The performances around the hashtag female empowerment on the social network Instagram

Alice Garcia Ferreira
alicegarciaferreira364@gmail.com
0000-0002-0435-2922
Universidade Federal dos Vales do
Jequitinhonha e Mucuri, Diamantina,
Minas Gerais, Brasil.

Luciana Resende Allain
luciana.allain@ufvjm.edu.br
0000-0002-7050-1164
Universidade Federal dos Vales do
Jequitinhonha e Mucuri, Diamantina,
Minas Gerais, Brasil.

Elisa Sampaio de Faria
elisasampaiodefaria@ufmg.br
0000-0002-5735-0365
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais,
Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brasil.

ABSTRACT

Considering that the social network Instagram constitutes a powerful means for sharing information, selling products, and influencing people through its tools, the objective is to research, from a new and anonymous profile, the performances of a grouping of 35 publications with the hashtag "Female empowerment". The aim was to investigate whether there would be controversy around Female empowerment performances in the analyzed publications. The following specific objectives were defined: to take an inventory of the actors in these publications and describe how they perform Female empowerment; to identify the main Female empowerment performances that emerge from the description of the actors present in the publications; to analyze the divergences and controversies between the main Female empowerment performances identified. A qualitative research was carried out, with documentary data as the source of information. To answer whether there are controversies or not, the first observation lens proposed by Venturini in his cartography of controversies was used. Through the analysis, it was identified that the analyzed publications perform empowerment in four main ways, which are: Female empowerment as the struggle of excluded bodies, Female empowerment as entrepreneurship, Female empowerment as the search for freedom, and Female empowerment as the valorization of self-esteem. It is concluded that the analyzed publications have distanced themselves from Female empowerment as a social and collective act that problematizes women's oppression by placing the intention of selling a product or service at the forefront. The importance of educational processes that problematize the role of social networks and their influence on ways of being and existing in the world, especially among young school-age people, is emphasized.

KEYWORDS: Feminism. Actor-Network Theory. Controversies.

1 INTRODUCTION

Instagram can be characterized as a platform that functions as an online social network and allows users to share posts in the form of images, videos, and the use of filters that alter the images, as well as the sharing of content on other social networks such as Facebook and Twitter (APROBATO, 2018; SUSSAI, 2014). According to Silva (2021), Instagram is a powerful means of communication, since according to data from the "We Are Social" and "Hootsuite" reports, 1.16 billion people around the world used this social network until the beginning of October 2020. Regarding Brazil, data shows that 66% of the Brazilian population are social media users, making the country the fourth most active in terms of access to social networks. With regard to the gender of users in Brazil, 53% are women and 47% are men (SILVA, 2021). Considering that a good portion of school-age youth access social media, it is relevant to discuss the role of the school in problematizing the content that circulates in this medium.

With the rise of Instagram usage by Facebook users, the application began to present technological innovations and updates to its functions, which have promoted greater adherence by users (APROBATO, 2018). The new features are mainly used by digital influencers to reach a larger number of people with their posts and exert greater influence over their followers (APROBATO, 2018). According to Luz (2019), "social influence" is a:

> [...] phenomenon that has been studied in the area of Social Psychology and can be understood as a process of changing behavior, beliefs, attitudes, opinions or feelings based on how the behavior of other people is perceived and interpreted, that is, the result of the influencer's action on the target of the influence (LUZ, 2019, p. 15).

As the author points out, influence occurs for various reasons and interests and results in different effects and consequences. In the case of Instagram, influence results in the commercialization of products, promotion of debates in the fields of education, public health, and politics. This context is understood by Aprobato (2018) as a commercial strategy based on social influence, where the subjectivity of interests is reproduced through the use of images, and this can be seen in the increase in the sale and commercialization of products used by influencers on Instagram. Aprobato (2018) adds that followers are seen by commercial profiles as "potential customers". Because of tools like direct messaging, stories, likes, hashtags, reels, and polls, Instagram enables a private mode of communication between followers of profiles who want to be heard, have their comments responded to, and receive individual and differentiated treatment (Aprobato, 2018; Luz, 2019). From the perspective of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), actors, called "actants", can be human and non-human and in all cases cause influence in the social environment. Harman (2009) comments that, for Actor-Network Theory, an actant is:

> [...] anything that acts, that produces effects in the world or on it, and can be a person, institution or thing - animals, machines, entities or objects. What defines an actant as such is not an essence or a set of necessary and sufficient properties, but the set of its relationships(HARMAN, 2009, p. 17).

