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Representation of female leadership at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic games

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Abstract

The issue of gender equality holds significant relevance in the contemporary world. Despite the substantial progress made in anti-discrimination legislation and women's rights movements, it is disheartening to observe the persisting gender disparities in the sports environment. Even though there have been some groundbreaking studies on sports, achieving gender parity in leadership positions remains a challenging task. Thus, this study aimed to identify if the leadership occupations of Team Brazil at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games were balanced, considering the variable gender of the individuals who participated in the event. The research method utilized for this project was content analysis. This method systematically evaluates public information to classify and quantify data into various categories. Official information was obtained from the Brazilian Olympic Committee to assess gender representativeness in the positions of coaches and team leaders. The results revealed that Brazil participated in 35 sports disciplines, with 302 athletes, 141 women (46.7%) and 161 men (53.3%), 82 coaches, four women (4.9%) and 78 men (95.1%), and 39 team leaders, nine women (23.1%) and 30 men (76.9%). This study revealed that both male and female athletes were equally represented in the competition, but there was a significant gender imbalance among coaches and team leaders. These findings are consistent with similar studies conducted in other countries, and are indicative of a broader trend. While there are several plausible explanations for this, it is imperative that we continue to track the involvement of women in leadership positions to ensure progress towards gender equality. In order to promote gender equality, it is essential to provide accurate and comprehensive official information.

Keywords: Coach, team leader, equality, gender, sport

Introduction

Sports can be conceived as a social construction, meaning it is a social world component. Sports manifest human interaction within distinct social, political, and economic contexts. They are the product of intentional design by individuals and reflect the nuances and complexities of these conditions. The achieved recognition of sports frequently exposes much about the values and orientation of individuals who play, watch, or sponsor sports games. Additionally, they uncover who has the power in a social world (Coakley, 2017) ^[13]. As sport is a social phenomenon, it reproduces the cultural values of society. The patriarchal organization prevalent since the beginning of humanity is also reflected in sports events. Consequently, the sports environment retains a male ideologic hegemony, reinforcing the dominant gender worldview (Burton, 2015) ^[10]. According to Giulianotti (2016) ^[23], sports have invariably been a pivotal cultural dominion for the social constitution and reproduction of prevalent heterosexual masculine identities. Sports institutions at both high-performance and grassroots levels impose formal and informal constraints on the involvement of women. Coakley (2017) ^[13] notes that despite changes in beliefs and ideas about gender over time, traditional norms established by men who introduced modern sports still dominate sports culture today. Consequently, sports are still largely associated with men and male perspectives. According to Pfister (2011) ^[46], the number of female coaches tends to decrease as the competitive level increases. This typical situation is more evident in leadership positions, an occupation historically associated with men because it is traditionally defined by distinctive characteristics culturally related to this gender (Fisher, 2019; Burton, 2015) ^[22, 10].

Despite the noteworthy progress made by girls and women in sports, equality remains an essential challenge. As per UNICEF (2017) ^[54], gender equality is the concept that all individuals, irrespective of their gender, should have equal access to opportunities, treatment, and conditions that enable them to realize their potential, uphold their human rights and dignity, and contribute to the social, economic, cultural, and political growth of their communities. This idea entails acknowledging and valuing the similarities and differences between men and women, as well as the roles they play. It's important to note that gender equality doesn't imply that men and women should become indistinguishable but should have equal rights, opportunities, and responsibilities, regardless of gender. Nevertheless, women invariably assume a small number of leadership roles in proportion to the percentage in society at large and in the sports environment (Woods, 2016) ^[56]. Despite progress made through anti-discrimination laws and women's rights movements, there are still inequalities in sports for girls and women. These include disparities in participation, athlete support, and access to leadership positions (Coakley, 2017) ^[13].

