

Health models and the quest for the "healthy" body. Analysis of adolescents' experiences using Instagram

Abstract

What counts as a the preferred/culturally dominant model of health is clearly influenced by political, social and cultural aspects, as well as by the media. This has a direct impact on adolescents, since there is a greater pressure to achieve the canons established as ideals. Young people's ideas about health are shaped by their personal circumstances and their social and cultural contexts. As research has indicated, social media plays a major role in this process, with Instagram one of the most popular sites/platforms. In this paper we provide the results of qualitative study designed to analyse the use of Instagram by students in relation to the field of health. The theory of social influence is used as the theoretical axis to investigate the extent to which adolescents imitate the socially desirable behaviours of the influencers they follow. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight Spanish students (5 girls and 3 boys) who acknowledged using Instagram to improve their healthy habits participated in the study. Three categories of responses were identified from an analysis of the interview data: a) the adolescents' conception of health; b) the influence of Instagram on what it means to have a healthy life; and c) reasons for following influencers. For the participants their main conception of health was associated with having a socially ideal body. Participants described how they used Instagram for the large amount of audiovisual content it offers, in many cases prioritising social success over health outcomes. This research helps to understand the role influencers have in translating and promoting health messages and meanings.

Keywords: Physical education; Health; Instagram; social influence

Introduction

Defining the concept of health is not easy, as there are a variety of political and economic interests invested in how it is understood (Fitzpatrick & Burrows, 2017). These interests pursue highly commodified ends that use "health" as a political and ideological tool to generate stereotypical ideas about healthy behaviour and indicators of health, such as body shape and weight (ref). In this context, new technologies, such as social media, provide a vehicle for learning about bodies and health that could be described as a form of 'public pedagogy' (Rich & Miah, 2014). As critical health education scholars argue, instead of a comprehensive, eclectic and contextual model of health, a reductionist approach is imposed, underpinned by mediatised dissemination, marketing and commodification, all regulated by the hegemony of the obesity discourse (Gray et al., 2018; Rich et al., 2020). According to Ayo (2012), the individualised health model, prominent in a neoliberal climate, promotes goals associated with body shape and weight which demand high levels of effort, which many people cannot (and should not) reach.

The association of health with the body's appearance and weight is exacerbated in adolescence, when young people are particularly sensitive to peer pressure and influence, as well as experiencing changes in their personal identity (Grogan, 2010). According to Aartun et al. (2022), this leads to an invisible social pressure, where different discourses of health and beauty, for example, have a strong influence on adolescents' embodied experiences.

With the exponential growth of social networks in recent years, there has been a proliferation of audiovisual resources related to physical activity, nutritional aspects, increasing muscle mass, etc (Goodyear et al., 2021). This content, due to its accessibility and immediacy, is viewed by millions of people. This can generate a number of benefits, as it allows access to an infinite amount of content immediately. In addition, it allows users not only to be recipients of information, but also to generate content or establish interaction through comments, experiences, likes. However, social networks are a like a loudspeaker, without any filter, that reproduce behaviors that can be transmitted by others (Bixter & Luhmann, 2021). For example, certain influencers without any training in the field of health, have millions of followers who reproduce their practices (Durau et al., 2022). In the context of social media, "influencers" are people who stand out on social networks, and other communication channels, through sharing content, generating a lot of influence on people's ideas and behaviours (Djafarova & Rishworth, 2017) Research suggests that their impact is higher among young people, influencing the way they evaluate themselves and modify their behaviour (Nelson et al., 2005). For example, in a study of young women's (15-17 years old), Camacho-Miñano et

al. (2019) found that influencers promoted discourses about fitness, empowerment and happiness but in doing so also reproduced the normative feminine body in a very restrictive way. Their study makes visible how digital media is used by younger girls, and how it affects their health, well-being, as well as their embodiment and subjectivities.

