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Excessive physical exercise and physical self-concept in eating disorders: Preliminary results

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Statement of the Problem, Anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are among the most common chronic diseases in adolescents and young adults (Garner, 2004). Those eating disorders (ED) have mortality rates from up to 21% (Huas, 2013), making ED one of the deadliest mental health diseases (Fichter, Quadflieg, & Hedlund, 2008). Among inappropriate compensatory behaviors such as vomiting or laxative abuse used by patients, excessive physical exercise (EPE) is very worrisome for clinical teams since patients who present EPE have poorer prognosis than non-exerciser patients (Stiles-Shields, DclinPsy, Lock, & Le Grange, 2015). EPE is defined by an abnormal amount of physical activity combined with a compulsive need to do physical exercise. If other compensatory behaviours are well controlled during hospitalization, EPE is not cared directly during treatments since there is a lack of empirical knowledge about this behaviour. Those issues highlight the need to study physical self-concept as a key construct. Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: This research aims to study relations between quantitative and compulsive EPE components and physical self-concept in ED patients. The sample of this cross-sectional study is composed with patients aged between 14 and 26 years old engaged in an ED intervention program. The Physical Self-Inventory (Maiano et al. 2008) and the Exercise and Eating Disorder test (Danielson et al., 2014) are used to measure variables. Findings: Preliminary results based on 15 patients indicates that there is a positive relation between sport competence and EPE quantity ($r= 0,650$, $p < 0,05$) and a negative relation between perceived physical appearance and EPE compulsion ($r= -0,611$, $p < 0,05$). There is no relation between the other components of physical self-concept and EPE. There is no relation between body distortion and EPE components. Conclusion & Significance, result suggests that the more patients exercise compulsively, the more negative their perception of their physical appearance. Results are intended to provide targeted intervention strategies for exerciser patients, however more studies are needed.

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