In the year 1979, the Olympic movement made a notable stride toward gender parity by officially acknowledging women's rightful entitlement to partake in sports pursuits in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In 1994, the International Working Group on Women and Sport successfully organized the inaugural World Conference on Women and Sport. This landmark event was followed by the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development, and Peace, which was conducted by the United Nations the following year. The outcome of this conference was the creation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which remains a significant milestone in the global movement towards gender equality and empowerment of women. This official document explicitly recommended sports as a meaningful way for gender equality and women's empowerment for the first time. Based on this scenario, in 1996, the Olympic Charter explicitly referred to the IOC's official position in supporting women in sports when the IOC organized its first World Conference on Women and Sport. From 1996 to 2012, the IOC convened the World Conference on Women and Sports. In 2014, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) established a goal to increase the representation of women participating in the Olympic Games to 50% as part of their Olympic Agenda 2020 initiative to promote women's involvement in sports. The IOC Women in Sport Commission subsequently recommended that the IOC's administrative board should have a minimum of 30% women by 2020, which the IOC Executive Board acknowledged and affirmed as an objective. In 2017, the IOC initiated the Gender Equality Review Project intended to assess the status of gender equality across the Olympic Movement following official directives (International Olympic Committee, 2020) ^[29]. The President of the IOC, Thomas Bach, declared, "sport is one of the most powerful platforms for promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls." In addition, Bach reaffirmed that "advancing women in leadership roles in sport is truly a team effort" (International Olympic Committee, 2018, p. 2) ^[27]. The IOC Gender Equality Recommendations cover five fundamental themes: ^[1] sport, ^[2] portrayal, ^[3]

governance, ^[4] funding, and ^[5] human resource monitoring and communication. The IOC (2018) ^[27] proposed a set of recommendations that require serious attention. These suggestions entail maintaining equality in gender representation and participation numbers for both individual and team sports and disciplines. It is also crucial to ensure a balanced gender representation among coaches and establish shared responsibility for implementing and sustaining gender equality measures. Lastly, a tracking system should be implemented to make monitoring and evaluating progress toward achieving these critical objectives easy.

Academic research on sports training is relatively recent; in the 1970s and 1980s, studies in this field initially made quantitative investigations into leadership and behavior, and at the turn of the century, qualitative research into sociological characteristics emerged (Bennie *et al.*, 2017) ^[3]. The importance of gender equality and the participation of women in this field has been emphasized in the literature. (Scelles & Pfister, 2021; Fisher, 2019) ^[52, 22]. Burton (2015) ^[15] and LaVoi and Dutove (2012) ^[36] emphasize the importance of understanding the plausible rationale behind the limited female representation in the technical sports committee's leadership positions and the sociological and cultural phenomena that affect this reality. According to UNICEF (2017) ^[54], Gender analysis is a thorough assessment of the dynamics between individuals of different genders. It encompasses evaluating their ability to obtain and control resources and their challenges in interpersonal interactions. To prevent the exacerbation of gender-based injustices and inequalities, it is crucial to incorporate gender analysis into all humanitarian needs assessments and sector evaluations. Additionally, such analysis promotes greater equality and justice in gender relations whenever possible. Considering the need to monitor and evaluate female participation in games, verifying the evolution of this process throughout history in each country is crucial. In Brazil, the inaugural participation in the Olympic Games took place in 1920 in Antwerp and was attended by 21 athletes, all men. In the Olympic Games of Los Angeles in 1932, the Brazilian team included only one woman. This team comprised 66 male athletes and one female athlete, Maria Lenk, who, at the age of 17, was the first South American to participate in the Olympic Games. The first female coach of a Brazilian team was Magali Cremona Lopes in synchronized swimming, who participated in the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1984. The first team leader was Vicélia Angela Lorenzano in artistic gymnastics at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona (Brazilian Olympic Committee, 2004) ^[6]. The participation of female athletes is progressively increasing. At the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, the Brazilian team won 21 medals, with nine in women's and 12 in men's sports (Brazilian Olympic Committee, 2021a) ^[7].

Figure 1 shows the historical evolution of the participation of Brazilian women and men in the Olympic Games from the games in Antwerp in 1920 to the games in Rio 2016, according to the Contact Us Service of the Brazilian Olympic Committee (2021) ^[8] and published information Brazilian Olympic Committee (2004) ^[6]. During the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, the Brazilian delegation achieved a more equal representation of male and female athletes participating in the games.