The results of Camacho-Miñano et al.'s (2019) study and those of others (Djafarova & Rishworth, 2017; Durau et al., 2022; Goodyear et al., 2021) suggest that it is essential to analyse how technology, specifically social media, can affect the bodily subjectivities of students and can generate an effect contrary to the intended one. That is to say, instead of being a source of resources to encourage reflection and learning, it can become a tool for the confusion of ideas, in many cases erroneous or unreliable ones. In response to this bias generated by the indiscriminate use of technology, the present research explores the issue further using social influence theory as a reference. The main difference of this research from previous literature is that it is underpinned by social influence theory (Kelman, 1958; 2004), focusing on how participants' attitudes and behaviours are, to a greater extent, due to the influence (direct or subliminal) exerted on them. This helps to understand the reasons why adolescents adopt one (or another) model of health, as well as the factors that condition the generation of that influence. Using this theory focuses on the processes that condition the acceptance of that influence, as well as the power of the influencer on the acquired behaviour and the durability of that behaviour. Specifically, this research examines how students aged 12-15 use Instagram as a resource for leading a healthy lifestyle and, in particular, analyses the means by which media influencers influence their behaviour, attitudes and habits in relation to their health.

The theory of social influence and its connection to social networks and health

Social influence theory (Kelman 1958; 2004) is based on the assumption that all changes in people's attitudes and behaviour are due to the influence of others, either intentionally or subliminally through three processes: 1) conformity; 2) identification; 3) internalisation. All three processes are closely related and conditioned by factors such as the likelihood of accepting the influence, the relative power of the influencer and the potency of the induced effect. According to Lim (2022), social influence in contemporary times is highly conditioned by the cultural factors inherent in politics, in the ideology of the individual and in the interests disseminated by the media; in other words, social influence is complex and multifaceted, influenced by factors such as social norms, social identification, social interaction and social inclusion. Lim argues that the media, in many cases influenced by a range of vested economic

and social interests, incite a typology of behaviour and attitude, which can be manifested in access to information, clothing, the food consumed or the place in which one lives or travels.

At its core, social influence theory elucidates the mechanisms through which persuasion operates within social contexts, shaping individuals' beliefs, intentions, and actions (Leow et al., 2021). The three processes discussed above are directly related to influence and persuasion in social contexts, something that influences people's affections, beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviours. This influence is always aimed at achieving a change in the behaviour of others, individuals or groups, in many cases to achieve particular objectives and implicit interests (Panagopoulos & van der Linden, 2016). In the domain of health, these principles take on particular salience, as the social influence to change mirrors wider societal pressures and media portrayals which often distort perceptions of what constitutes a "healthy lifestyle" (Rich & Paschal, 2020). The pervasive influence of social validation exacerbates the allure of conforming to societal body ideals, extravagant fitness regimes, and conspicuous displays on platforms such as Instagram (Laughter et al., 2023). In this age of digital affirmation, the quest for social acceptance frequently eclipses considerations of genuine well-being (Kargapolova et al., 2021).

In order to better understand how and why young people take up certain health messages, this study draws on the theory of social influence, to address the following questions: What motivates adolescents to follow specific influencers? How does adolescents' engagement with social networks shape their reception and application of health-related messages in their daily lives?.

Methodology Approach

A phenomenological, reflexive and critical approach was used for the study. The study is phenomenological in the sense that it investigates a circumstance lived from the experience of the participants, in this case, the conception that they give to health based on the influence generated by the influencers. Its reflective nature is based on the search for the whys and wherefores, seeking to investigate and analyse what kind of influence social networks generate, and how they (Instagram) impact on the health models adopted by adolescents. Finally, its critical component is argued on the basis of the analysis and questioning of the true value placed on health by adolescents, and this thinking may lack its own character.

For this purpose, the theory of social influence has been used, which focuses on how the influence of others can condition personal interests. Specifically, in the field of health, it allows us to explore how this pressure for social acceptance can lead to a lack of personal judgement about health models.

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133 **Ethics**

134 Permission was obtained from the principal investigator's University Ethics Committee.
135 Special attention was paid to the ethical principles of the research, since, on the one hand, the
136 participants were minors, and, on the other hand, their use of social networks was analysed.
137 This meant that the data had to be handled with special care and sensitivity, due to the large
138 amount of content circulating on the internet that is unsuitable for minors. After both they and
139 their parents had consented, participants were guaranteed anonymity throughout the research.
140 In addition, the privacy of the participants was respected at all times, giving them the freedom
141 to show or delve deeper into the Instagram profiles they followed. In this respect, it was
142 respected if a participant did not want to show a particular type of content. Both families and
143 students were assured that they would receive all research results once obtained, as well as the
144 research findings.

