DIGITAL DISSONANCE:
THE CLASH BETWEEN REAL BODIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA PERFECTION[1]

DISSONÂNCIA DIGITAL: O CHOQUE ENTRE CORPOS REAIS E A PERFEIÇÃO NAS MÍDIAS SOCIAIS

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Abstract: From the perspective of the Theory of Social Representations and Cognitive-Behavioral Theory the objective was, considering the Brazilian reality, to analyze the representations of the ideal/perfect female body propagated on social media and highlight possible impacts on women's mental health. Content analysis was used based on the collection and categorization of comments on publications on the profiles of two digital influencers on digital social media. The comments were categorized as *beauty*, *body* or *mental health*. It was observed that concepts and standards of beauty and ideal body have been changing, preserving frustration in the face of inadequacy to the current norm, leading to the perception of bodies as objects of consumption that can be controlled, labelable, and educable. It was highlighted that when a woman perceives herself to be outside the ideal standard, dysfunctional beliefs and thoughts can be activated, causing psychological suffering and potentially leading to the development of mental disorders. Future studies may include transsexual women, international influencers and different psychological approaches.

Keywords: Cognitive Psychology; Body; Beauty; Mental health; Social Representations; Women.

Resumo: Sob a ótica da Teoria das Representações Socais e da Teoria Cognitivo-Comportamental objetivou-se, considerando a realidade brasileira, analisar as representações de corpo feminino ideal/perfeito propagadas nas redes sociais digitais e destacar possíveis impactos sobre a saúde mental de mulheres. Empregou-se a análise de conteúdo, a partir da coleta e categorização de comentários de publicações nos perfis de duas influenciadoras digitais

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em uma rede social. Os comentários foram categorizados como: *beleza*, *corpo* ou *saúde mental*. Observou-se que conceitos e padrões de beleza e corpo ideal vêm alterando-se, preservando-se a frustração diante da inadequação à norma vigente, levando à percepção dos corpos como objetos de consumo passíveis de controle, rotuláveis e educáveis. Destacou-se que quando a mulher percebe-se fora do padrão ideal podem ser ativadas crenças e pensamentos disfuncionais, ocasionando sofrimento psíquico e podendo acarretar o desenvolvimento de transtornos mentais. Futuros estudos poderão incluir mulheres transexuais, influenciadoras internacionais e diferentes abordagens psicológicas.

Palavras-chave: Psicologia Cognitiva; Corpo; Beleza; Saúde Mental; Representações Sociais; Mulheres.

Social representations (SR) are constructed through interactions between individuals in society based on everyday communication practices (MOSCOVICI, 2003). In this sense, SR can be defined as organizing principles of symbolic relations between individuals and groups, being knowledge that transforms the strange into the familiar through the aggregation of novelty to existing knowledge structures endowed with specific stability (DOISE, 1992; MOSCOVICI, 1961). Representations are essential in elaborating collective ways of seeing and experiencing the body, starting with disseminating models of thought and behavior related to it (JODELET *et al.*, 1984). It is emphasized that it is important to study the body from the conception of SR because it allows us to recognize the social character of the individual dimension, portraying the body as a mediating factor of knowledge of oneself and of the other, based on social relations (JODELET, 1984; 1994).

In this context, the body goes beyond its biological character and manifests itself as a cultural and social expression (BARBOSA *et al.*, 2011; ULIAN *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, social factors are linked to body dissatisfaction, presenting relevance due to the influences of body aesthetics values in contemporary times (MARCUZZO *et al.*, 2012). The influence of the media is highlighted, which is considered one of the leading social factors linked to body satisfaction and dissatisfaction (CONTI, *et al.*, 2010; THOMPSON *et al.*, 1999). Mass media, such as magazines, television and digital social networks, are saturated with images of thin and well-defined bodies, leading to comparisons about appearance and directly interfering with the perception that individuals construct about their bodies.

In digital social networks self-image is prominent, gaining the power of communication and attracting followers (SILVA; JAPUR, 2021). According to Krawitz (2014), there is manipulation through computerized image editing programs, which, with different levels of adjustment, create false images of perfect bodies that attract views and followers. The body

begins to be transformed and its image can be modified according to the interests and social needs of the subject (LE BRETON, 2003; LUCENA *et al.*, 2020).

Notably, social network use has transformed human relationships and the compulsive use of these tools causes behavioral changes and, in some cases, even psychological damage to its users (SANTOS; SILVA, 2018). In the meantime, considering the contemporary Brazilian reality, this article aimed to evaluate the impact of the SR of the ideal/perfect female body propagated in digital social networks and highlighted its possible reflections on women's mental health. To this end, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) concepts, such as dysfunctional core beliefs, were used in the analyses presented here.