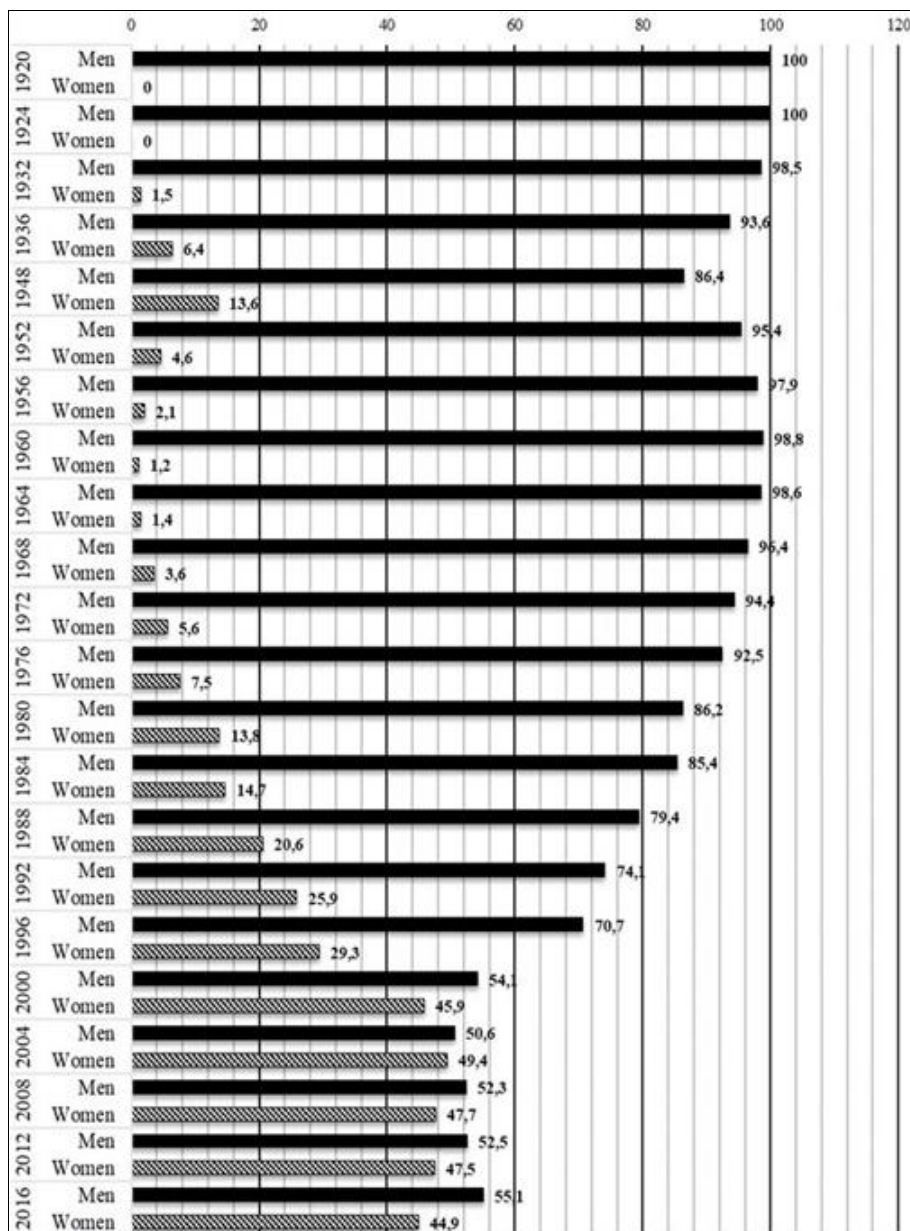


Fig 1: Percentage of athletes by gender in Team Brazil at Summer Olympic Games editions by year (Brazilian Olympic Committee, 2004) [6].