145 **Participants**

146 All students were recruited through their physical education teachers. To do this, three Physical
147 Education teachers, from three different public schools in a city in northern Spain, with whom
148 we usually work on different field projects were contacted. The purpose of the research was
149 explained to them and the criteria for selecting the students were provided. These three teachers
150 were familiar with the use of social networks, since they had used them in the classroom on
151 some occasions to work on different content. This greatly facilitated the task of recruiting
152 participants. All three schools were located in neighbourhoods with a medium socio-economic
153 family level

154 Students were recruited based on the following criteria: a) having a profile on
155 Instagram; b) being active in the use of Instagram (at least once a week): uploading photos,
156 commenting on others, giving likes, etc; c) following at least three profiles related to the field
157 of health: physical activity, bodybuilding, nutrition. Eight students (five girls and three boys)
158 showed an interest in the study and also met these criteria. They ranged in age from 13 to 15
159 years. The Instagram profiles of all participating students were public, so the researchers could
160 access them. It was also checked that they followed influencers linked to the health field.

161 **Data collection**

162 Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted, one with each participant. All of them were
163 conducted online via the Teams platform, thus adapting to the participants' schedules. They
164 were recorded, in order to be able to review them later in depth and transcribe them in their
165 entirety. Each one lasted approximately 45 minutes. Prior to each interview, the researchers

reviewed the Instagram profiles of each of the participants, identifying that they made week use of it, both in comments and in uploading photographs. This made it possible to tailor each of the questions asked in relation to their use of social media. All the questions were asked according to the objective of the study (table 1). An interview was conducted for each participant, with the aim of exploring each of the issues raised in greater depth. Each of the questions were asked in order, trying to go as deeply as possible into each of the answers.

All the questions developed were guided by the social influence theory used in the research. It should be noted that participants' use of Instagram was not tracked throughout the research, as the researchers believed that this could influence the way they acted. Their use was only checked at the beginning to ensure that they met the initial selection criteria.

Table 1- Basic script used for the semi-structured interview of participants

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- 1- What are the main characteristics of a healthy lifestyle and why do you consider them to be the most important?
 - 2- Do you consider that you have a healthy lifestyle and what do you do to achieve it?
 - 3- Do you think Instagram is useful for a healthy lifestyle? Why?
 - 4- Do you follow all the advice that is published on this network or do you question some of it? On what basis do you follow some or others?
 - 5- What criteria do you use to follow an influencer in the field of health? Why those and not others?
 - 6- To what extent would you like to be like them, and why?
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Data Analysis

The transcriptions of the interviews were coded using cross-matching patterns (Saldaña, 2013) generating thematic axes based on the saturation of ideas. These thematic ideas were related to health (physical activity, nutrition, rest, body typology) and the use of social networks (influencers, type of use, reasons for use, examples of use). This approach is used to compare and contrast different data sets in order to find similarities and differences that provide a deeper understanding of the data. Once the data was collected and transcribed through the Weft QDA software, labels were established on the most relevant and recurring results. These initial codes were then used to generate more general themes. These themes were then searched for in each of the participants' responses, filtering and counting the most recurrent aspects (saturation). On this basis, and considering the theoretical constructs of the theory of social influence, the categories into which the results are structured were generated.

Once the information had been classified by themes, it was thoroughly reviewed by each of the researchers, first individually and then jointly, in order to seek consensus on the results obtained (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). The data analysis process was carried out

according to the three phases of Kelman's social influence theory: conformity, identification and internalisation.

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1. Conformity: The analysis focused on identifying patterns of conformity among participants. Specifically, researchers examined how participants' responses reflected adherence to societal norms and expectations regarding health behaviors. This involved scrutinizing instances where participants conformed to prevalent health models promoted on Instagram, as well as identifying instances of resistance or deviation from these norms.
2. Identification: The analysis also delved into participants' identification with health models presented on Instagram. Researchers sought to understand the extent to which participants identified with influencers and the lifestyles they promoted. This phase involved examining participants' emulation of influencer behavior and their alignment with the values and ideals espoused by these figures.
3. Internalization: Finally, the analysis explored the internalization of health models and behaviors promoted on Instagram. Researchers examined whether participants internalized these models as their own and integrated them into their daily lives and self-concept. This phase involved assessing the depth of participants' commitment to health behaviors endorsed by influencers and the extent to which these behaviors became ingrained in their identities.

