

Facebook and the diffusion of themes: Gender equality and female empowerment in the vision of korfball athletes

FACEBOOK AND THE DIFFUSION OF THEMES: GENDER EQUALITY AND FEMALE EMPOWERMENT IN THE VISION OF KORFBALL ATHLETES

O FACEBOOK E A DIFUSÃO DAS TEMÁTICAS: IGUALDADE DE GÊNERO E EMPODERAMENTO FEMININO NA VISÃO DE ATLETAS DE CORFEBOL

FACEBOOK Y LA DIFUSIÓN DE TEMAS: IGUALDAD DE GÉNERO Y EMPODERAMIENTO FEMENINO EN LA VISIÓN DE LAS ATLETAS CORFEBOL



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ABSTRACT: The role of Facebook in the dissemination of themes related to gender equality and female empowerment was analyzed, in the view of Korfball athletes in Brazil. Qualitative study that used a questionnaire applied to 12 Korfball athletes from Brazil. Data were descriptively analyzed using the Content Analysis Technique. The results showed that the athletes have knowledge about gender issues and female empowerment in Korfball, they emphasized that Facebook is an important tool in the dissemination of the sport and the themes, gender equality and female empowerment of women in Korfball.

KEYWORDS: Sport. Korfball. Female empowerment. Gender equality. Facebook.

RESUMO: *Analisou-se o papel do Facebook na difusão das temáticas relacionadas à igualdade de gênero e o empoderamento feminino, na visão de atletas de corfebol do Brasil. Estudo qualitativo que se fez uso de um questionário aplicado à 12 atletas de corfebol do Brasil. Os dados foram analisados descritivamente por meio da Técnica de Análise de Conteúdo. Os resultados evidenciaram que o(a)s atletas possuem conhecimento acerca das questões de gênero e empoderamento feminino no corfebol, enfatizaram ser o Facebook uma importante ferramenta na divulgação da modalidade e das temáticas, da igualdade de gênero e do empoderamento feminino da mulher no corfebol.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Esporte. Corfebol. Empoderamento feminino. Igualdade de gênero. Facebook.*

RESUMEN: *Se analizó el papel de Facebook en la difusión de temas relacionados con la igualdad de género y el empoderamiento de las mujeres, en opinión de los deportistas de korfball en Brasil. Estudio cualitativo que utilizó un cuestionario aplicado a 12 atletas de Korfball de Brasil. Los datos se analizaron de forma descriptiva mediante la técnica de análisis de contenido. Los resultados mostraron que las deportistas tienen conocimiento sobre temas de género y empoderamiento femenino en Korfball, enfatizaron que Facebook es una herramienta importante en la difusión del deporte y los temas, igualdad de género y empoderamiento femenino de las mujeres en Korfball.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Deporte. Korfball. Empoderamiento femenino. Igualdad de género. Facebook.*

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Introduction

Social media means a set of Internet applications, whose concepts are based on WEB 2.0, which enables the creation and exchange of varied content, many of which are designed by the user himself (KAPLAN; HAENLEIN, 2010). Among the various types of social media, such as *blogs/microblogs (Twitter)*, the websites used to share multimedia content (*YouTube, Instagram*) and social networks, such as *Facebook*, are the object of analysis of this study.

According to Iosifidis and Nicoli (2019), *Facebook promoted* a revolution in the communication process and profoundly impacted people's lives. This was launched in 2004 and the numbers related to accounts opened on the platform, such as daily user accesses, exceed the house of billions of individuals connected to the network. According to Kemp (2020), among the most used social interaction and communication platforms in the world, *Facebook* remains the most popular social networking site on the web, with about 2.5 billion monthly active users.

This platform has been used quite frequently in the academic area. In the field of Education (PESSOA; PANIAGO, 2018; LINHARES; CHAGAS, 2015), sociology (MESCH, 2017; ABBAS; MESCH, 2016), Physical Education and Sports (LINKER *et al.*, 2018; FERNANDEZ-RIO, BERNABE-MARTÍN, 2018; PEDROSO *et al.*, 2017) its applicability has been ratified in the most different areas, such as data collection space (COSTA, 2018; BUZZI *et al.*, 2016) and scientific dissemination (BARBOSA; SOUZA, 2017).