In this study, which has ANT as its theoretical framework, the hashtag was used as a reference tool. This tool functions to organize and categorize the

keywords entered in the "search" option of Instagram. When the keywords are preceded by the pound symbol (#), they become a hyperlink that directs searches to the analyzed publications linked to the hashtag. Hashtags are essential for the recovery of analyzed publications, meaning that this tool groups publications by keyword, facilitating the search. In this sense, from the perspective of ANT, the hashtag is a powerful actant, as it is capable of channeling publications from various users around a common topic.

It is also important to highlight the "algorithm" actor on social media. Gillespie (2018) comments that search algorithms determine what to show based on user information, that is, platforms expect to be able to use the knowledge already gathered about the user and other users who have been considered similar to them in statistical and demographic terms, and anticipate the most adherent search results. In this study, in order to try to circumvent algorithm interference, a new profile was created to search for the first 35 posts with the hashtag "female empowerment" on Instagram.

The question this study aims to answer is: What realities are performed in posts found through the Instagram search tool using the female empowerment hashtag? The goal was to conduct an exploratory research on the existence or not of a controversy surrounding the way female empowerment is staged on Instagram. The specific objectives were: to take an inventory of the actors in 35 posts and describe how these actors perform female empowerment; to identify and describe the main performances of female empowerment that emerge from the analysis of actors present in the posts; to analyze the controversies surrounding the main categories of female empowerment identified.

2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The origin of the concept of empowerment was sought in Freire's ideas. Joice Berth's work (BERTH, 2018) made it possible to situate the context in which the idea of female empowerment emerges and to understand its resignification. With bell hooks (HOOKS, 2019), the understanding of feminist struggle and what that struggle seeks to change in society is presented. bell hooks is the pseudonym of Gloria Jean Watkins. The author, who created this pseudonym in honor of her grandmother, employs it in lowercase as a political stance that seeks to break with linguistic and academic conventions, focusing on her work rather than her name. In addition to these studies, Actor-Network Theory and controversy mapping make up the theoretical framework for analyzing the performances of female empowerment in the publications analyzed on Instagram. In the following paragraphs, these studies are briefly presented.

Defining the word "empowerment" is somewhat challenging, as Deluchi (2016) argues that it is a multifaceted word that can be placed in various fields of knowledge. When researched on the internet, the word does not have many national references. Deluchi (2016) explains that few Brazilian authors have proposed the term in their studies.

The origin of the word empowerment is associated with the English word "empowerment." Deluchi (2016) identifies Paulo Freire as a precursor of the term empowerment in Brazil. Baquero (2006) describes that the increasing use of the term empowerment arose in emancipatory movements linked to the exercise of

citizenship, such as the black, women's, homosexual, among others, in the United States in the second half of the twentieth century. The root of the concept would have a close connection with the Protestant Reformation initiated by the monk and theology professor Martin Luther, carried out in Europe in the sixteenth century (BAQUERO, 2006). Berth (2018) states that when Luther translated the biblical writings into German, which until then were in Latin, he confronted the hegemonic control of information by the clergy and gave to the oppressed classes, who did not dominate Latin and accepted what was offered to them as the word of God, the power of information. For Berth (2018), Baquero (2006) revealed an important path for the historical understanding of the theory of empowerment and brought one of its main dimensions: information as an instrument of liberation.

Berth (2018) points out that Freire was one of the precursors of the analysis applied to the reality of oppressed groups, for in 1960 he thought of the theory of conscientization, which was an inspiration for the theory of empowerment. For the author, Freire is a thinker who reflects on concrete reality, making the theory of conscientization a practice for liberation and a strategy for the action of oppressed groups. Advancing the discussion, Freire and Shor (1986) apud Roso and Romanini (2014) approach empowerment from the notion of social class and also say that the empowerment of the social class is not the same as individual or community empowerment, but rather a concept linked to the struggles of the oppressed social class:

> The issue of social class empowerment involves the question of how the working class, through their own experiences and cultural construction, strives to obtain political power. This makes empowerment much more than an individual or psychological invention. It indicates a political process of the dominated classes seeking their own freedom from domination, a long historical process in which education is a front of struggle (FREIRE; SHOR, 1986, p. 72 apud ROSO; ROMANINI, 2014, p. 89).