It is worth emphasizing that recent scientific theoretical articles on the subject, such as those by Santos and Gonçalves (2020) and Duarte et al. (2023), have highlighted that with the considerable increase in the use of social networks impacts on women's mental health are already verified. However, when it comes specifically to the perspective of SR, no studies focused on this theme are identified, although it is considered that in women's representations of their bodies there is a lot of pressure and concern about "having to be beautiful" and that this scenario in itself can already affect their mental health (ALMEIDA, 2009). Therefore, there is a need to explore the impact of SR on the female body and its effects on women's mental health.

The importance of discussing how women's mental health is affected when natural bodies do not correspond to those represented on social networks is to seek to collaborate in a theoretical and reflective way on the subject. Therefore, it is interesting to discuss the theme from the perspective of SR, since it is revealed that the impact of beauty standards and the sharing of body SR on female body dissatisfaction must be understood within an architecture of social thought (SECCHI *et al.*, 2009).

METHOD

The present study's design involved researching two profiles of young, cisgender, white women and digital influencers from a popular social network with more than 2 billion users until July 21, 2023[5]. Comments available in publications on the profiles of the two women were identified and selected. The profiles were analyzed considering their influence on the public accompanying them and their respective bodies' exposure to the virtual environment. The

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[5] Information collected on the "Tech Tudo" website: https://www.techtudo.com.br/listas/2023/07/qual-a-rede-social-mais-usada-em-2023-a-resposta-vai-te-surpreender-edapps.ghtml

choice of profiles was due to the different ways in which bodies are disclosed; a profile works with the explicit exposure of images of the ideal body to sell weight loss programs; while the other features photos with similar characteristics, but the influencer uses her body implicitly to sell products from her cosmetics brand.

Two publications from each profile were selected for analysis in this study, totaling four. The choice of these was because, in the four publications, there are images of the influencers' bodies to draw followers' attention to promote their products, namely weight loss programs and cosmetics. Each publication's comments were selected considering the first 300 in the order in which they appeared. A total of 100 comments were collected from two publications of each profile. These were the results after the exclusion of those made by men's profiles, only with emojis (emoticons), comments about product charges and comments that presented foul language (mainly vulgar words or expressions).

The comments were stored using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet[6]. In order to maintain the anonymity of the influencers, they were identified as Ana and Maria. Maria's comments were collected on 08/27/2023 between 3:20 pm and 10:50 pm. Ana's samples were collected on 08/28/2023 between 11:00 pm and 1:10 am and 08/30/2023 from 7:30 pm to 8:37 pm. Notably, the spelling and abbreviated language errors found in the comments were corrected in this study to facilitate the readers' understanding. Subsequently, the comments were transcribed and organized for analysis using the content analysis (CA) method. According to Bardin (1977), the raw material of CA consists of any material from verbal or non-verbal communication.

CA is interested in knowing both the conditions of the message's producer and receiver and the possible effects they produce. Bardin (1977) calls this process inference (deduction in a logical way), which uses indicators that can be quantified or not. Among the various techniques that contemplate content analysis, categorical analysis (CA) was used. According to Bardin (1977), categorical analysis is the oldest and most used technique in practice. CA works by dismembering the text into units (decomposing) so that they are then grouped into categories, and the following categories are included in this study: *Beauty*, inserting comments associated with the beauty and the ugly; *Body*, including comments that address the bodies of influencers or followers; and *Mental* Health, which used CBT principles, Beck's theory (2021), integrating comments related to followers' beliefs about themselves (such as beliefs of worthlessness, lack

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[6] A table with all the comments can be accessed through the link: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1KbZ0NjBoomtpXfkyUff1aZQfEH6QPmD6/edit#gid=180729397

of love, and helplessness) and emotional or sentimental states (such as sadness, joy, and anxiety).

RESULTS

The search in the profiles of the two digital influencers resulted in identifying and selecting four publications, described in Table 01.

Table 01. Description of the images present in the publications under analysis.

Profile 1: Influencer Ana	Profile 2: Influencer Maria
Publication/Post 1	**Publication/Post 1**
It is a "carousel of images"; the first photo is chosen for analysis. Ana appears in a yellow bikini, sitting on a bed and positioning her body to the left. She stands on tiptoe with his left arm resting on the bed.	Maria is seen standing in a pink bikini. In the background you can see a swimming pool and she is holding her arms back and positioned with her face and body to the left side. The product is on your face, it's a blush from your cosmetics brand.
Publication/Post 2	**Publication/Post 2**
It is a "carousel of images"; the first photo is chosen for analysis. Ana appears in a blue and white bikini, wears glasses and stands in the pool. Her right arm holds on to the pool's edge while her left is bent and leaning against her head.	On the beach, Maria appears lying face down on a beach chair, wearing sunglasses, with her left arm bent and her right almost against her face. Next to it appears a sales product of your cosmetics brand.