Authors such as Garcia *et al.* (2018), in a pioneering study on gender issues in the field of social networks, explored the gender division on *Facebook*, in different countries, the interfaces with some social sectors, such as the economy, education and health. They used the *Facebook Gender Divide (FGD)* tool, a metric composed of data from more than 1.4 billion users, dispersed in 217 countries and had access to interesting data on aspects related to gender inequality, globally. The authors showed that the FGD compiles gender equality indicators in different scenarios of society, such as education and health and aspects related to economic opportunities, such as the issue of employment.

Several social movements have used social networks to promote their causes and have added important gains, such as visibility and recognition. Some campaigns can be evidenced: in the militancy against sexual harassment #MexeuComUmamexeuComTodas (ROMEIRO; SILVA, 2018), in the scenario of racial segregation #BlackLivesMatter (INCE, ROJAS, DAVIS, 2017), in sport, against gender inequality #LikeAGirl, #GirlsCan (RODRIGUES, 2016; DELUCHI, 2016) are some examples.

In this sense, Loiseau and Nowacka (2015) bet on social networks as a powerful source

of highlighting the issues of gender, women's rights and, thus, leveraging commitments to equal opportunities. The authors see technologies, social media and social networks as an important tool to mobilize the public in the face of gender differences, in all sectors of society, including sports. Oliveira (2019) and Perez and Ricoldi (2019) corroborate the authors and show that it is a *feminism of the hashtag*, which aims to promote activism on issues related to gender issues. And that these are characteristics of the fourth wave of feminism, which has as an environment of discussion the digital space.

According to Cooky and Antunovic (2020) this new format of promoting knowledge, via digital activism, about gender narratives in the field of sport, tends to promote a disruption of male hegemony that has been nothing the contents evidenced by the different sports channels. For the authors, by giving voice to the athletes and their stories, there is the strengthening of different collectives.

In view of the above, it can be seen that the *tools provided by Facebook* tend to show that the construction of contexts are possible, which allow to make comments, shares, or, only, like the content, becoming an interesting reference point for the collection of information about the gender theme in the sports field. However, little is known about the potential of the social *network Facebook* in terms of promoting effective discussions in the field of gender, issues related to equal opportunities and women's empowerment in sport.

By focusing on the egalitarian issue in the sports context, Korfball advocates the participation of both genders, because it translates a different reality from other sports modalities, given that the teams are formed by men and women, the marking of athletes is by gender, weakening the traditional prerogatives of the sport and promoting a balance in performances, such as strength, height, speed (GUBBY; WELLARD, 2016). According to the authors, these are unique characteristics of Korfball and can break with the binary thought of hegemonic masculinity and femininity in the field of bodily practices, making them more inclusive and possibly achievable, with regard to equal opportunities between genders in sport.

In view of these issues, it became interesting *to analyze the role of Facebook* in the dissemination of themes related to gender equality and female empowerment, in the view of Korfball athletes in Brazil.

Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature and was developed through exploratory research. A self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection (RICHARDSON, 2017) via *online platform*, *Google Forms*, which generated a *link* that was sent to the athletes by *WhatsApp*. Information technologies have become allied, due to the popularization of these and which can be accessed from different locations, besides being attractive and promoting quick access to responses, almost in real time (ARAÚJO *et al.*, 2019).

The sampling technique used in this study was characterized as non-probabilistic and for convenience. The sample consisted of 12 participants, Korfball players of the Brazilian national team, six male athletes and six female athletes, who are willing to participate in the study, which was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee (CEP) under the opinion of number: 2,318,775. All participants also signed the Free and Informed Consent Form (TCLE).

The collected material was analyzed descriptively and the data were analyzed using the Content Analysis Technique proposed by Bardin (2017). For this, the answers from the questionnaire were grouped into two thematic categories elaborated a priori. Category 1, Korfball, gender equality and female empowerment, which was subdivided into three thematic axes: 1.1) Understanding of athletes on gender equality; 1.2) Athletes' understanding of female empowerment; and 1.3) Diffusion of Korfball. As for category 2, Interfaces between Korfball and *Facebook*, it was subdivided into two thematic axes: 2.1) *The role of Facebook* in the dissemination/dissemination of knowledge about Korfball; and 2.2) *Facebook as a space for sharing content about gender and empowerment*.