Freire and Shor (1986), as cited by Roso and Romanini (2014), show the need to overcome the notion of individual empowerment. Empowerment is much more than an individual action, it is a social and collective action. In summary, individual empowerment is a small part when it comes to the empowerment of classes that aim at the liberation of oppressed minorities. Roso and Romanini (2014) give the example of women who free themselves from an individual and daily situation, such as a spouse who abuses them, and they warn that for a radical change in unjust gender relations, women must unite strongly and fight together.

For Berth (2018), Paulo Freire's international dialogue inspired the union of thought with social transformation and the material change of the degrading conditions to which a social group is subjected. For the author, Freire's reflections were decisive for the development of empowerment theory and for the correct application in the necessary means. However, part of the feminist movement of the 1980s questions the approach of the concept of the oppressed, which is not an abstract concept, but marked by gender, race, sexuality, and other categories.

Berth (2018) emphasizes the importance of deepening the analysis of what empowerment is. What is currently called women's empowerment seems more like a tautology that fails to explain the origin of the concept or what it proposes. This depoliticizes the concept, reducing it to a mere expression of individual

freedoms. She warns that when the concept of empowerment is distanced from its original meanings, the result is an appropriation of the discourse to sell a shallow, paternalistic empowerment that is interested in maintaining the current state of affairs. In the author's words:

> It is to judge that to empower oneself is to individually transcend certain barriers, but to continue reproducing logics of oppressions with other groups, instead of thinking about empowerment as sets of necessarily anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-capitalist strategies and as the political articulations of domination that these conditions represent (BERTH, 2018, p. 51).

The author then proposes a synthesis of what is understood by empowerment from the perspective of black feminist and intersectional theories:

> We broaden the concept of humanity, as well as the transformative potential, naming realities through theoretical productions and empowerment networks that bring the individual, community, and collective dimension of affirmation, valorization, and recognition (BERTH, 2018, p. 154).

Berth (2018) argues that through this redefinition, the intention is not to establish new paternalistic, assistentialist, or dependent relationships between subjects, nor to dictate how contributions should be made to the struggles and positions of the oppressed group. Understanding the concept of power that is in empowerment is to know that the new logic does not seek to invert power relations, but rather to subvert them.

bell hooks (2019) discusses feminism as a collective effort. She points out that feminist struggle occurs when a woman or a man stands up against sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. The author argues that this struggle can occur at any time and in any place. hooks (2019) asserts that the feminist movement needs to be grounded in an understanding of not only gender issues but also race and social class:

> As all defenders of feminist politics know, most people do not understand sexism or, if they do, think it is not a problem. A crowd thinks that feminism is always and only a matter of women seeking to be equal to men. And most of these folks think that feminism is anti-male. Their misunderstanding of feminist politics reflects the reality that most learn about feminism from patriarchal mass media (HOOKS, 2019, p. 18).

For hooks (2019), people are not born feminists, but they become feminists by choice and action. She says that in order for women to change patriarchy, they must first change themselves and become aware that throughout history, women have been oppressed, exploited, and silenced. hooks (2019) also problematizes feminism that does not see the problem of class and race in its discussions, making it an elitist feminism, where transformation would only occur in one social class, which would be the richest, forgetting about black and poor women. For her, white women who still dominate feminist discourse and who, most of the time, formulate and make feminist theory, have little or no understanding of white supremacy as a strategy of a racist, sexist, and capitalist state. There must be a collective effort to spread the message of feminism and spread knowledge to everyone. hooks (2019) argues that feminism was designed to create equality and is fundamentally a radical movement, that is, one that attacks the root of the problem.

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Cornwall (2018) opposes the narratives of female empowerment that have gained prominence in the speeches of major international development institutions and corporations in recent decades. According to her, these corporations and institutions emphasize in women the desire to empower and realize their "potential" and offer light empowerment, which is a completely opposite version of empowerment that confronts the underlying social and power relations that produce social and material inequities. Light empowerment does not aim for social change and lacks political discourse.

In theoretical terms, the issue of female empowerment is controversial. Venturini (2010, p. 261) describes controversies as "situations on which actors disagree," and therefore are "hot" issues of interest, whose debate has not yet been concluded. These controversial situations or issues arise in heterogeneous relationships or collective life, where many heterogeneous actors coexist (VENTURINI, 2010). Allain and Coutinho (2017) propose that, to map controversies, it is possible to use some observation lenses described by Venturini (2010). These lenses are more than a methodological guide because they seek to focus our vision on the various layers of controversy. In this work, we used the first of the five observation lenses:

> The first lens raises the question: What is the controversy about? By answering this question, we delineate the controversy, moving from arguments (chaotically scattered in the literature and apparently isolated from each other) to debate (when we articulate the arguments of dissonant voices) (ALLAIN; COUTINHO, 2017, p. 5).