Through this comprehensive analysis, the study aimed to elucidate the nuanced ways in which Instagram influences adolescents' health models and behaviors, informed by Kelman's framework of social influence theory.

The three categories into which the results are structured are:

1- The participants' the concept of health: these address aspects linked to the individual's concept of health, the variables that influence it and the behavioural patterns they follow on a daily basis in order to have a healthy life.

2- Influence of Instagram to have a healthy life: all the information related to the use that participants make of Instagram as a tool of influence to achieve a healthy life model is included.

3 - Reasons for following influencers: information related to the reasons and motives that participants have for following certain influencers according to health aspects.

Results

The results are presented in narrative form, showing the most significant ideas in each of the categories into which the results are structured. Each text extract has been coded according to the interview conducted with each participant: (E1 (Esteban); E2 (Sofía); E3 (Sara); E4 (Miguel); E5 (Laura); E6 (Vanesa); E7 (Raúl); E8 (Lorena).

Students' concept of health

In response to interview questions 1 and 2, all of the participants described their understanding of health in terms of bodily appearance and/or weight, which was managed through exercise. Their comments reflect the social pressure to have the ideal body:

"Health is having a healthy body, let's not be fat [...]" (E7: Raúl).

"You have to keep fit, because as you get older your body changes, your hips get wider" (E2: Sofía).

"I know that it is very important for me to be healthy, so I try to go to the gym a lot and do sport [...]. It is the best way to have a healthy body" (E4: Miguel).

This understanding of health was also evident in the way they say other people:

"When you see someone, who has a neglected body, what you see is that they don't take care of themselves, that they don't follow a healthy lifestyle" (E6: Vanesa).

Their connection was further confirmed by their feelings of success in their relationships with others:

"Since I have a good body I notice how others like me more, I am more successful [...]. The classmates come closer to me, ask me more questions, want to be with me more in class" (E7: Raúl).

Most participants acknowledged the existence of social pressure to have the ideal body, which influenced their behaviour. They described how in order to have that "healthy" body it was necessary to carry out habits that, although not advisable, were effective, for example, to lose weight. They said that:

"I admit that some days I have practically not eaten [...]. To have a healthy body you need to make efforts" (E3: Sara).

"I know they say that shakes are unhealthy because you don't eat as much as you should, but I don't mind, because if you drink them you usually lose weight and see the results" (E5: Laura).

This search for the ideal body is something that most of the participants agreed on. However, some were clear that the most logical thing to do is to accept the body that each one has:

258 *"It is clear that we all, in one way or another, would like to have the ideal body that*
259 *some Instagramers have [...]. However, I am aware that the most sensible thing to do*
260 *is to accept oneself, although it is not easy". (E1: Esteban).*

261 This student says that this search for the ideal body, although he would like to be able to have
262 it, does not generate an obsession:

263 *"It is obvious that having a healthy body is better, but I am not obsessed with having it*
264 *[...]. I'm not willing to sacrifice my life to achieve it". (E1: Esteban).*

265 In fact, he questions whether certain practices that are encouraged on social media are actually
266 healthy:

267 *"It is normal that you end up getting carried away by certain practices that are*
268 *promoted on social networks, although on many occasions I try to be critical, as many*
269 *things are not healthy at all" (E1: Esteban).*

270 While most of the participants associated health with body appearance and physical
271 attractiveness, there were other students who had a broader dimension of health:

272 *"Honestly, what worries me most about having a healthy life is to look good, and for*
273 *others to see me that way [...] I mean, that when you wake up every morning you look*
274 *beautiful in the mirror" (E5: Laura).*

275 *"I don't know if health is something else, but what I like is to look good" (E4: Miguel).*

276 *"For me, body image is very important, but I am aware that health must go much further*
277 *[...]. For example, mental health is very important" (E8: Lorena).*