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Results and Discussion

The analysis of the statements was based on the answers from the questionnaire applied to athletes from the Brazilian Korfball team of both federations, which are located in the states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. It was found that, regarding the age group, it varied between 17 and 32 years. Regarding marital status, all athletes are single. Regarding education, five athletes have Incomplete Higher Education, five athletes have Complete Higher Education and two athletes have complete high school.

These athletes are not exclusively dedicated to the sport. They exercise other professions to maintain themselves financially. Regarding the frequency of Korfball practice, eight athletes practice twice a week, one athlete said he practiced once a week, while one athlete said he

practiced three times a week and another said he practiced weekly. Finally, an athlete claimed to practice monthly.

Regarding salary income, 41.66% of athletes stated that they did not have income; 41.66% of the sample reported that they earn from one to two minimum wages and 16.66% of the sample showed that they receive three to four minimum wages per month. Data on the profession exercised showed that 41.66% of the sample are physical education teachers; 41.66% of students; 8.33% of higher education students and 8.33% of the sample are self-employed. As for the time of practice, this varied between 2 and 9 years.

As previously claimed, the answers were grouped into two thematic categories elaborated a priori, according to the themes, as already explained in the procedures for data analysis. It is pressing to emphasize that some questions had more than one answer, thus changing the percentage value; and that the information presented refers to the data that obtained the highest incidence of responses.

Regarding category 1) Korfball, gender equality and female empowerment, the thematic axes were discussed - understanding of Korfball athletes about gender equality, female empowerment and the diffusion of Korfball. Gender equality in the athletes' view is related to the issues of equal rights and conditions for both, as well as the lack of differences in opportunities between men and women. It is understood here the understanding, even if not so thoroughly, that the athletes have an understanding about gender equality, however, it is also perceived the need to conceive more information about gender equity. According to Alves (2016), equity is a broader concept, referring to justice and the construction of specific policies that ensure this balance.

For athletes, Korfball helps in promoting gender equality in the sporting context. According to 50% of the athletes, in Korfball, the players act on an equal footing and the differences between genders do not prevail, but respect, cooperation and inclusion, due to their rules. This fact can be corroborated in the statements of the athletes:

[...] because it is the only court sport that is mixed by rule and mandatory, it can promote equality because of it (Athlete 12, our translation).

[...] because it is officially mixed so men need women playing as well as the other way around, which makes there is respect on both sides (Athlete 9, our translation).

[...] Korfball aims at cooperation and inclusion between players, everyone depends on everyone to win, not depending on the player who comes out, so if you have a player who is weaker, the team needs to strengthen him [...]. And

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because they play men and women having the same roles within the game, it takes the interaction of the two in a positive way to emerge victorious (Athlete 10, our translation).

Another 41.66% of athletes stated that Korfball is a space in which women can show their abilities without being discriminated against. This question can be evidenced in the speech of an interviewee:

[...] Korfball provides the possibility for women to show their potential without segregation, different from what happens in most sports (Athlete 8, our translation).

Raj (2020) attests to the information of the athletes, evidencing a positive perspective on equal opportunities between genders in sport in the near future. The author cites the 2020 Agenda on gender equality in sport, proposed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). However, some barriers still need to be overcome. The author listed six obstacles that still contribute to this disparity. Inequality in terms of salaries and awards, biological differences, differentiated financial return, with regard to revenue generated, media coverage, social roles assigned to men and women and pregnancy. Breaking these barriers are necessary, through the elaboration of public policies to end gender prejudice, as well as to provide access to education and financial support to projects that deal with the inclusion of women in sport. | 7

Female empowerment in the view of athletes is related to the active participation of women in society, making their voice, their values, their rights count. This understanding is in line with what Brauner (2015) and Stromquist (1995) emphasized about empowerment. For the authors, by empowering an individual, giving him active voice and visibility, he contributes to his emancipation and strengthening. These elements influence your actions.

