*I set higher goals than most people.*

Je ne vise pas la perfection dans mon travail  
*I do not aim for perfection in my work*

C'est important pour moi d'être complètement compétent(e) dans tout ce que je fais  
*It is important to me that I be thoroughly competent in everything I do.*

Moins je fais d'erreurs et plus les gens m'aimeront  
*The fewer mistakes I make, the more people will like me*

Je dois être contrarié(e) si je commets une erreur  
*I should be upset if I make a mistake.*

Les gens auront une moins bonne image de moi si je fais des erreurs  
*People will probably think less of me if I make a mistake*

Si je ne fais pas tout le temps bien, les gens ne me respecteront pas  
*If I do not do well all the time, people will not respect me.*

Mes parents attendaient de moi que je sois excellent  
*My parents have expected excellence from me*

Mes parents acceptaient facilement que je puisse faire des erreurs  
*My parents readily accepted that I could make a mistake*

Mes parents n'acceptaient pas que je ramène des notes basses ou sous la moyenne  
*My parents did not accept that I receive bad or below-average grades*

J'ai rarement ressenti que je pouvais atteindre les standards de mes parents

*I rarely felt like I could reach my parents standards*

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***Perfectionistic online self-presentation***

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Perfectionistic Self-Presentation Online Scale items

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Je dois toujours avoir l'air aussi bien que possible sur les réseaux sociaux

*I always have to look as good as I can on social media*

Je dois toujours avoir l'air de faire les choses parfaitement sur les réseaux sociaux

*I have to look like I always do things perfectly on social media*

Je m'efforce d'être parfait(e) sur les réseaux sociaux

*I strive to be perfect on social media*

Je m'en fiche d'être parfait(e) sur les réseaux sociaux

*I don't care about being perfect on social media*

Je pense beaucoup aux erreurs que j'ai commises sur les réseaux sociaux

*I think a lot about mistakes that I have made on social media*

Je me sens mal quand je n'ai pas l'air parfait(e) sur les réseaux sociaux

*I feel bad about myself when I don't look perfect on social media*

Je dois toujours garder mes soucis éloignés des réseaux sociaux

*I should always keep my problems away from social media*

Je pense que cela ne pose pas de problème d'admettre ses erreurs sur les réseaux sociaux

*I think it is okay to admit a mistakes on social media*

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***Depression***

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Depression scale items

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J'ai eu le moral bas  
*I was down*

J'ai été de mauvaise humeur  
*I had a bad mood*

J'ai été triste  
*I felt sad*

J'ai été inquiet(e)  
*I was worried*

J'ai eu du mal à me concentrer  
*I found it difficult to focus*

J'ai été frustré(e)  
*I was frustrated*

J'ai eu du mal à dormir  
*I had troubles getting asleep*

J'ai eu des sommeils agités  
*I slept restless*

Je suis souvent resté éveillé(e) après m'être couché  
*I lied awake often*

Je me suis senti physiquement faible  
*I felt without energy*

Je me suis senti lent(e) et morose  
*I felt slow and dull*

J'ai eu la flemme  
*I could not get going*

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***Influencer status***

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Influencer status

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Quelle est la taille de votre communauté en ligne?

*What is the size of your online community ?*

Exercez vous une activité en ligne ?

*Do you exert an activity online ?*

Cette activité vous demande elle de dévoiler des informations personnelles ?

*Does this activity requires you to disclose yourself ?*

Cette activité en ligne génère elle des revenus?

*Does this online activity generates incomes ?*

Êtes vous un(e) influenceur en ligne?

*Are you an online social media influencer ?*

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***Demographics***

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Demographics

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Veillez indiquer votre sexe

*Indicate your gender*

Indiquez votre âge

*Indicate your age*

Indiquez votre nationalité

*Indicate your nationality*

Quel est votre plus haut niveau d'études atteint?

*What is your highest level of education attained?*

A quelles fréquences utilisez vous les réseaux sociaux?

*How often do you use social media?*

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**Appendix 2: Tables***Table 7. Depression scale factor analysis - Rotated component matrix*

<b>Factor loadings for Depression scale</b>		
Item	Factor loadings	
	Mental depression	Physical depression
J'ai eu le moral bas	.808	.190
J'ai été de mauvaise humeur	.800	.229
J'ai été triste	.833	.206
J'ai été inquiet(e)	.748	.206
J'ai eu du mal à me concentrer	.560	.319
J'ai été frustré(e)	.729	.239
J'ai eu du mal à dormir	.228	.812
J'ai eu des sommeils agités	.242	.756
Je suis souvent resté éveillé(e) après m'être couché		.802
Je me suis senti physiquement faible	.290	.665
Je me suis senti lent(e) et morose	.476	.611
J'ai eu la flemme	.361	.490

*Note:* Factors below .20 are suppressed

Table 8. Moderation mediation analysis with mental depression subscale - Direct effects on perfectionistic online self-presentation

Antecedent	PSPO					
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Constant	3.58	.18	19.35	.00	3.21	3.94
Perfectionism	.52***	.05	10.38	.00	.43	.62
Influencer	-.08	.07	-1.11	.27	-.22	.06
Interaction	-.12	.14	-.84	.40	-.39	.16
Age	-.01**	.01	-2.69	.01	-.02	-.00
Education	-.01	.04	-.28	.78	-.08	.06
Gender	-.24***	.05	-4.82	.00	-.34	-.14
$R^2 = .18***$ $F(6, 782) = 28.26, p < .001$						

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$



*Table 9.* Moderation mediation analysis with mental depression subscale - Direct effects on  
mental depression

Antecedent	Mental Depression					
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Constant	3.47	.31	11.14	.00	2.86	4.09
Perfectionism	.22**	.07	2.94	.00	.07	.37
Perfectionistic online self- presentation	.04	.05	.80	.43	-.06	.14
Age	-.03***	.01	-3.58	.00	-.04	-.01
Education	-.07	.05	-1.37	.17	-.17	.03
Gender	.42***	.07	6.04	.00	.29	.56
$R^2 = .07***$ $F(5, 783) = 11.99, p < .001$						

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

*Table 10.* Moderation mediation analysis with physical depression subscale - Direct effects on perfectionistic online self-presentation

Antecedent	PSPO					
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Constant	3.58	.18	19.35	.00	3.21	3.94
Perfectionism	.52***	.05	10.38	.00	.43	.62
Influencer	-.08	.07	-1.11	.27	-.22	.06
Interaction	-.12	.14	-.84	.40	-.39	.16
Age	-.01**	.01	-2.69	.01	-.02	-.00
Education	-.01	.04	-.28	.78	-.08	.06
Gender	-.24***	.05	-4.82	.00	-.34	-.14
$R^2 = .18***$ $F(6, 782) = 28.26, p < .001$						

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

*Table 11:* Moderation mediation analysis with physical depression subscale - Direct effects on physical depression

Antecedent	Physical Depression					
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
constant	3.07	.31	9.85	.00	2.45	3.68
Perfectionism	.12	.07	1.56	.12	-.03	.26
Perfectionistic online self-presentation	.14**	.05	2.77	.01	.04	.23
Age	-.03***	.01	-4.09	.00	-.04	-.02
Education	-.02	.05	-.40	.69	-.12	.08
Gender	.38***	.07	5.47	.00	.25	.52
$R^2 = .09***$ $F(5, 783) = 14.59, p < .001$						

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$