The traceability of digital tools, such as hashtags, can be interesting when explored through the ANT perspective. Marres and Moats (2015) indicate that the connection between media and controversies studies situated in the field of Science, Technology, and Society has changed considerably with the strengthening of the internet as a privileged location for monitoring the moments of social propagation. Bruno (2012) explains that digital traces, which are products of actions, interactions, and statements of all kinds, as well as multiple and diversified, can have their course traced relatively easily compared to traditional means of recovering the constitutive relationships of social phenomena.

Venturini (2010) explains that the cartography of controversies acts as the didactic and methodological version of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which is a collection of techniques for structuring, exploring, and understanding controversies and debates, usually related to technical and scientific issues. ANT views reality as historically, culturally, and materially situated, as opposed to the perception that reality is a distant, stable, linear, and predetermined scenario. From the perspective of ANT, there are different interpretations, performances, and realities that coexist simultaneously in the present, realities that are put into action through a diversity of associations between non-human and human elements (MORAES, 2019). These associations refer to networks, flows, alliances, mobility, and movements, instead of referring to a fixed essence. The network of actors is composed of varied series of connected animated and inanimate objects, therefore, an actor-network is an actor and a network simultaneously. The groups are not definitive and can easily disperse, that is, what exists is a movement of forming groups, where actors connect and disconnect according to their individual and collective interests. These associations and disconnections leave marks that

can be followed. Understanding the actor based on what it does, that is, describing in detail its performance, its movements of association and disconnection, is the main interest of ANT (ALLAIN; COUTINHO, 2017). Latour (2000) presents the notion of translation in the scope of ANT, which more than a geometric idea of displacement from one place to another, can be understood as the transformation of objectives, interests, instruments, and human beings. In ANT, the movement of translation leads to deviations from the route, creation of links that were not there before, or disconnections that alter the network of actors.

As this study investigates which female empowerment is performed in Instagram hashtags, it is fundamental to introduce the concept of performance. Law (2012) cited by Moraes and Arendt (2013) indicates that the interest of some researchers will not be so much in the construction of networks, but rather in the realities that were put into action through the movement of association and disconnection of actors. For ANT, the social is a verb rather than a noun; the social is the composition of networks, groups, and realities with heterogeneous actors. With ANT, scientists are interested in describing how reality was performed through practices. Allain and Coutinho (2017) develop a notion of reality as multiple, moving away from the notion of a untouched reality, distant, the result of a scientist's discovery, that is, they understand reality as made, performed. Therefore, the metaphor of construction gives way to the notion of performativity. Sorensen (2009) cited by Venancio and Viana (2021) understand performance as the result of a socio-material assembly, which allows us to question what could be obtained through an organization of elements that interrelated, acted, or participated in a particular practice. Thus, the notion of participation included in Sorensen's (2009) performance refers to how one actor acts or provides conditions for another to also act. Venancio and Viana (2021) explain that performance encompasses a vast process, and the effect is not limited to the individual action of an actor. Performance describes a variety of components that together form a socio-material assembly.

3 METHODS

The approach of this research is qualitative, as according to Bogdan and Biklen (1994), qualitative studies aim to understand a phenomenon in its natural environment, where they occur. In this study, the investigated phenomenon occurs on the social network Instagram. As for the objectives, the research is exploratory. This type of research aims to provide greater familiarity with the problem, in order to make it more explicit or to construct hypotheses (GIL, 2007). The data source is documentary, since this type of research uses diversified sources, without analytical treatment, such as: newspapers, magazines, films, photographs, television program videos, etc. (GIL, 2007).

To answer whether or not there are controversies in the analyzed publications, the first observation lens proposed by Venturini (2010) was used in his mapping of controversies, since when approaching a controversy:

> [...] the first impression may be that of a chaotic cloud of competing arguments. Therefore, the initial task will be to map the network of statements, revealing how dispersed discourses can be connected (FARIA; COUTINHO, 2015, p. 139).

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To analyze the traces of the #empoderamentofeminino hashtag on Instagram, a new and anonymous profile was created, linked to a new email address. On June 24, 2021, a search for #empoderamentofeminino was conducted on the social network. The first 35 presented publications were selected, composing the research corpus. The publications were minutely described. Initially, the images, hashtags, number of likes, and comments were recorded. Then, the publications were grouped considering other hashtags they have in common, which resulted in the identification of four prominent performances of female empowerment on Instagram. This result will be discussed in the next section. For ethical reasons, data and images that may identify Instagram users will not be revealed.