Despite the gradual evolution in athletes' participation and performance, studies on Brazil's Olympic coaches and team leaders are still scarce. Thus, this study aimed to identify the balance of the leadership occupations of Team Brazil at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, considering as the variable the gender of the individuals who participated in the event. Furthermore, there is an attempt to comprehend the results better in light of the literature and its implications.

Material & methods

The content analysis method was applied, which aims to interpret the content from collected documents using a systematic, objective, quantitative, and classificatory description of information (Woods, 2016; Lewis, Zamith, & Hermida, 2013; Creswell, 2012) [56, 39, 15]. According to Bryman (2012) [9], content analysis is quantitative if information collection can be categorized from the frequency of occurrence of events that can identify different units of analysis and make comparisons. An advantage of this research method is information transparency, as the data are public. Another advantage is that it is an unobtrusive research procedure because the researcher's action does not interfere with data production. According to UNICEF's (2017) [54]

definition, gender indicators are utilized to evaluate gender-related developments in a particular context and monitor advancements in gender equality over a period. Additionally, the IOC has a specific percentage of female participation in sports as a chosen parameter and recommends the implementation of a monitoring and tracking system (International Olympic Committee, 2021; International Olympic Committee, 2018) [30, 27].

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected from the Brazil Team Guide - Tokyo 2020, released by the Brazilian Olympic Committee - BOC (2021b) [8]. This official document, with 371 pages, contains the following sections: [1] Message of the President of BOC; [2] presentation of the Brazilian Olympic Channel; [3] presentation of the Chief and Sub-chiefs of the delegation; [4] sponsors; [5] supporters; [6] Japanese cities where Brazilians settled; [7] sports disciplines with Brazilian competitors at the 2020 Summer Olympics; [8] history of Brazilian participation in the Olympic Games; [9] number of athletes by edition of the Olympic Games; [10] Brazilian flag bearers in the Opening Ceremony since 1920; [11] number of medals by edition of the games; [12] number of medals according to sport discipline; [13]

Brazilian medalists since 1920; [13] curiosities about Brazilian participation in the games; [14] protocols of BOC. The description of each sport includes the name of the team leader, the name of the coach or coaches of the sport, and the name of athletes, women, and men, separated into distinct columns. Moreover, the guide exhibited detailed information from each athlete, including complete name, picture, gender, sports discipline, kind of competition, date of birth, city, and state of birth, height, weight, club or association, coach's athlete at the club or association, athlete's social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), the main accomplish in the career, and notes about athletes' life. Based on this official document (Brazilian Olympic Committee 2021b) [8], the role and gender of the members of 35 sports who represented Brazilian participation in the competition were verified. The guide's content was compiled in a Microsoft Office Excel® spreadsheet. Information was recorded according to the following categories: specific sport, name, and gender of the team leaders by sport, name, and gender of the coach, and name and gender of the athletes.

Results

As mentioned previously, this research aimed to identify the balance of the leadership occupations of Team Brazil at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, considering as the variable gender of the individuals who participated in the event. The content analysis of the official document entitled Brazil Team Guide – Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games revealed that Brazilians participated in 35 sports disciplines (Brazilian Olympic Committee, 2021b) [8]. In 24 sports disciplines, the Brazilian team participated in women's and men's competitions. Only men participated in canoe flatwater, equestrian jumping, equestrian dressage, equestrian event, rowing and shooting. Only women participated in marathon swimming, modern pentathlon, rhythmic gymnastics, rugby and weightlifting. Other sports disciplines had the participation of male and female athletes. Brazilian women and men's participation in the Olympic games as athletes, coaches, and team leaders is shown in Figure 2.