278 The results of this category indicate how the students link the health model fundamentally to
279 the body typology, which is mediated by social and cultural factors. Being liked by others and
280 feeling accepted by their peers are the main reasons they argue for healthy habits. These results
281 are in line with those obtained by Azzarito et al. (2016), in which they demonstrated how
282 students acknowledged being trapped in the existing media narrative about health in order to
283 obtain that ideal body and thus be able to 'fit in' with social norms of appearance and physical
284 attractiveness. They also relate to research by Vandenbosch et al. (2022), which demonstrates
285 the dysfunctionality that exists in many cases between social networks, health and negative
286 effects on body image. Under the theory of social influence, this is justified under the principle
287 of alienation, as the person modifies his or her personal identity in order to end up fulfilling
288 the expectations generated by society. This identity is represented in people's everyday actions,
289 in many cases integrating replicated behaviours of those they consider as referents.

290 ***Influence of Instagram to have a healthy life***

Looking at interview questions 3 and 4, participants were quite open in describing how they used Instagram almost daily, taking up many of the influencers' tips to construct their everyday lives in relation to embodied practices of health:

"I look at Instagram every day to see if there is new content. I care a lot about what some influencers comment on, as I find it interesting for my day-to-day life" (E6: Vanesa).

"I have it as a routine, I always see if they post new videos about how they take care of their body, their diet [...]. A lot of those ideas are used by me afterwards" (E4: Miguel).

"The material posted on these profiles influences what I do to live a healthy life" (E8: Lorena).

"I recognise that many times the content of Instagram conditions my way of acting, training, eating [...]" (E1: Esteban).

The main content they followed in relation to health was linked to physical activity, muscle training and nutrition:

"I mainly follow influencers who tell how they train and show the evolution of their body" (E1: Esteban).

"I like how some influencers talk about what they eat, how they train and how they take care of their body, although I also follow a lot the way they live, how they dress, where they go [...]" (E3: Sara).

They attached little importance to the rigour and substantiation of the information that was posted on Instagram, rather what mattered was whether the message accorded with their own accords with their own needs and worldview about health:

"I don't really give too much importance to whether what influencers say is scientifically proven or not, what matters to me is that it is useful to me" (E8: Lorena).

"I try to check on the internet if what they say is right or wrong, but the truth is that if I like what they say, I usually do it straight away" (E7: Raúl).

"If I'm honest, what I look at most when following an influencer is how many followers they have and how well known they are" (E1: Esteban).

"I recognise that it is not the best option, and the truth is that lately I try to contrast the information more, although I don't know if I am looking at the best sources" (E3: Sara).

They also give a lot of relevance to the lifestyle and aesthetic patterns of the influencers. This even relates to the way of dressing: These aspects are closely related to social influence theory, for example, with the element of conformity, aligning aesthetics and health as elements of

social identification. Also, with the elements of compliance, embodied in factors such as social norms, minority influence and group attractiveness, as behaviours are manifested in order to please the groups to which they belong.

"In the end I think aesthetics also has a health aspect, that is to say, you dress or take care of yourself in one way or another depending on how you look or feel" [...]. There are clothes that you can only wear if you have a healthy body" (E4: Miguel).

"I think we all prioritise aesthetics over any other health parameter. I am the first. We like to be liked by others" (E5: Laura).

Delving deeper into the health discourses that spread on Instagram, they also indicate that in many cases they idealise the health models that the influencers promote in their profiles, knowing that it is very difficult to achieve those body types, have those routines, facilities or access to certain services:

"I am aware that many of the things that influencers talk about are very difficult to achieve, as they require a lot of resources [...]. For example, I don't have the possibility of having a personal trainer, having a gym at home or having such a wide variety of food" (E1: Esteban).

This, on certain occasions, generates frustration:

"I have to admit that on some occasions this causes me frustration, since, no matter how hard you try, you will never get what they get". (E6: Vanesa). *"If you want to be liked, and above all to be liked by others, you have to accept that you have to have a good body, and for that reason you have to look for references"* (E8: Lorena).