4 RESULTS, ANALYSES AND DISCUSSIONS

After describing the 35 posts, four predominant performances of female empowerment were identified. These are: female empowerment as a struggle of excluded bodies; female empowerment as entrepreneurship; female empowerment as a search for freedom; female empowerment as self-esteem valorization. Among the 35 collected posts, those with the most likes were selected to represent each of the four predominant performances. Next, the four most liked posts and the female empowerment performances they are related to are presented. Then, the way in which these performances connect or do not connect with the different understandings of female empowerment presented in the Theoretical Foundation section is discussed.

4.1 Female empowerment as a fight for excluded bodies

In the 35 analyzed publications, 09 associate the fight for excluded bodies with female empowerment. The analyzed post's image is a collage of two photos of the same woman. She is a white, fat woman with long, wavy, copper-colored hair. In the photo on the left, she wears moss green pants, a loose purple T-shirt, and white sneakers. Her hair is pulled back, and she stands straight with her arms down and legs straight, feet aligned. The word "hides" is written at the bottom of the image. In the photo on the right, the woman is wearing the same pants and blouse, but the blouse is tied differently, revealing some of her belly. Additionally, she wears mid-length black boots and adds a jacket of the same color as the pants, thrown over her shoulders. Her posture is more relaxed. Her hips turn smoothly, her left leg takes a step forward, bringing movement to her feet, her hands are in her pants' pockets, and her wavy hair is thrown forward with her head tilted. The word "values" is written at the bottom of the image.

The caption of the photo reads "hides vs. values," highlighting that the clothes are comfortable and stylish at the same time. The caption also tags the store where the clothes are sold. In addition to #empoderamentofeminino (#femaleempowerment), the caption includes the following hashtags: #plussize #roupasfemininas #roupasplussize #corpolivre #tendencia #tendeciaplussize #plussizefashion #autoestima #seame #amorproprio e #Piracicaba (#plussize #womensclothing #plussizeclothing #bodypositivity #trend #plussizetrend #plussizefashion #selfesteem #loveyourself and #Piracicaba). The photo had 4,296 likes and 23 comments at the time of collection.

A comment with three likes is from a woman who writes: "You rock! I love your looks!" Another comment, with two likes, is from a man who says: "It's very true that people only think about the body, leaving aside character. Another thing they have prejudice about is that they think fat people cannot be beautiful. To me, a person should feel beautiful just the way she is and not be sad because she doesn't fit the media-imposed standard." The other comments are mostly made by women who are complimenting the photo and tagging other people to see the post.

The actants identified in this post are: the body, the clothes, the plus size, the trend, the look, the beauty standard, and the media. The analysis concludes that the post's purpose is to make the account owner's followers understand that the body of a fat woman also occupies spaces and can have clothes considered stylish, even in a society that is so fat-phobic. Rosa (2020) argues that the erasure of the fat woman's body reaches a problematization space in feminist agendas when it comes to empowerment and self-love, characterizing feminism as a movement of self-acceptance, fighting against socially and culturally imposed beauty standards. Rosa (2020) emphasizes that the exclusion of the fat body goes far beyond the vigilant and punitive gaze; it is also in the sizes of seats and turnstiles of public transport that were not made for the fat body, in the size of clothes, and even in affective and sexual rejection. Therefore, a fat woman showing that she can also feel beautiful, healthy, and stylish constitutes an act of resistance.

Berth (2018) agrees that there are no forces to start a lucid process of empowerment without strengthening self-esteem. But she draws attention to the sense of self-esteem, which, contrary to what has been preached, is not only linked to the considerations made about our aesthetic beauties. Self-esteem is a starting point for empowering the community. The author argues that empowerment must be collective in order to bring benefits to society as a whole. To support her idea, Berth (2018) quotes León (2001):

> Empowerment as self-confidence and self-esteem must be integrated into a sense of process with the community, cooperation, and solidarity. Taking into account the historical process that creates the lack of power, it becomes evident that there is a need to alter the existing social structures; in other words, the imperative of change is recognized (LEÓN, 2001 p. 97 *apud* BERTH, 2018, p. 115).

The publication in question is characterized as a promotion of plus-size clothing. It is important to emphasize that the same capitalist and sexist society that excludes fat bodies is also responsible for creating new consumer markets based on this exclusion. Cornwall (2018) argues that investing in women and girls, in this case, fat women, becomes a solution for the development market, because, according to the author's logic, the creation of markets reaches new consumers and feeds the engine of economic growth.