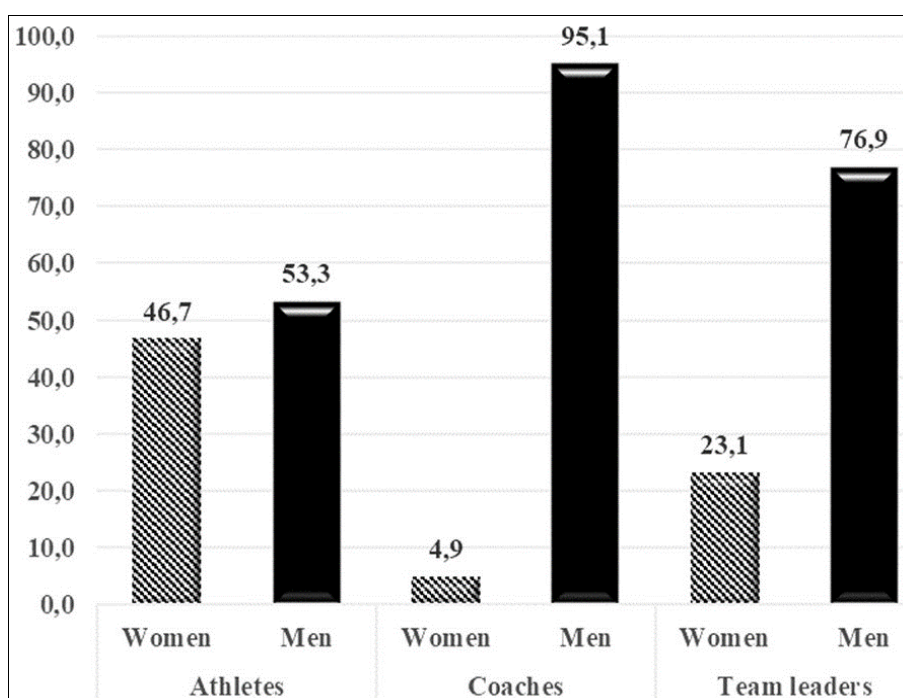


Fig 2: Percentage of position by gender in team Brazil at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games (Brazilian Olympic Committee, 2021b) [8].

Regarding the participation of men and women as athletes, Team Brazil followed the trend of recent versions of the games and presented a balanced distribution in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. In contrast, out of the 82 Olympic coaches who composed the Brazilian team, only four were women. They participated in athletics, football, rhythmic gymnastics, and swimming. Of the 39 Olympic team leaders, nine were women who participated in artistic gymnastics, equestrian dressage, equestrian event, modern pentathlon, rhythmic gymnastics, rugby, skateboarding, taekwondo, and volleyball.

Discussion

The results revealed that the numbers of male and female athletes were similar. However, the percentage of men who acted as coaches and team leaders was greater than that of women. Given these results, a singular aspect should be considered. Sports coaching is legitimately considered a profession in Brazil, which demands a higher education

degree in Physical Education according to a federal law since 1998 (see Santos, 2018) [9]. Physical education professionals who work as coaches are supervised by the Federal Council of Physical Education, which established a professional ethics code created in 2003 and updated in 2015 (Federal Council of Physical Education, 2003, 2015) [19, 21]. Physical education professionals who work as coaches are supervised by the Federal Council of Physical Education, which established a professional ethics code created in 2003 and updated in 2015 (Federal Council of Physical Education, 2003, 2015) [19, 21]. Physical Education Professionals must abide by the Code of Ethics, influenced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Agenda 21. The code acknowledges the importance of addressing gender roles. According to the Ethical Code, professionals should conform to universal values that promote equal relationships between genders, and all individuals should have the right to a discrimination-free workplace based on any characteristic. (Federal Council of Physical Education, 2015) [21].

Considering the ethical code, the number of male and female coaches should be balanced, contrary to what was found in this research. In contrast, the results of this study corroborated with the data provided by the IOC (2018) [27] about the Olympic Games in general. The statistics of editions of the Summer Olympic Games showed that the percentage of women holding the occupation of coaches represented 11% in Rio 2016 and London 2012. The last two editions of the Winter Olympic Games reported similar numbers, with 9% of women occupying the position of coach in Sochi 2014 and 10% in Vancouver 2010. Regarding international technical officials, the data showed that women held 29% of the positions in Rio 2016 and London 2012, 30% in Sochi 2014, and 29% in Vancouver 2010. This scenario is also observed in Europe.