The results of this category have shown how the use of Instagram, focuses more on the social impact of the influencer than on the existing rigorous content related to health. This influences the importance that students give to aesthetic patterns, something that can cause frustration. Linking these results with the theory of social influence, we see how students attach great importance to this "mirror health", prioritizing body image over any other health parameter. Faced with this situation of the search for the ideal body image, Aartun et al. (2020) highlight the importance of the application of pedagogies of embodiment in PE, encouraging students to reflect before, during and after physical activities linked to health. This encourages a deeper understanding of the true concept of health, giving students a greater distance from practices that, although promoted by influential people, are not entirely recommendable. This influence on the pursuit of the 'healthy body' generates stereotypes that can lead to

discrimination, with students who do not comply with the normative weight being teased (Plummer et al. 2022). This relates to the social influence theory element of ‘normative bias’, in this case, demonstrating how people who do not conform to established body canons are relegated to the background. In the same way, and in response to the research questions posed, it can be seen that there is constant pressure on social networks to have the ideal body linked to health, with those who are closer to the defined models having a greater ‘social acceptance’ (Langnes et al., 2023).

Reasons for following influencers

The main reasons given by participants for following influencers were: the number of followers they have, the quality of the content they post on their profile and the resources they offer to users. The number of followers was taken as indicative of the quality of the message and the resources provided.

"The first thing I base my decision to follow an influencer on is the media impact they have and their number of followers [...]. If they have a lot of followers you know they are successful" (E8: Lorena). *"Someone who does not have many followers is not worth following"* (E1: Esteban).

"If an influencer has many followers, it makes it easier for you to have more impact with others" (E3: Sara).

"I look to do exercise routines that are performed by influencers with a lot of followers, as they are more successful" (E7: Raúl).

"I'm interested in quality content, and above all, content that can be put into practice in your day-to-day life" (E4: Miguel).

Participants indicated that following certain health influencers was trendy and widely accepted among their peers:

"It's not the same if you train or do sport on your own as if you do it because you follow certain influencers [...]" (E5: Laura).

"Truly, nowadays, who doesn't follow an influencer? Nobody knows everything, so it's always good to follow someone who knows more" (E2: Sofia).

In this sense, some participants recognise that it is always positive to have one's own criteria on health, but that it is also necessary to be attentive to new trends on social networks, as it is necessary to be up to date in terms of health.

387 *"I always try to have my own criteria, but when it comes to health you have to be up to*
388 *date, and social networks are a good way to do this [...]. In the end you are always*
389 *influenced in some way"* (E6: Sofia).

390 This is related to the theory of social influence, in particular, with the modelling of behaviour,
391 demonstrating how students tend to imitate those they consider role models, in this case
392 through social networks, something that has an impact on their perception of what is desirable
393 in terms of health.

394 Participants say they are attracted to the seemingly idyllic life that influencers lead:

395 *"The truth is, when I follow an influencer it is because in a certain way they make you*
396 *keep up to date with their advice, their trends [...]* (E7: Raúl). *"I admit that sometimes*
397 *I pay more attention to the lifestyle of the influencers than to what they really say"* (E6:
398 Vanesa). *"Although if you think about it, it's a bit sad, deep down we all try to be a bit*
399 *like them, since it seems that life is going so well for them"* (E3: Sara).

400 Although they recognize that surely everything is not as beautiful as it seems:

401 *"It is very utopian when you are told that you have to accept yourself as you are. If you*
402 *have a good body you are much more attractive, and that is what we are all looking for*
403 *[...] "I'm actually aware that these influencers edit the videos to make everything look*
404 *beautiful, but I admit that I see them all the time"* (E1: Esteban).

405 These aspects link to elements of the social influence theory of role models, the effect of the
406 social environment and reference groups, showing how participants tend to imitate people they
407 consider successful, in order to feel socially supported and supported by their circles of friends.
408 This influence can significantly impact students' health perceptions and behaviours.