When asked about the Korfball and female empowerment relationship, 50% of the athletes emphasized that the modality emphasizes gender equality and women empower and assume their space by right within the courts, whether as an athlete, coach or referee. This question can be evidenced in a speech of an interviewee:

[...] women often lose space for men in sport in general, but in Korfball women play an important role in conjunction with men which makes women value themselves more, as well as men (Athlete 9, our translation).

Another 41.66% of athletes stated that it is a sport in which the presence of women is essential since its origin, has its space guaranteed. After that, the woman is already empowered. This fact can be attested in the speech of an interviewee:

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[...] it is clear in schools that boys play and participate in physical education classes, while the girls sit down. In a sport that is necessary the participation of the two, both need to strive for the girl to be good, so there is the incentive of female participation in the sport and even its empowerment because a door opens for their participation (Athlete 10, our translation).

The speech of the athlete 10 can be corroborated in the study by Khan and Khan (2020), in which the authors promoted the existence of programs that promote female empowerment through sports practices and physical activities. The authors emphasized that some strategies departing from programs such as "Woman Win" (the first international organization that aims to empower girls and women through sport) generate positive effects on the female population. Sport is a potentiator in the empowerment of girls and women, in the economic and social sphere.

Regarding the diffusion of Korfball in Brazil and the possible ways of spreading the sport, it was found that 75% of the athletes showed that the sport is not popular in Brazil due to ignorance, disinformation and prejudice, as well as the valorization of traditional sports to the detriment of new modalities, because Korfball differs from traditional sports due to its rules.

This question can be corroborated in the speech of the athlete:

Brazil has a sports culture with a greater amount of physical contact and usually gender segregation. The Korfball format sometimes frustrates new participants because of misinformation and prejudice (Athlete 8, our translation).

However, this situation could be reversed in the view of the athletes. According to 50% of these, actions such as training/training courses for professionals in different states of Brazil and insertion in higher education, in Physical Education courses, could effectively contribute to the dissemination of the modality. Another 41.66% of the interviewees stated the insertion of Korfball in schools, physical education classes or school championships. These questions can be corroborated in the statements of some athletes:

[...] physical education classes in college. Because then the teachers would know the sport and help in the dissemination (Athlete 3, our translation).

[...] courses in different states so that everyone knows the modality (Athlete 1, our translation).

Schools, no doubt... there is no better way to be worked on in the school reality, with girls and boys together in physical education classes (Athlete 4, our translation).

Regarding the new contents in the context of physical education classes and the

disruption of prejudice regarding less traditional modalities, can be visualized in the study by Tucunduva and Bortoleto (2019). The authors talked about the insertion of a body practice, in this case, the circus, within the framework of teacher training courses in Physical Education, in order to add new contents, in addition to the traditional modalities. This reflection corroborates the view of athletes about the diffusion of Korfball through teacher training courses.

Thus, Gubby (2018) points out that by inserting sports practices in physical education classes, which promote the collective experience of boys and girls playing together, such as Korfball, they can contribute to the disruption of male hegemony in the sports context, helping to promote gender equality. In the context of the BNCC (Common National Curriculum Base, 2020), the sport Korfball is seen as an invasion game and the sport is centered as a thematic unit of Physical Education, as well as classified under several criteria, among them cooperation, one of the premises of Korfball.

Regarding category **2) Interfaces between Korfball and Facebook**, we tried to discuss the interfaces between Korfball and *Facebook*, in the view of the Brazilian Korfball athletes. This thematic axis was subdivided into two subcategories: *the role of Facebook* in the dissemination/dissemination of knowledge about Korfball and *Facebook* as a space for sharing content about gender and behest empowerment.

Regarding the first subcategory, it can be seen that 83.33% of the athletes were active in the social network *Facebook* in some way, whether enjoying, posting or sharing content related to the modality, thus helping in the diffusion of Korfball. This information can be viewed in some statements:

Yes, because I am a player and I want to spread the sport that I practice (Athlete 1, our translation).