According to a 2017 report by the European Institute for Gender Equality, women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making positions within sports organizations at all levels - local, national, European, and global. In fact, in 2015, only 14% of top leadership positions in sports federations across the Member States were held by women, with percentages ranging from 3% in Poland to 43% in Sweden. In most countries, women had less than 20% of these decision-making roles. In convergence with the European Institute for Gender Equality (2017) [18], Ahn and Cunningham (2017) [1] reported that gender inequality is the norm in the National Olympic Committees (NOC). Considering diverse countries from the Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Oceania, the average female participation in NOC was approximately 20%. The European Institute for Gender Equality (2017) [18] has reported that the representation of women in coaching positions is disproportionately low across all levels of performance. The data suggests that only 20% to 30% of European sports coaches are women, a concerning figure given that the percentage of women participating in these sports is significantly higher. This gender disparity raises essential questions about the barriers preventing qualified women from entering and succeeding in coaching positions. From this scenario, it is worth noting that distinct generations of female athletes have not become coaches or team leaders. In general, Rodrigue, Trudel, and Boyd (2019) [48] emphasized the importance of prior experience as an athlete to be an essential part of the learning process of coaches. Former athletes conceivably possess substantial cultural and social capital of the sport they practice, which might mean it is challenging to attain specific knowledge of sport in other ways (Eime *et al.*, 2021; Schull & Kihl, 2019; Santos, Nogueira, & Böhme, 2016) [17, 53, 50]. These practical experiences make them individuals with knowledge in the sport context, this can be observed by the significant percentage of coaches who have a history as talented athletes (Blackett, Evans, & Piggott, 2017) [58]. The competence of a coach does not depend on gender but on their appropriate education, previous success, social support, and the athletes' perceived ability (Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Gilbert, 2021; Myers *et al.*, 2017) [57, 41]. However, the tangible results obtained in this study do not follow this logic, considering that the specific indicators of female representation in the leadership role remain disproportionate concerning male occupancy, even when the proportion of representation as athletes as similar for years.

In broader settings, researchers are dedicated to recognizing the possible barriers that are most frequently encountered. LaVoi and Dutove (2012) [36] categorized critical barriers into four socio-ecological levels: individual, interpersonal,

organizational, and sociocultural. In the sociocultural macro environment, the principal barriers encountered by LaVoi and Dutove (2012) [36] focus primarily on dominant gender stereotypes and cultural ideologies. Key leadership positions, such as coaches, are culturally associated with the white male stereotype (Cooper *et al.*, 2020; Ahn & Cunningham, 2017; Hoyt & Murphy, 2016) [14, 1, 25], and in the sports environment, it still perpetuates the concept of heterosexual masculinity as the norm (Norman, 2012; Kark, Eagly & Chrisler, 2010) [43, 32]. Practically, everything different from this stereotype is oppressed, discriminated against, and/or excluded. Therefore, typical cases of sexism, homophobia, racism, and heterosexism invariably represent barriers for women to occupy the coach position (Lavoie & Dutove, 2012) [36].

At the organizational level, critical barriers are found in work policies and structural issues of the organization where women work. The primary barriers are summarized by LaVoi and Dutove (2012) [36] as follows: procedures that do not support or exclude women, homologous reproduction of men at the time of hiring, employment instability, reduced pay, unidirectional communication between management and coaches, absence of assistance in the formation and maintenance of the coaches' career, lack of family-oriented policies, marginalization, and tokenism, which is defined as the inclusion of women in the organization just to save face instead of real encouragement for equal participation. Kenttä *et al.* (2020) [33] emphasize organizations and stakeholders' important role in spreading awareness and taking precise actions to improve the situation.

When it comes to personal relationships, coaches often face challenges with the individuals they work with. It is crucial to recognize the significance of women in coaching, mentoring, and development roles as highly visible and attainable role models for female coaches to succeed and flourish.