Berth (2018) explains that one must be careful when it comes to empowerment, as empowering oneself is about transcending individual barriers. But as important as that, one must also think of empowerment as a set of collectively thought-out strategies, necessarily anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-capitalist. Therefore, it can be concluded that the analyzed publication does not represent the struggle for the causes of women who are victims of fatphobia, but rather intends to advertise plus-size clothing and show how these clothes can

enhance the value of fat women. Despite the commercial intention, it is understood that the problem of excluding fat bodies is present, but it does not provoke community mobilization beyond comments and likes.

4.2 Female empowerment through entrepreneurship

Out of the 35 analyzed publications, 18 relate entrepreneurship to female empowerment. Therefore, this is the predominant performance among the analyzed publications. The image with the most likes and comments was selected to represent the performance of female . a black woman's bust. She has tense eyebrows, a pointed nose, and thick, closed lips with slightly downward arched corners. Her hair is black and styled in a black power afro. The woman is not wearing any clothes. In the background, there are warm colors like red and yellow serving as the image's backdrop. In the caption, the author of the post writes: "Beautiful, strong, and powerful women... you deserve everything!!! Be happy!!! (sic)." The author describes the painting technique used and the size of the canvas. She included the following hashtags: #empoderamentofeminino, #mulherempreendedora #mulherespoderosas #mulhereslindas, #mulheresfelizes.(#femaleempowerment, #womenentrepreneurs #powerfulwomen #beautifulwomen #happywomen). In the caption, the author also includes a snippet of Nina Simone's song "Feeling good," which talks about feelings of well-being in the blossoming of a new life. Comments on the post praise the artwork, such as "How beautiful," "Wonderful," and "Lovely artwork." There is only one comment from a woman asking how to purchase the painting or other works by the artist. The identified actors in the post were: black woman, oil painting, entrepreneurship, happiness.

It is noteworthy that this is a publication intended to advertise the product of an artist. She found on Instagram a place to showcase her art and sell it to her followers. Silva et al. (2018) comment that displaying products on social media has some advantages, including greater visibility of products, brand promotion, increased number of customers interested in convenience and practicality, and the possibility of reaching new markets by presenting products to customers from other cities, states, or even countries. In addition, the entrepreneur can receive feedback from customers via social media, promoting greater interaction between the parties - as can be seen in the comments presented above.

According to Hisrich and Peters (2002) cited by Jonathan and Silva (2007), entrepreneurship is defined by the ability to recognize opportunities and create something innovative under conditions of uncertainty, assuming the risks involved. However, Natividade (2009) points out that female entrepreneurship is growing every year, but it is not always linked to formal professional action, that is, it does not always include labor rights; and there is still little or no management guidance, making the possibility of empowerment minimized. In line with this idea, Berth (2018) draws attention to the "easy" discourse of entrepreneurship which often seeks to further precarious the situation of workers, especially black workers.

hooks (2019) argues that economic self-sufficiency is necessary if women want to choose the opposite of male domination. The author argues that, in order to live fully and well, to work in something that increases self-esteem and has good and dignified wages, shared work programs will be necessary, for example, state

projects that provide salaries for women and men who want to stay at home to take care of household work and young children.

4.3 Empowerment as a search for freedom

Among the 35 analyzed posts, 04 correlate the search for freedom with women's empowerment. The post selected to represent women's empowerment as a search for freedom shows a photograph of four women posing, smiling with clothing and accessories appropriate for cycling. They are in a field, next to a wooden fence. All the clothes have pink in their composition. One of the women is sitting on the fence and embracing the woman next to her with her arm. She has a water bottle in her hand. One of the women is standing with her arms resting on the fence. One of them is crouching. In the lower right part of the image, it is possible to see part of a bicycle wheel.