Yes. IKF official games are streamed on YouTube, allowing you to share on Facebook and enable prying eyes to know the sport, as well as photos, game results, etc. (Athlete 5, our translation).

According to research by Achen *et al.* (2020), the intelligent use of different social networks, in the case of the study, *Twitter* and *Facebook*, can help in the promotion of the content disseminated by sports clubs, positively favoring the dissemination, by fans and users of social networks, of the sport that is a fan. This construction of relationships evidenced by the authors, taking into account the triad, fans, athletes and social media, tends to reach, globally, thousands of people, thus contributing to the spread of the sport. It can be seen that *Facebook* has proved effective, since this efficiency is due to its tools to like, comment and share content.

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The speech of an athlete corroborates this question:

[...] it is a sport that draws attention, and social networks reach large numbers in a short time (Athlete 4, our translation).

In this perspective, an article published by Gough (2020) on the site *Statista*, the author cites a survey conducted by Capgemini, a company that provides consulting services, and the data revealed that sports content has been consumed through different social media, among them, *there is YouTube, Twitter and Facebook*, which have *streaming platforms*, which broadcast live games, as well as disseminate other content.

Regarding the subcategory *related to Facebook* as a space for sharing content regarding gender equality, 41.66% of the athletes said that their posts address this theme. The *posts* were about the differences between football (salary, contracts, management and arbitration positions) and Korfball (promotes equality in every way). The athlete's speech can corroborate this question:

Yes, I made a comparison with football, which is historically regarded as a "male sport", highly aggressive and excludes women from its practice, even though this scenario is changing today. Korfball, on the other hand, allows everyone to play equally and encourages the practice of both genres and Fair Play (Athlete 8, our translation).

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According to Pereira and Brito (2020), when we use social media spaces as a territory of social practices, there is the formation of collectives of people who organize themselves from socially common shared values to all. Thus, it can be seen that the speeches of the athletes are permeated by values in which they believe, Korfball as a space for equal opportunities between genders. Other statements also highlight content related to these issues:

Yes, as the sport is mixed, whenever it talks about inclusion, cooperation between the players I share, because I believe it is one of the main goals of the sport (Athlete 10, our translation).

Yes. Also, publications explaining what Korfball is and talking about gender equality (Athlete 11, our translation).

[...] I've posted interviews with some athletes who have been to the Brazilian national team talking about how Korfball changed their minds in terms of how to see gender equality (Athlete 12, our translation).

Another 33.33% of the athletes emphasized not posting content related to this theme.

Regarding the posts that related Korfball with female empowerment, it can be seen that 50% of the sample does not publish content on this theme. A possible justification to

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corroborate this number can be evidence in Berth's speech (2018), when the author promotes an emptying in the way the theme is used today, as well as the lack of understanding and understanding about such a complex concept about what empowerment is. Another justification focuses on the timid scientific production on female empowerment related to Korfbal (SILVA; SCHWARTZ, 2020). Another 41.66% said they posted on the subject. Some statements of the athletes may corroborate:

Yes, about some games in which women were the highest scorers of the match (Athlete 5, our translation).

Yes, I've shared photos and videos of the championships out there of women athletes who were considered "best of the championship" who competed equally with men (Athlete 12, our translation).

Jagtap's study (2020) meets the testimonies of athletes and points out that sport is considered a tool that amplifies female voices and contributes to overcoming gender barriers. When inserted in the context of sport, according to the author, these bring to the playing field of life, leadership, strategy, the force that directs them towards gender equality in different social sectors. The notion of women's empowerment in the sports field is related to the fact that they feel free to assume new identities, as well as to assume responsibilities regarding being agents of change, unbuilding values rooted in society at different social and personal levels (WELLARD, 2016).

With regard to the questioning of *Facebook being* a social network that helps in the dissemination of Korfbal in a global way, as well as on issues of gender equality and women's empowerment in sport, 83.33% of the interviewees said that the platform can be used for this purpose. Some statements corroborate this information:

Facebook can help, because it is a well-known global network, where many subjects are disseminated (Athlete 1, our translation).

I'm sure. It is a social network that alone has the potential to spread any kind of information (Athlete 2, our translation).