(Leeder & Sawiuk, 2020; Sawiuk, Groom & Fiedler, 2019) [37, 51]. Therefore, social relationships must be analyzed. According to Lefebvre, Bloom, and Duncan (2021), coaches in the development phase should be stimulated to engage with diverse individuals, both inside and outside the sports field, to reinforce their evolution and promotion. In the case of female coaches, LaVoi and Dutove (2012) [36] mentioned the lack of support from co-workers, mentors, family, and friends and negative interactions with athletes, colleagues, assistants, superiors, and referees. Examples of these obstacles at the interpersonal level can be seen in athletes' preference for male instructors (Madsen & McGarry, 2016) [40], the competition between coaches, the strengthening of men's groups of coaches in which women are not welcome (Norman, 2010) [43], the lack of female mentors and women in the workplace (Carson, McCormack, & Walsh, 2018) [12], prejudice and discrimination (Kenttä *et al.*, 2020) [33], and bullying and moral and/or sexual harassment (Lavoie & Dutove, 2012) [36]. Another aspect that can lead to severe cases of stress and burnout is related to the time the coaches need to dedicate to work, maintain an appropriate connection with other coaches, and travel regularly for training or competitions. Notably, this situation negatively affects personal life and family relationships (Joncheray, Burlot, & Julla-Marcy, 2019; Bentzen, Lemyre, & Kenttä, 2016) [31, 4] which is described by Kenttä *et al.* (2020) [33] as being a derivative product of social expectations of the roles of men and women.

Finally, noting barriers at the personal level, LaVoi and Dutove (2012) [36] include coaches' biological and psychological factors. It is worth mentioning that many of

these negative consequences emerge from sociocultural, organizational, and interpersonal contexts. The coaches reported unfavorable self-perception and self-assessment. They do not believe they have sufficient skills, knowledge, experience, or personality congruent with the coach position. Consequently, they are constantly in a position to prove themselves capable and mention the need to exceed their limits to demonstrate that they are equally competent as their co-workers (Kenttä *et al.*, 2020; Carson, McCormack, & Walsh, 2018) ^[33, 12]. Moreover, coaches sometimes need to hide their personal characteristics, adjust to the masculine culture, and cope with uncomfortable situations, which can damage their mental health (Kenttä *et al.*, 2020) ^[33]. Consequently, women experience increased difficulties in assertiveness and recognizing their skills and abilities. Moreover, women encounter supplemental distress in being confident and recognizing their achievements. Hence, the reduced assertion of their femininity in this scenario and the lack of a welcoming environment in sports organizations mean fewer women occupying the position of a coach in men's teams. Thus, their stability in the position also seems to be difficult. However, prolonged experience seems to reduce professionals' doubts regarding their actions and produce more beneficial practices (Lafontaine & Kamphoff, 2016) ^[34].

To accurately describe the difficulties that women experience in their careers, particularly in leadership positions, some metaphors are mentioned in the literature, like glass ceiling, glass cliff, and labyrinth (Ahn & Cunningham, 2020; Hancock, Darvin, & Walker, 2018; Norman, Rankin-Wright, & Allison, 2018) ^[2, 24, 45]. The metaphor "glass ceiling" has been employed in an elaborate attempt to illustrate the possible reasons women scarcely conquer leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007) ^[16]. The phenomenon commonly referred to as the "glass ceiling" encapsulates the notion that women are frequently confined to lower-level positions within a corporate hierarchy. Though they may bear witness to more senior managerial roles through a transparent barrier, they are frequently unable to progress beyond it. This inhibits women from holding leadership positions in sports careers (Hancock, Darvin, & Walker, 2018) ^[24]. The initial argument that uses the term "glass cliff" is that women mostly hold disagreeable leadership positions and come with antecedents of a potential problem or chaos or apparent inconsistency (Ahn & Cunningham, 2020) ^[2]. In recent decades, despite being a minority, cases of women who were successful in the position of a coach at the most diversified sports levels and who coped with obstacles were reported. Therefore, the term "labyrinth" is another metaphor that exemplifies this challenging situation (Burton & Lavoie, 2016) ^[11]. Eagly and Carli (2007) ^[16] state that occupying leadership positions as women is an accomplishable path nowadays, and some coaches easily overcome the barriers they face, while for others, it is an arduous journey to be discovered and twists and turns can compare to a labyrinth (Hancock, Darvin, & Walker, 2018) ^[24]. The obstacles women face when occupying leadership positions depend on specific situations, distinct environments, and the coach's characteristics. According to Weatherford, Block and Wagner (2018) ^[55] the principal barriers that women encounter can be sensibly diminished by education, active recruitment, mentoring programs, equal remuneration marketing that endorses women in respected roles, balanced leadership in decision-making, and no tolerance for gender-based discrimination or intimidation.