As mentioned above, the results were organized into the categories of *Beauty*, *Body*, and *Mental Health*, obtaining the following data: in Ana's first publication, 27 comments were identified referring to the *Beauty* category, 33 comments in the *Body* category and 11 in the *Mental Health* category, while in the second publication, it was identified as *Beauty* 38 comments, for *Body* 14 and for *Mental Health* 6. In the first publication of Maria's profile, 50 comments were obtained for the *Beauty* category, for *Body* 1 and *Mental Health* 3, while in Maria's second publication there were 68 comments for *Beauty*, for *Body* 3 and *Mental Health* 1 comment.

Examples of comments in the *Beauty* category are: "beautiful, wonderful" ("linda, maravilhosa") and "perfect" ("perfeita") (publication 2, Mary). Some examples of the *Body* are: "this woman has the most beautiful body in Brazil" ("essa mulher tem o corpo mais bonito do Brasil") and "strange body" ("corpo estranho") (publication 1, Ana). Examples of the *Mental Health* category are: "Respect a body like that, I wanted to, I just don't have the discipline to do it, you're beautiful!" ("Respeita um corpão desse, eu queria, só não tenho disciplina para isso, você é linda!") (publication 1, Ana); "so beautiful body, in this life you are either thin or you are happy, you can't do both" ("tão linda de corpo, nessa vida ou você é magra ou você é feliz, as duas coisas, não dá") and "Wonderful, it seems that there are no organs, while I seem to have twice as many, congratulations beautiful" ("Maravilhosa, parece até que não tem órgãos, enquanto eu, parece que tenho o dobro, parabéns lindona") (publication 2, Ana).

It was observed that Ana's profile has more comments about the Body and that the negative ones appear more frequently among them. Maria's profile has a lower incidence of comments related to the Body and a higher incidence of the Beauty category, where positive comments are prevalent. Regarding the Mental Health category, Ana's profile has a higher incidence of comments associated with dysfunctional beliefs (BECK, 2021) (such as those of worthlessness) and negative emotions (such as sadness).

REFLECTION ON THE FINDINGS

This study explores the impact of social representations (SR) of the ideal or perfect female body propagated through digital social networks, emphasizing its potential consequences on women's mental health. The analysis, supported by comments collected in this research, underscores the importance of understanding women's body SR as products of specific societal and temporal contexts. These representations are significantly influenced by the capitalist market, which profits from women's desires to achieve nearly unattainable standards of beauty affecting psychological well-being.

In relation to beauty, a category derived from this study's findings, it is noteworthy that the pursuit of beauty is an age-old phenomenon. However, its concept has evolved over time, leaving women with a sense of frustration when their bodies do not conform to the prevailing norm. Similarly, the body category is associated with individual and social representations that, akin to beauty, are mutable and can lead to the perception of women's bodies as commodities. These bodies are seen as controllable, labelable, and educable objects of consumption. This

perception further reinforces the societal pressure on women to adhere to the ever-changing beauty standards, thereby perpetuating the cycle of body dissatisfaction.

In the context of mental health, it was observed that when a woman perceives herself as deviating from the ideal standard of SR with a perfect body, the negative consequences can activate dysfunctional beliefs and thoughts, causing psychic suffering. This can also lead to the development of mental disorders such as depressive mood and eating disorders. This observation aligns with recent studies that highlight the psychological impact of body dissatisfaction on women's mental health.

In fact, research indicates that the portrayal of idealized body images on social media platforms can have detrimental effects on mental health, particularly among women. For instance, the internalization of these standards is linked to body dissatisfaction, which can lead to various psychological issues, including depression and anxiety (KARAM *et al.*, 2023; JIOTSA *et al.*, 2021). Social media use has been found to be a significant predictor of body image concerns, where the frequent comparison with digitally altered images exacerbates feelings of inadequacy (HE *et al*., 2024).

The results, obtained from the collection of data in two profiles of Brazilian digital influencers, pointed to different ways of disclosing the body, these being implicit and explicit. The difference in comments between the two, especially those that can be associated with the mental health category, are linked to the followers' beliefs about themselves and to emotional or sentimental states. These results indicate that influencers who work directly with body image ideals can impact women's mental health. However, influencers who work indirectly also do so, even if they disregard or do not clearly perceive the impact of SR on the mental health of their followers.