In the caption, the authors say: "Happiness is going out with friends and having fun on a beautiful ride!! Let's go divas?!" They ask their followers to turn on notifications. In addition to #women'sempowerment, hashtags such as #love, #liberdade, #brazil, #amorproprio, #instagood, #mtbfeminino, #juquié, #bahia, #mulher, #bike, #mtbararaquara, #pedalanordeste, #unidosnopedal, #eunamtb, #mtbcapixaba, #mtbcoach, #bikes, #passion, #ciclismo, #pedalamaiscaruaru, #ciclismonaveia, #bike_superacao e #felicidade (#love, #freedom, #brazil, #selflove, #instagood, #mtbfeminino, #juquié, #bahia, #woman, #bike, #mtbararaquara, #pedalanordeste, #unidosnopedal, #eunamtb, #mtbcapixaba, #mtbcoach, #bikes, #passion, #cycling, #pedalamaiscaruaru, #ciclismonaveia, #bike_superacao and #happiness) are also included. The photo has 627 likes and 20 comments as of the collection date. In the comments, there are 19 men and one woman interacting with the post. Most of the comments praise the women for the cycling initiative. The only woman also praises them in this regard, saying: "That's so cool!!" The actants identified in this post were: friends, cyclists, helmets, freedom, happiness, ride, bicycle, and overcoming.

In the publication, there is an intention to invite other women to have fun together and to free themselves, especially from the stereotypes of the fragile, modest, and submissive woman. The idea of freedom in this publication is also conveyed through Nina Simone's lyrics and the relaxed attitude of the plus-sized woman. Liberating oneself, through financial independence and freeing oneself from stereotypes, seems to be a common principle in the idea of empowerment. Here, it is observed that different performances of women's empowerment are connected through the idea of freedom.

Although individual actions are the beginning of a transformation process, Freire and Shor (1986) cited by Berth (2018) argue that liberation is a social act, and one should use the acquired freedom to help others to free themselves:

> This is the issue. I don't believe in self-liberation. Liberation is a social act. [...] No, no, no. Even if you feel more free individually, if that feeling is not a social feeling, if you are not able to use your newfound freedom to help others to free themselves through the global transformation of society, then you are only exercising an individualistic attitude towards empowerment or freedom (FREIRE; SHOR, 1986, p. 71 apud BERTH, 2018, p. 43).

Regarding the term "superation," the analysis concludes that the authors of the publication seek to overcome the notion of female fragility through the practice of cycling. Adelman (2006) believes that sports are a practice that challenges the limits of bodily competencies. For women, sports are a field of many conflicts and struggles over what a woman can be and do.

4.4 Female empowerment as self-esteem valuation

Of the 35 analyzed publications, 4 refer to the valuation of self-esteem as female empowerment. In the image of the publication selected to represent female empowerment as the valuation of self-esteem, the following sentence is read: "It is impossible to please everyone. Everyone is too many people! Therefore, focus on pleasing yourself!" There is a pink background and flower drawings in the image's layout. In the caption, the author invites followers to interact with a question and presents herself as a psychologist, leaving her contact for those interested in scheduling a consultation. In addition to #empoderamentofemino (#femaleempowerment), there are other hashtags such as #amorproprio, #twitter, #frasesereflexões e #autoestima (#selflove, #twitter, #quotesandreflections, and #selfesteem). The photo had 203 likes and 18 comments at the time of collection.

Most of the comments express agreement with the sentence. One follower, in addition to agreeing, also writes for people to do therapy. The inventory of actants in this publication is: self-esteem, psychologist, therapy, focus.

Once again, it is evident that female empowerment performances intersect. However, in this publication, the type of self-esteem in question is related to mental health, assuming a psychological dimension, and not only to aesthetics, as is the case with the stylish woman who invests in plus-size clothing to increase her self-esteem.

Assis et al. (2020) argue that the psychological dimension intends to develop self-knowledge, where individuals acquire and/or strengthen their feelings of power, competences, self-valuation, and self-esteem. Oliveira (2007) comments that contemporary women have multiple tasks, such as work, caring for the home and children. These tasks can cause stress and anxiety, harming their mental health and leading to psychological disorders.

It is worth noting that the publication is also an advertisement, as the author exposes her cell phone number and invites people to schedule consultations with her. Oliveira (2007) comments that women with low income levels suffer greatly from the lack of resources to access therapies, such as work overload and a lack of time to devote to self-knowledge processes.

Assis et al. (2020) argue that programs like Community Therapy (CT) are necessary for women in poverty to undergo an empowerment process. CT emerges as a tool for caring and supporting the mental health of this population, a space for welcoming, sharing suffering, and life wisdom that occurs in a circular and horizontal manner. Although this publication aims to show the importance of doing therapy, the message is not directed to all women, but only to those who can afford a consultation.