Although there are theoretical explanations for the results found, the fact is that monitoring the involvement rates of women as coaches and leaders remains a relevant way to verify advances in female participation in sports. According to Newman (2015) ^[42], confronting the dilemmas of the concepts that provide the basis of theories might be complex to perceive or measure empirically, so they must be converted into indicators like events and characteristics that can be observed or quantified. The described scenario reiterates the importance of the active search for gender equality through the organizational standpoint expressed by several sports. According to Ritzer and Ryan's (2011) ^[59] definition, affirmative action comprises both voluntary and mandatory policies and procedures implemented to promote equal access to education and employment opportunities for groups that have been historically marginalized. The number of participants is previously established in sports mega-events, such as the Olympic Games. The structuring of sports competitions reflects the IOC's dedication to promoting gender parity within the realm of sports. The Committee actively advocates for and supports women's involvement in sports across all levels and organizational structures, with a primary objective of upholding the fundamental principle of equality between genders (International Olympic Committee, 2019) ^[28]. In addition, the IOC has a specialized board that advises on developing and implementing its policies for women, the Women in Sport Commission (International Olympic Committee, 2020) ^[29].

The International Council for Coaching Excellence (2019) ^[26] is another organization that embraces a project with the specific purpose of taking action to increase the number of female coaches at all sporting levels. International Council for Coaching Excellence reinforces the degree to which women are still underrepresented in sports technical committees and outlines an action plan with suggestions to meet the IOC's Gender Equality Review Recommendation. Both documents emphasize the importance of having clear objectives and practical recommendations for realistically achieving gender equality (International Council for Coaching Excellence, 2019; International Olympic Committee, 2018) ^[26, 27]. Consequently, greater transparency is required by institutions in publicizing information with accurate data on the adequate representation of women in the sports scene, especially concerning leadership positions, and the deliberate adoption of affirmative actions necessary for minority groups to compete effectively in procedurally fair disputes. Sports can change the perception of women and minorities, according to the IOC (2021) ^[27]. Leaders in the sports industry are responsible for setting the standard for how athletes are portrayed in global media and communication. This involves how they are presented, depicted, and discussed.

Following this premise, studies suggest an effective way to verify the transparency of sports institutions and disseminate official data. It is crucial to analyze the data collected on women's participation in sports engagingly, considering the historical evolution of their involvement, to reduce gender inequality. However, one limitation of this study is the absence of official data on women's involvement as coaches and team leaders in events before the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. This naturally limits the historical analysis of the trajectory of Brazilian women in this specific professional field. Future research should continue to register the participation of women in sports mega-events as coaches and team leaders, including different countries and cultures, diverse sports, and distinct competitions, as well as the

forthcoming editions of the Olympic Games. Also, it is necessary to investigate the reasons why high-performance female athletes did not have opportunities to work in sport leadership and coaching roles following their retirement from competition. Only with the monitoring and reporting system of effective participation of women in leadership positions will it be possible to design policies to promote gender equality properly.

Conclusions

The objective of the research was to verify the involvement of female sports coaches and team leaders in the Brazilian Team during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, while also analyzing the importance of women occupying leadership positions. However, in a sports context where there is equal opportunity for competition for male and female athletes, the results of this study suggest that this circumstance does not directly imply an equal representation of men and women in leadership positions, such as coaches and team leaders. The literature shows that the considerable obstacles women face to be coaches and leaders are explained by specific socio-ecological factors, particularly the individual, interpersonal, organizational, and sociocultural levels. In conclusion, more research that properly investigates the effective participation of women in leadership positions in sports and affirmative actions that legitimately promote gender equality is needed.

Conflicts of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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