Given the results, it was noticed that the way of using body image disseminated on social media in an implicit way (information that is subtended) generates a higher frequency of positive comments, such as "you are beautiful, perfect" ("você é linda, perfeita") (Publication 1, Maria). Meanwhile, the explicit form of presentation (clear and direct information) results in the appearance of a more significant number of negative comments, both about the influencer, as in a "strange body" ("corpo estranho") (Publication 1, Ana), and from those who follow her in relation to themselves, "every time I see Ana my self-esteem digs an extra meter" ("cada vez que vejo a Ana minha autoestima cava um metro a mais") (Publication 1, Ana). In this scenario, and more specifically with the explicit form of presentation, the beauty standard becomes a

product that is consumed mainly through mass media, such as social networks, which play an essential role in the construction and dissemination of ideal body standards (HOLLAND; TIGGEMANN, 2016), thus evidencing RS about the beautiful, the ugly, the healthy and the ideal of body and beauty to be sought.

It is possible to analyze the publications and profiles of influencers Ana and Maria from a heuristic perspective, which can be understood as a process that simplifies complexity and time in decision-making, allowing quick decisions to be made without considering all the variables involved (FINUCANE *et al.* 2000), in these cases the decision to purchase the product sold, whether it is the weight loss program or cosmetics. Notably, the notion of heuristics is close to SR, and the latter is a shortcut for issuing prior judgments and decision-making. In this context, the representativeness heuristic, which we link here to SR, consists of evaluating the probability of an event based on an existing example that we already have in our mind (KAHNEMAN; FREDERICK, 2002). Thus, the purchase of products is validated by the prototype of the influencers' "ideal" body, that is, their consumers are attracted or not by the representation they have of them. Therefore, it is understood that to be "Beautiful!! Beautiful to live!" ("Belíssima!! Linda de viver!") (Publication 2, Ana), like influencers, you have to buy the products sold.

In the logic of a capitalist society of production and consumption, body image becomes a fundamental representation because it is through it that people gains fame, aesthetic recognition, financial and social status (LIMA *et al.*, 2013). However, the impacts and negative consequences of this logic are usually not assessed, which can damage the mental health of women who do not achieve the recommended ideal of beauty, as observed in "You make me depressed" ("Você me deixa depressiva") (Publication 1, Ana). Thus, using the "ideal" body image disseminated on social media implicitly and explicitly generates recognition and profit, but also impacts the SR of the female body, of what is beautiful or ugly, worthy of admiration or shame. Therefore, it is important to discuss social representations (SR) of women's beauty and their relationship with the data collected in this study, aspects presented in the next subtopic.

Social Representations of Beauty in Women

Social Representations (SR) delve into the processes through which individuals, in interaction with society, construct explanations about social objects (VALA; TORRES, 2006).

Based on this assumption, beauty can be considered a social construct, produced by a specific group situated in a particular place and historical moment (SPINK; MENEGON, 1999). Therefore, it is possible to affirm that it is a construct directly influenced by SR, as illustrated by the comment "too beautiful, inspiration" ("linda demais, inspiração") (Publication 2, Ana). In this comment, Ana's follower recognizes that the influencer's beauty represents the ideal norm accepted among the different SR about women's beauty.

It is noteworthy that the pursuit of beauty is ancient and that over time its concept has undergone transformations, observable through the specific styles or standards of beauty in different cultures and eras. Thus, SR are observed as guides that influence individuals and groups in their practices (ABRIC, 1998), particularly in determining what is considered beautiful or not. It is emphasized that primitive peoples already used substances for beautification; their faces and bodies were painted and tattooed to scare away evil spirits and please their gods (KURY *et al*., 2000). The ancient egyptians cultivated beauty eccentrically, using cosmetics both for personal beautification and to prepare the dead for burial (D'ANGELO *et al*., 2011). In the middle ages, the ideal of feminine beauty went beyond the use of cosmetics and beautifying accessories and began to emphasize the standard of white skin tone, blond hair, and a virginal appearance (KURY *et al*., 2000, p.19).

In the nineteenth century, consumption gained greater prominence and industries began to produce cosmetic products on a large scale (KURY *et al.*, 2000), initiating a new era of beauty conceptions. The arrival of the twentieth century brought more innovations to the beauty culture, with the multiplication of plastic surgeries, research in this area, and makeup products becoming fundamental in everyday life (VIGARELLO, 2006). In the twenty-first century, women's beauty standards are strongly influenced by society, new means of communication, such as digital social networks, and cultural factors.

Through the use of the media, the cultural industry is responsible for creating and reinforcing images, standardizing an ideal of beauty (MOTA, 2006). The advancement of the internet marks contemporaneity, with new means of communication, including social networks, which gained popularity and began widely used by the population. These platforms allow users to share through profiles what interests them, interact with other users, and show their points of view on various subjects (MADEIRA; GALUCCI, 2009). In social networks, users are, at the same time, the source and receiver of information.