409 The results of this category show how students' perceived social success is associated
410 with following influencers with the most followers. These "healthy" lifestyle models are the
411 most attractive to them. According to the theory of social influence, this determines how the
412 individual adopts and imitates patterns of behaviour of the most influential people in society,
413 replicating practices that bring them closer to this success and collective repercussion.
414 However, the results reflect how students, although they are aware of how unattainable it is to
415 follow those life models spread by instagramers, try to imitate them. This social success, little
416 questioned in terms of rigorousness, seems to be socially accepted. These results connect with
417 the identification and internalisation elements of social influence theory. Regarding
418 identification, in particular with the affiliation motivation, as students identify with those they
419 admire, respect or wish to imitate. This process is motivated by the desire to be socially

accepted. In this case, it has been observed that students follow the healthy lifestyle patterns and models of influencers because of their success and social impact. With regard to internalisation, specifically with the motivation of personal conviction, determining how attitudes and behaviours are integrated into the person's own system of values and principles. In this case, the participants relate the health models promoted by the influencers with the lifestyles they appear to have, aspiring, in certain cases, to want to have them.

Discussion

The study reported in this paper draws on social influence theory to examine the modern-day landscape of health perceptions and practices among adolescents, particularly within the realm of Instagram usage. It unravels the multifaceted nature of how individuals' attitudes and behaviors towards health are molded by external forces, echoing the foundational principles elucidated by Kelman (1958; 2004). As evidenced by the convergence of theoretical insights and empirical findings, the sway of social influence extends far beyond mere conformity, identification, or internalization; it permeates the fabric of societal norms, cultural ideologies, and media representations, shaping not only individuals' health aspirations but also their social identities and interactions (Lim, 2022). In this sense, the results obtained in this research have shown how, through the use of Instagram, adolescents conceive a model of personal health that is highly conditioned by social media influence.

Navigating the influx of health-related content on social media necessitates discernment and critical appraisal (Tapan-broutin & Ilkorucu, 2021). Addressing these challenges calls for a paradigm shift towards contextually tailored health interventions (Wright et al., 2018). Yet, while social networks like Instagram serve as lucrative platforms for health promotion, the quality and reliability of content, particularly that disseminated by high-profile influencers, remain subject to scrutiny (Aïmeur et al., 2023; Domenico et al., 2021). This research underscores the need for guiding adolescents towards discerning, conscientious, and non-stereotypical health models. Leveraging social media's potential for health promotion demands concerted efforts to counteract detrimental stereotypes and impositions, safeguarding adolescent well-being in an increasingly digitized world.

In accordance with the first category of analysis, related to the concept of health, the results show how participants associate health mainly with a stereotypical body typology. Participants affirm that the most important goal is to obtain that body, which they call healthy, in the most effective way possible, often without questioning the means to achieve it. Political, economic, and marketing factors, as discussed by González-Calvo et al. (2022), strongly condition these body stereotypes, which are manifested in the field of health and educational

curricula. It is essential to adopt critical teaching models that allow students to question concepts of obesity and a healthy body, reflecting on body stereotypes that limit a broad and integrative understanding of health (Safron, 2020). This is reflected in the results of the present study, as participants recognize having obsessive behaviors in relation to their concept of health that directly affect their physical self-concept and social relationships. Additionally, they acknowledge attaching great importance to aesthetics. González-Calvo et al. (2020) indicate how social, cultural, and media patterns surrounding the pedagogy of physical activity and sport bias individual behaviors, leading to superficiality, desirability, and aesthetic appearance. Most students recognize that health has a superficial and aesthetic purpose, although they know that a healthy life model must consider a diversity of variables.

Regarding the second category of analysis, the influence of Instagram on their health model, participants indicated their dependence on this social network, adapting their lifestyle models to those of influencers. They acknowledged that they did not care too much about the accuracy of the information shared by influencers. As Goodyear et al. (2019) point out, today's society, and especially adolescence, is based on immediacy, which is particularly dangerous when health is at stake, as the immediate pressure to achieve challenges produces negative feelings in children and adolescents, especially those lacking the necessary skills. The advice participants follow on Instagram primarily concerns physical activity, muscle training, and nutrition. However, these are often the aesthetic and lifestyle patterns of influencers, generating frustration when these ideals are unattainable.

In relation to the third category of analysis, the reasons for following influencers, results show that the most important criteria were the number of followers, content uploaded, and resources offered to users. Participants admitted that social impact was important to them, and following successful influencers made them feel accepted and up-to-date. It is essential to be cautious about the content adolescents access on social networks, where audiovisual content of little rigor often prevails to gain social media traction (Camacho-Miñano et al., 2019). Despite this, the use of social networks can inspire students, encouraging their creativity based on prior knowledge (Santos et al., 2023). To achieve this, focus must be placed on: a) the specific content being consulted; and b) the interactions generated among followers (likes, retweets) (Goodyear et al., 2019).