[...], because it was through the Facebook that I got to know several other athletes from other countries and also met other championships also that I had the pleasure of playing (Athlete 12, our translation).

Not only Facebook, but today Instagram also has that power. To massify and disseminate subjects that were once sought after and thus open the eyes of many people to new sports and also to attitudes and outdated positions in relation to the female universe (Athlete 4, our translation).

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Yes, because many are connected in the Facebook. So, both our team gets information about actions that occur in the world about Korfball to be inspired and participate, such as dissemination to our friends and family (Athlete 10, our translation).

According to Marx (2018), *Facebook* is multifaceted, and can be considered a space for dissemination of varied and formative content. It is, in the author's view, an environment that enables the construction of knowledge collaboratively. Thus, the information posted there are likely to change, these are

[...] built together with their network, constantly renewed and disseminated, because in navigation practices, people interact, signify their concepts and perceptions of the world, add new information to their repertoire and have the opportunity to learn in the relationship with the other (MARX, 2018, p. 38, our translation).

Another 16.66% of athletes said that *Facebook* is an important tool that can help promote the sport:

Yes. Facebook is a mass communication tool. Everything that is posted can reach a certain audience, although the system purposely limits. But for those who can invest money, the public to be reached can be huge (Athlete 5, our translation).

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Yes, because it is a platform of free access to all (Athlete 6, our translation).

That is, it can be realized that the platform is seen as a communication equipment, of worldwide reach and millions of people are connected, consuming the most different contents.

Final considerations

The present study aimed to analyze the role of Facebook in the dissemination of content related to gender equality and female empowerment, in the view of Korfball athletes from Brazil. Thus, the data were analyzed and discussed in the light of the literature, giving voice to the athletes on the themes in question.

Based on the two categories created, it can be seen that, in relation to the first, "Korfball, gender equality and female empowerment" the athletes emphasized that, due to the intrinsic characteristics of the sports modality analyzed, as well as the principles and rules that guide it, Korfball tends to be one of the most appropriate modalities regarding promoting practices that favor equally both genders. The fact that the two genres play on an equal footing tends to equalize the differences between men and women on the playing field.

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Regarding the issue of female empowerment in Korfball, the athletes emphasized that the fact of being obliging the presence of women in the team, which demonstrates how much the sport values the female presence in the sport since its origin. Among the principles incited by the modality, such as cooperation, non-violence, alternation of functions and co-education, these tend to promote female empowerment, by encouraging the break with gender stereotypes in the sports field, giving the voice to women on the playing field.

Regarding the second category analyzed, which related to the interfaces between Korfball and *Facebook*, we tried to analyze the role of the social network in the dissemination of knowledge about sports, as well as the space for dissemination of content on gender and empowerment in Korfball. It can be seen that *Facebook* represents an important source of dissemination of content related to Korfball, because it is a dynamic platform and reaches a considerable layer of the user population of the network. The International Federation of Korfball (IKF) makes use of the social network to disseminate the most different issues related to sports, such as reports, videos of matches or better moments, information on rule changes, arbitration, etc. The federations present in each country where the sport is played also make use of *Facebook* with regard, in addition to the elements above, to promote the sport and interfaces with the contents about gender and the valorization of women in sport.

Brazilian athletes also claimed to use *Facebook* as a way to disseminate issues pertinent to the Korfball universe. This emphasized that they use the network to share events and sports competitions of their clubs as well as other Brazilian teams and other countries. The posts also mention gender equality in the sports field.

It was noticed that the contents related to the empowerment of women in Korfball and in general are not posted by athletes frequently. This may be linked to the fact that there is no certain understanding on the subject, as addressed in the discussions or simply not relating it to women in sport and the whole process of fighting and overcoming barriers that women had to overcome to conquer their space.

However, the study has some limitations, among them, the number of athletes, which was limited to 12. Sand a larger sample, the data could generate other results on the analyzed themes. However, because it is still a little-known modality in Brazil, there was a difficulty in capturing athletes who still remain active. Another limitation concerns a single platform analyzed, *Facebook*. Perhaps an analysis of another social network could compare the data found and, finally, increase discussions.

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