5 CONTROVERSIES SURROUNDING FEMALE EMPOWERMENT PERFORMANCES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION

The objective of this study was to identify female empowerment performances on Instagram. For this purpose, 35 posts with the hashtag female empowerment were described and analyzed. Among these posts, four predominant performances of female empowerment were identified. It was observed that female empowerment is performed in multiple ways on Instagram, behaving as a polysemic concept. The analysis also revealed that performances are not pure, but hybridize, mixing different understandings and intentions related to female empowerment. However, the results are based on a small sample of Instagram posts and cannot be generalized.

The hypothesis that there are controversies surrounding female empowerment performances on Instagram was confirmed, as what is behind the messages of autonomy, self-esteem, and self-knowledge marked by the female empowerment hashtag is the offer of some service, such as a psychologist's consultations, or some product, such as plus-size clothing and artwork.

These movements were interpreted as translations that combine one interest with another that is very distinct. For example, when promoting the sale of plus-size clothing, the interest is diverted from feeling aesthetically good to the true interest, which is to sell a product. In other words, the real interest is disguised by discourses on self-esteem, equality, freedom, and autonomy, with the strict purpose of reaching the public who share these interests.

Although many analyzed posts use the idea of female empowerment, most posts were superficial, bringing light empowerment that does not aim for social changes (CORNWALL, 2018). Additionally, the majority of analyzed posts do not promote collective engagement of women around a cause.

As presented in the introduction, empowerment is a social and collective act, connected with processes of problematization, awareness-raising, and transformation of the causes of situations that oppress women. An important observation is that in none of the posts were these situations of oppression even raised. The use of a term that originates from social movements and feminism in posts that explicitly seek to meet commercial interests seems very controversial, as these posts rely on the capitalist way of life, without ever problematizing how this system promotes the maintenance of oppressive relationships, especially towards the most vulnerable groups. It also seems controversial that, in the analyzed posts, empowerment is not for women, but for consumption, reinforcing the power of class inequality that historically has maintained the status quo and the situation of oppression over women, especially black and poor women.

It is important to highlight the role of hashtags, which have been shown to be a powerful actor capable of diverting interests, connecting very diverse actors, and extending networks. The hashtag is a tool that helps connect people and has the potential to bring them together in processes of problematization, awareness-raising, dialogue, and critical thinking, which are so necessary for female empowerment in its most radical form. It is hoped that this study can inspire reflections and educational processes that problematize the role of social networks and their influence on ways of being and existing in the world, especially among young girls and women. Therefore, the relevance of the analytical tool of

controversy cartography is highlighted, as it makes visible the network connections and individual and collective interests around disputes over divergent issues. Moreover, as it is the role of schools to promote education committed to combating any form of discrimination, it is also fundamental to have scientific education that critically examines the discourses circulating on social media, which discusses gender inequalities, in order to promote a truly radical female empowerment among all students.

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AS PERFORMANCES EM TORNO DA *HASHTAG* EMPODERAMENTO FEMININO NA REDE SOCIAL *INSTAGRAM*

RESUMO

Tendo em vista que a rede social Instagram constitui um meio poderoso para compartilhar informações, vender produtos e influenciar pessoas por meio de suas ferramentas, objetiva-se pesquisar, a partir de um perfil novo e anônimo, as performances de um agrupamento de 35 publicações com a *hashtag* "empoderamento feminino". Buscou-se investigar se haveria uma controvérsia em torno das performances de empoderamento feminino nas publicações analisadas. Foram definidos os seguintes objetivos específicos: fazer um inventário dos atores nessas publicações e descrever como eles performam o empoderamento feminino; identificar as principais performances de empoderamento feminino que emergem da descrição dos atores presentes nas publicações; analisar as divergências e controvérsias entre as principais performances de empoderamento feminino identificadas. Foi realizada uma pesquisa qualitativa, sendo a fonte de dados documental. Para responder se há ou não controvérsias, fez-se uso da primeira lente de observação proposta por Venturini em sua cartografia de controvérsias. Por meio das análises, identificou-se que as publicações analisadas performam o empoderamento de quatro maneiras principais, sendo elas: empoderamento feminino como luta de corpos excluídos, empoderamento feminino como empreendedorismo, empoderamento feminino como busca pela liberdade e empoderamento feminino como valorização da autoestima. Conclui-se que as publicações analisadas se distanciaram do empoderamento feminino como um ato social e coletivo que problematiza a opressão das mulheres ao colocar em primeiro plano a intenção de venda de algum produto ou serviço. Ressalta-se a importância de processos educativos que problematizem o papel das redes sociais e sua influência sobre os modos de ser e estar no mundo, especialmente entre jovens em idade escolar.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Feminismo. Teoria ator-rede. Controvérsias.

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