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CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS
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CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN SPORT SCIENCE

Programme and Abstracts

28–29 April, 2022
Kaunas, Lithuania

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In the conference programme, the first speaker indicated in bold and underline is a young scientist and participated in the competition for the award of young scientists

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THE DUPLICATED BODY: A NEW FORM OF DUALISM AMONG PREADOLESCENTS

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Background. The use of social media is widespread among preadolescents, regardless the age restrictions that many providers and platforms have set. On these platforms, the massive representation of their bodies – often vehiculated as filtered images and/or altered videos – is negatively impacting their body image. Many of them experience feelings of insecurity and rejection during a time when their bodies are changing rapidly. This phenomenon is causing a new form of dualism between the perceived body and the representative body, and between the body as a given of nature and its virtual and artificial representation (Digennaro, 2021).

Research methods. The authors carried out a research study to investigate the impact of this new form of dualism on preadolescents' life and their personal wellbeing. To the purpose, a sample of 368 preadolescents (56.51% males) was analyzed through two anonymous and self-administered questionnaires aimed at investigating: what types of social media are used (McLean Paxton, Wertheim, & Masters, 2015); how they use the social media and how they represent their bodies; the relation between the natural and the virtual bodies; the body image (Cash, Fleming, Alindogan, Steadman, & Whitehead, 2002); the level of physical activity. The 89.5% of the respondents (n = 323) declared to frequently use social networks whereas 99% use messaging apps.

Results and discussion. Broadly, YouTube, Tik Tok, Instagram and WhatsApp are the most used social media/apps. The 64.5% of the Tik Tok's users spent more than 2 hours per day on this social media. Results showed that a massive use of social media as platforms where to vehiculate altered copies of the body and constantly exposing bodies of both peers and celebrities is leading to a misperception of the perceived body. Higher use of social media platforms, particularly Instagram, Snapchat, and WhatsApp, corresponded to greater body image concerns, especially among the girls ($p < 0.005$). Moreover, frequent users with a low level of daily physical activity tend to have a distorted body image, with negative influences on their physical and psychological health. They often describe themselves in extreme negative terms with a related body dissatisfaction. The virtual body that they can create on the social media is seen as a model to be pursued and the dualism between the perceived body and the virtual body determines frustration and body disaffection.

Conclusions. The study confirmed the association between social media use, body exposure and wellbeing concerns. It provided evidence on the massive use of the social media/messaging app among the preadolescents regardless the fact that these platforms are not intended for them. Finally, it showed the presence of an inner conflict related to the body that must be further analysed and investigated.

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