By unraveling the intricate web of social influence and digital engagement, this study paves the way for a more informed and emancipated youth, poised to navigate the complexities of health in the digital age with resilience and discernment. These results offer a nuanced understanding of how adolescents navigate the digital terrain of Instagram, where health ideals

intersect with social validation and influencer dynamics (Arango-Paternina et al., 2022). The results obtained, based on the three categories of analysis, underscore the need to recalibrate educational approaches, especially in physical education (PE), to foster critical thinking and holistic perspectives on health, emancipating students from stereotypical body norms and superficial aspirations (Wiklander et al., 2023).

Conclusions

The article has demonstrated how the student who participated in the study were influenced through their engagement with Instagram to adopt meanings of health that were associated with stereotypical canons of body type. This following of influencers is fundamentally due to their social success, far beyond the rigorousness of the content offered. This gives meaning to the theory of social influence used as a theoretical structure in the research.

In this sense, the results obtained lead to a profound reflection on the role that participants' social networks currently play in adolescents with respect to their health model, something that could be called "digital health" (Rich & Miah, 2014; Rich et al., 2020). As reflected in the research, the influence that social networks can exert on adolescents is high, following healthy patterns that, at times, can be harmful. Without underestimating and undervaluing their potential in terms of accessibility and availability of content, it is essential that both the educational administration, the PE, sports clubs and federations, and gyms, through the involvement of families, establish protocols, advice and training in relation to digital health.

This article makes an important contribution to the existing literature on the topic of social networks, health and social influence among adolescents. However, the article has some limitations. Firstly, it only analyses one social network, Instagram. Secondly, the specific contexts of practice of each of the participants have not been analysed. In this sense, as future lines of research, it would be interesting to contrast the use made of various social networks, as well as to carry out specific interventions on the content consumed and its influence on day-to-day practice.

Some practical implications for health and physical educators emerge from the work. First of all, it is necessary to establish training programs that help the correct use of social networks such as Instagram, with the aim to address the risks to subjective well-being posed by online social networks. Secondly, PE are crucial to generate an adequate concept of body satisfaction, through the use of respect and the improvement of self-confidence, among other variables. In addition, the training of important significant others such as parents and/or teachers is relevant in the proper use of social networks. For this reason, and as reflected in this

research, it is essential that the educational system and families intentionally address the use that adolescents make of social networks, with PE being a fundamental subject. This must be taught under the pedagogical premises of reflection and critical awareness, trying to promote eclectic health habits in students based on body acceptance. It is necessary to teach adolescents how to cope with this indoctrination in behaviour that can be associated with the field of health, and that can have negative physical, psychological and social consequences. Therefore, appropriate pedagogical use must be made of the concepts of "face-to-face health" and "digital health", as well as the management of personal data in the use of social networks. In this sense, initial teacher training is essential, and must connect the field of health with the reality that students experience on a daily basis, and which of course influences how they use and relate to social networks. In this sense, it is essential that, for example, subjects such as PE work on physical literacy, advocating a more ethical, proportionate and accepted model of health, from a vision of social justice (González-Calvo et al., 2021). Therefore, schools should regulate the use of social networks, approaching them from a reflective, critical and pedagogical perspective, connecting their use with the practice of conscious and healthy physical activity (Gil-Espinosa et al., 2022). Providing healthy resources, based on personal acceptance, is essential, promoting activities that are linked to self-esteem and physical self-concept, trying to filter healthy messages that come from social networks. It is important that students can make their own decisions in relation to health, since, as has been seen in the theory of social influence, the influence generated by influencers can be very high, establishing "role models" supported by social norms and peer group pressures.

As a final reflection, this research serves as a clarion call for educators, policymakers and health advocates to prioritise media literacy and promote evidence-based health education strategies, empowering adolescents to make informed decisions amidst the pervasive influence of social media. Ultimately, the study contributes to the ongoing discourse on adolescent health and digital literacy, encouraging a more inclusive and equitable approach to health promotion in the digital age.

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