For Andrieu (2008), beauty is a quality granted to a body by an individual or a particular society during a specific period. In contemporary society, the ideal of beauty guides the notion of social acceptance; the goal is to fit within the hegemonic standard of beauty stipulated by society (MOTA, 2006). In the current context, beauty is not only contemplated but evaluated; if accepted, it is applauded, and if not, it is questioned and rejected, as evidenced by the comments collected in this study: "What a stunning body, congratulations!" ("Que corpão deslumbrante, parabéns!") (Publication 1, Mary); "You have surgery on your body" ("Você tem cirurgia no seu corpo") and "strange body" ("corpo estranho") (Publication 1, Ana).

Furthermore, capitalism is related to this standardization, which is transformed into a rule, becoming a way of controlling people and aiming at the profitability of the beauty industry (SOUZA, 2018). In the meantime, social representations (SR) of women's beauty are primarily influenced by market logic, which in many cases is masked under the guise of "non-aesthetic care for health" to maintain or modify consumption patterns, such as the use of supplements and the sale of weight loss programs "for health," as promoted by the influencer Ana.

It is noteworthy that the male public is strongly guided by the social representation (SR) of heteronormative cisgender masculinity, which is constructed through the denial of all that is feminine and the affirmation that men should act like men and not like women (DUNNE *et al*, 2006). This does not eliminate the resulting psychic suffering but is linked to a gender expression associated with a lower concern for appearance and the practical adoption of beauty procedures (BLOCH; RICHINS, 1992). Conversely, with the strong influence of culture and social networks, more and more women dedicate themselves to maintaining their bodies, being encouraged to associate beauty with youth and self-worth (DEL PRIORE, 2009).

It is worth emphasizing that, like social representations, gender results from social constructions expressed through discourses and non-verbal communication, which compose performances as they define and reinforce identities. In this way, a person's identity is not the origin of their actions but the opposite: their speeches, gestures, and way of being in the world exist because they have been assigned and socially molded (BUTLER, 2000). Furthermore, Butler criticizes the notion of gender arising from sex, arguing that this distinction is arbitrary and not natural, and that gender is the expression of the subject. Thus, it could be stated that transsexual women, whose gender identity is not equivalent to their male biological sex, would also suffer the impacts of social representations of the female body (BUTLER, 2000). Another aspect that deserves to be highlighted is that social representations and gender theories do not

appear disconnected from the concrete realities they materialize but are in close harmony with them (ARRUDA, 2002).

Le Breton (2007) points out that the model of feminine beauty has been changing, with a significant decrease in the mannequin considered ideal, which can be observed in comments such as "I wish I could lose weight, I think you're beautiful!" ("Queria ter condições de conseguir emagrecer, te acho linda!") (Publication 2, Ana). From this perspective, the imposition of an aesthetic body standard as an ideal nowadays seeks to impose on women the internalization of a body standard socially and temporally constructed as something natural. Thus, to be beautiful, one must have a muscular, defined, or lean body (NOVAES; VILHELA, 2003). Considering this, the next subtopic will discuss the SR of the "ideal" body for women in contemporary capitalist society.

Ideal Body, Capitalism and Social Networks

Over the years, different ways of thinking about the body have evolved, as well as different forms of relationships with it (DANTAS, 2011). The body can be defined as a natural organism, that is, a set of organs that guarantee the functions necessary for life (DUROZOI, 1996). However, it is also characterized by the individual and social representations associated with it. Le Breton (2003) points out that the transformation of bodies happens at both biological and cultural levels. The body begins to be transformed, and its image can be modified according to the interests and needs of each individual.

In the study of social representations (SR) of the body, in addition to a psychological and individual emphasis, such as that developed by Schilder (1997), there is also a collective emphasis related to opinions and common sense, theorized by Moscovici (1976). Therefore, it is not solely individual nor purely social, but rather the result of a symbolic construction that takes place according to individual and collective perceptions and representations (ANDRIEU, 2008), which are modified and reflect the social and historical moment of a given group (ORY, 2006). The study of the body from the perspective of SR brings the possibility of integrating intimate dimensions with those that are socially shared, influencing ways of relating both to one's own body and to the bodies of others (JODELET, 1994). In this sense, the SRs of the influencers mentioned in this study disseminate the idea of what would be an "ideal body" model, as observed in comments like "I want to be thin like this" ("Quero secar assim"), "The

little belly I wanted to have" ("A barriguinha que eu queria ter") and "too beautiful, inspiration" ("linda demais, inspiração") (Publications 1 and 2, Ana).

As a result of social construction, the body considered "beautiful" is shaped by body ideals and beauty standards proposed by societies, which are dynamic and vary across different cultural, social, and historical contexts (CAMARGO et al., 2011). In contemporary times, the body is associated with beauty standards that require precise measurements. Under capitalist ideology, it is captured by the culture industry, transforming the body-producer into the body-consumer, thereby making it profitable to sell itself in the market (COELHO; SEVERIANO, 2007), as observed in "body of the dreams" ("corpo dos sonhos") and "Help me lose weight" ("Me ajuda a emagrecer") (Publication 1, Ana).

The body thus attains the status of an object of consumption, the most beautiful, precious, and resplendent of all objects (BAUDRILLARD, 1991), as seen in "Body goal, serves for my dream mural" ("Meta de corpo, serve para o meu mural dos sonhos") (Publication 1, Maria). Consequently, the body becomes an object of exaggerated valorization, as seen in "Perfect, I want this body" ("Perfeita, quero esse corpo") (Publication 1, Ana), providing opportunities for the consumption of service goods intended for the maintenance of this body.

Giddens (1998) states that bodies are like products, analyzed for quality, being educated, ordered, cataloged, and labeled. The social representations (SR) of body and fitness appear as elements that reinforce self-esteem, suggesting that having a thin, fat-free, beautiful, healthy body with rigid muscles reveals the power that body exaltation assumes in contemporary times (SIQUEIRA; FARIAS, 2008). This aspect is evident in "The Most Perfect Body I've Ever Seen" ("O corpo mais perfeito que eu já vi") and "Scandal of Perfect" ("Escândalo de perfeita") (Publication 1, Ana). In this sense, the profiles of the influencers mentioned in this study use marketing to foster the desire for these "perfect" bodies, corroborating Santos and Gonçalves (2020), as seen in "Body goal" ("Meta de corpo") and "This little belly is a dream" ("Um sonho essa barriguinha") (Publication 1, Maria).

A woman's body is represented as something that must embody beauty, thinness, power and status, and additionally, be healthy (SECCHI *et al.*, 2009). Currently, these models are recognized and are assigned the criterion of body shape, that is, the ideal and satisfactory body model to be followed (SANTOS; GONÇALVES, 2020), as seen in "Wow, what a body!" ("Uau, que corpão!") and "Perfect" ("Perfeito") (Publication 2, Maria). The media has thus become an important means of disseminating and capitalizing on what is called the "cult of the

body," a behavior stimulated both by the media and the beauty industry (SIQUEIRA; FARIAS, 2008).

To achieve a socially accepted aesthetic ideal, individuals often dedicate themselves to sculpting the perfect body, aligning with the contemporary standards of beauty that emphasize youth and thinness (FONTES et al., 2012). According to Duarte et al. (2023), pursuing the perfect body drives people to conform to these imposed standards. It is important to note that by establishing nearly unattainable standards, the growing quest for these ideals overlooks several critical aspects, particularly those related to mental health (SOUZA; SILVA, 2017). Therefore, it is crucial to assess the impact on women's mental health when their actual bodies do not align with those portrayed on social networks, a theme addressed in the next subtopic.

What does Mental Health look like when real Bodies do not correspond to those represented on Social Media?

Novaes and Vilhena (2003) emphasize how much the image of women continues to be associated with beauty, with less tolerance for deviations from socially established aesthetic standards. Nowadays, body appearance is highly relevant, so body cult practices have drawn attention to the emergence of a lifestyle based on the search for the "ideal." Capitalism and social networks foster the illusion of a perfect body standard that can be conquered, as observed in "Respect a body like that, I wanted to, I just don't have the discipline to do it" ("Respeita um corpão desse, eu queria, só não tenho disciplina para isso"); "Perfect! I want that body" ("Perfeita! Quero esse corpo") (Publication 1, Ana) and " This little belly is my dream" ("Um sonho essa barriguinha") (Publication 1, Maria). The search for this perfect standard can turn women into a product where an attempt is made to commercialize established beauty and youthfulness (MELO; OLIVEIRA, 2011). In this scenario, the search for gyms and plastic surgeries is also identified through sociocultural practices, diets and aesthetic procedures, which results in the significant consumption of techniques aimed at beautification (CASTELLO, 2022).

It is believed that the internalization of this ideal body can contribute to the modification of personal behaviors that lead to psychological disorders related to body dissatisfaction (LIRA et al., 2017), as seen in "You make me depressed" ("Você me deixa depressiva") (Publication 1, Ana). According to Beckian CBT, from childhood, people begin to develop core beliefs, which are motivated by their genetic predisposition, their interaction with other people and the

meanings they attribute to their experiences and circumstances (BECK, 2021). In this context, the woman who perceives herself outside the socially imposed standard can develop negative feelings towards herself from a very early age, feeling inferior, incapable and devalued, as in: "Every time I see Ana, my self-esteem digs a meter more" ("Cada vez que vejo a Ana, minha autoestima cava um metro a mais"); "Respect a body like that I wanted, I just don't have the discipline to do it" ("Respeita um corpão desse eu queria, só não tenho disciplina para isso"); "Wonderful, it seems that there are no organs, while I seem to have twice as many, congratulations beautiful" ("Maravilhosa, parece até que não tem órgãos, enquanto eu, parece que tenho o dobro, parabéns lindona") (Publication 1, Ana).

Souza and Silva (2017) point out that women who perceive themselves outside the socially imposed standard are most often discriminated. In this sense, the self-image can begin to be characterized as distorted, to the extent that a negative evaluation of it is formed from the discrepancy between the real image and the idealized one, as seen in "I want to be thin like this, I'm very skinny, but I have fat in my belly" ("Eu quero secar assim, sou bem magrinha, mas tenho gordurinha na barriga") and "Help me lose weight" ("Me ajuda a emagrecer") (Publication 1, Ana). As mentioned above, this search for an almost unattainable ideal standard can develop in women's negative thoughts, intermediate beliefs (such as conditional assumptions) and core beliefs about themselves (BECK, 2021).

Core beliefs are central ideas about yourself, others, and the world. These are enduring, deep, and fundamental understandings that are often not articulated (BECK, 2021). Beliefs are ideas that individuals take as absolute truth, that's how things "are". In this context, the current standard of beauty that is imposed and disseminated on social networks can be internalized as absolute truth so that the woman who has her body within the standards can feel, at least momentarily, fulfilled and fitted. In contrast, the one who perceives herself outside it can feel like a failure since currently not being beautiful in Brazilian society leads to reduced self-esteem and insecurity (CURY, 2005), as observed in "I wanted to be able to lose weight" ("Queria ter condições de conseguir emagrecer") (Publication 2, Ana).

Dysfunctional beliefs are absolute, rigid, and maintained by maladaptive information processing (BECK, 2021). Aaron Beck theorizes that negative core beliefs about oneself fall into two broad categories: those associated with helplessness and those associated with unlove. In addition to these, a third category, associated with unworthiness, was described by Judith Beck. These beliefs are shaped by personal experiences derived from identifying with

significant others (KNAPP; BECK, 2008), and SR can also be associated with this. In this sense, the influencers mentioned in this article would be as a reference of the ideal/perfect body standard to be followed by women, as observed in "Perfect" ("Perfeita"), "Wonderful" ("Maravilhosa") (Publication 2, Maria); "Congratulations on your beauty!" ("Parabéns pela beleza!") and "Beautiful" ("Linda") (Publication 2, Ana). However, when the idealized does not correspond to the real, dysfunctional beliefs tend to be unrealistic, extreme and maladaptive (BECK, 2021) as in "In this life, either you are thin or you are happy, you can't be both" ("Nessa vida, ou você é magra ou você é feliz, as duas coisas, não dá") (Publication 2, Ana).

In this context, as dysfunctional beliefs are activated, women may fall back on one of the categories of core beliefs described by Beck, or even on all three. Beck (2021) specifies that the helplessness category refers to the perception of being inefficient when doing things, in self-protection and when equating oneself with other people, which can be seen in comments collected, such as: "I wanted a body like that, I just don't have the discipline to do it" ("Um corpão desse eu queria, só não tenho disciplina para isso") (Publication 1, Ana).

The category of lack of love is associated with the perception of having personal qualities that result in an inability to receive and maintain love and intimacy with others, as observed in "I want to be thin like this, but I have fat in my belly" ("Eu quero secar assim, mas tenho gordurinha na barriga") and "Wonderful even seems that it has no organs, while I seem to have twice as many" ("Maravilhosa parece até que não tem órgãos, enquanto eu pareço que tenho o dobro") (Publication 1, Ana)". On the other hand, the category of core beliefs of worthlessness is linked to the idea that the person is a sinner, immoral, dangerous or of no value to others, as can be seen in "every time I see Ana my self-esteem digs a meter more" ("cada vez que vejo a Ana minha autoestima cava um metro a mais") (Publication 1, Ana) and also in "Wonderful, it even seems that it has no organs, while I, it seems that I have twice as much, congratulations beautiful" ("Maravilhosa, parece até que não tem órgãos, enquanto eu, parece que tenho o dobro, parabéns lindona") (publication 2, Ana), which represents both disaffection and worthlessness.

Beck (2021) points out that if one of these beliefs is activated, the tendency is to focus on information that confirms it, thus neglecting contrary information, which is harmful in producing a functional cognitive assessment. Therefore, the discrepancy between the idealized body disclosed in the profiles of the influencers Ana and Maria, mentioned in the present study, and the real body of the women influenced by them may contribute to activate dysfunctional

beliefs that generate psychological suffering and illness. In addition, it is possible to analyze the difference between the influencers' profiles from the perspective of the implicit and explicit, considering the results of the comments in the mental health category. Although the ideal pattern is disclosed in both profiles, in what works implicitly, a lower incidence of comments in the mental health category is perceived, obtaining when adding the two publications.

On the other hand, in the profile that works with the body explicitly, there is a higher incidence of comments in this category, totaling 17 comments that can be associated with mental health, adding the two publications. Thus, a clearer negative impact on women's mental health is fostered by promoting the exaltation of the SR of ideal/perfect body. The identification of these results is relevant because it sheds light on the fact that yes, influencers who work directly with body image ideals can impact women's mental health, but that influencers who work indirectly with body image ideals also do so, even if neither they nor their followers clearly notice the impact of this body representation on their mental health.

In this sense, Judith Beck (2021) states that in psychological disorders, there is a dysfunctionality of thoughts, which influences the individual's mood and behaviors. In this sense, the negative consequence of SR of influencers' bodies on their influencers can appear when the woman perceives herself to be out of the ideal standard and consequently develops psychological disorders associated with dysfunctional thoughts and equally dysfunctional core beliefs.

Some disorders, such as depressive disorder, which cause suffering or impairment in social, professional, or other important areas of the individual's life (DSM-5; APA, 2014), can be triggered. Also, eating disorders, since studies show a considerable increase in the incidence of these disorders associated with the search for body ideals, and that these disorders predominantly affect women (HOEK; VAN HOEKEN, 2003) who, as mentioned above, are the most concerned with and charged for appearance. In this sense, it is indicated that among the precipitating factors of eating disorders are stressful events, restricted diets, and especially thinness seen as a symbol of success (FLEITLICH *et al*., 2000).

By way of conclusion, even if only from the data collected in this study, it is not possible to determine cause and effect relationships or even correlations that can be tested, it can be inferred, trying to answer at least partially the title question of this subtopic, that when real bodies do not correspond to the SRs propagated on social networks, women's mental health can

be impacted and that the magnitude of this impact can be variable to the point of even leading to the development of a mental disorder.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This study significantly enriches the existing literature by offering a reflective discussion on the potential impact on women's mental health when their actual bodies do not align with the representations disseminated on social media. It brings to light the psychological implications of the disparity between reality and the idealized images of female bodies frequently portrayed in the digital realm.

One of the study's limitations is its exclusive focus on data collected from the Brazilian population. This geographical constraint may have resulted in a lack of diverse cultural perspectives, as the study did not include influencer analyses from other countries. Cultural context can profoundly influence social representations and perceptions of beauty and body image, making it a crucial aspect to consider. Therefore, future research should aim to incorporate a more global perspective by including data from influencers across various countries.

Another limitation is the non-inclusion of profiles of transgender women. Transgender women, who often confront unique challenges and societal pressures related to body image, were not represented in this study. Including them in future research would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of social representations on different segments within the female population. Future studies could also focus on the international scenario and include transsexual women, either corroborating the results identified here or indicating other possibilities for reflection. This would allow for a deeper exploration of this theme, which is still relatively uncharted in current research.

Moreover, it is essential to consider the intersectionality of factors such as race, socioeconomic status and cultural background, which can significantly influence the social representations of the female body and its impact on mental health. Integrating these variables could offer a more nuanced understanding of the disparities in body image issues across different demographics. Additionally, future research could explore the role of traditional media versus digital social media in shaping body image perceptions, as well as the potential for digital

literacy programs to mitigate the negative impacts of social media on body image and mental health.

It is noteworthy that this study considered the fundamentals of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to analyze the data. CBT, with its focus on changing negative thought patterns, provides a valuable framework for understanding how social representations can impact mental health. However, further research could expand this perspective by including the ways in which other approaches to psychology perceive the phenomenon of social representations of female bodies. For instance, a psychoanalytic approach could provide insights into the unconscious influences on body image perceptions, while a sociocultural approach could shed light on the role of societal norms and expectations.

Additionally, future research could investigate the role of different cultural contexts and the impact of various social media platforms on body image and mental health. This could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the global implications of these social representations. For example, how do social representations vary across different cultures? How do different social media platforms contribute to the propagation of these representations? These are critical questions that need to be addressed to fully understand the scope and impact of social representations of the female body.

In conclusion, while this study provides valuable insights into the impact of social representations of the female body on women's mental health, there is still much to be explored. The findings of this study underscore the need for continued research in this area, with a focus on inclusivity, diversity and a broader cultural perspective. By doing so, we can work towards a more comprehensive understanding of this complex issue and its far-reaching implications on women's mental health.

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