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PERCEPCIÓN DE LA HOMOSEXUALIDAD EN EL DEPORTE VENEZOLANO

PERCEPTION OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN VENEZUELAN SPORT

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Resumen

Hablar de homosexualidad es aún un tema que en algunos países no es común. En Venezuela tendemos a creer que se podría hablar de dicho tema. A pesar de todo, en algunos intentos de conversar con algunas personas del sector deportivo, el tema no ha sido un tópico del cual se pueda hablar con facilidad. También, no existe mucha información en la literatura deportiva venezolana acerca de este tema. Esto fue notorio para los autores de este estudio. Es por esto que nuestra investigación se llevó a cabo. El propósito de este estudio es conocer la percepción de la homosexualidad en el sector deportivo venezolano. La metodología consistió en un enfoque mixto, donde se administró una escala de Likert y una entrevista semi-estructurada a nueve (09) participantes, que estuvieron de acuerdo en participar de manera anónima y voluntaria. Los participantes fueron voceros de diferentes sectores deportivos, todos heterosexuales, tales como entrenadores, jueces, administradores y deportistas. Los resultados se analizaron mediante el análisis de contenido y la frecuencia de respuestas. Los resultados revelan ciertas características de la sociedad venezolana que han sido indicadas en investigaciones antes, pero no en el sector deportivo.

Palabras clave: Homosexualidad, Deporte, Venezuela, Tolerancia, Educación.

Abstract

To talk about homosexuality is still a topic that in some countries is not a very common one. In Venezuela, we tend to believe that we could talk about that topic. Nevertheless, in some attempts of talking to some people of the sports sector, this topic has not being well received as an easy topic to talk about. Also, not much information is given in Venezuelan sport literacy about this

topic. This was noteworthy for the authors of this study. That is why our research was carried out. The aim of this study is to know the perception of homosexuality in the Venezuelan sports sector. The methodology consisted of a mixed approach, where Likert scales and semi-structured interviews were conducted to 09 participants, that agreed to participate anonymously and voluntarily. The participants were stakeholders from different sports sectors, all heterosexual, such as coaches, judges, administrators and athletes. Results were analyzed using content analysis and response frequency. The results reveal certain characteristics, of the Venezuelan society that indeed were indicated in research before, but not in the sports sector.

Keywords: Homosexuality, Sport, Venezuela, Tolerance, Education.

Introduction

The practice of sports activities in society is usually related with positive effects the latter transfers to the participant. Such is this, that currently it is very common to find writings where values that come from sport are treated, values like team work, justice, humility, honesty, moral, self-control, sport spirit, emotional control, leadership, self confidence, trust, among others.

Having this into account, ¿what is happening with sport values when we are in front of a team member that is different? For example, a member that is not heterosexual. In Venezuela, the topic of homosexuality is evidently sensitive, not just in the sports world, but also in general daily life, even though homosexuality has been present in sport since its origins, because it was usual to see in the different sport disciplines women with tough attitude and society accepted it under the scheme of women being rough due to the sport practiced, but not because they are homosexual. For example, it was easily perceived that society tolerated watching a softball girl behave in male manner, but it didn't conceive watching a effeminate man from the same sport. The same happened in basketball, boxing and other sports. Sport culture plays an important role in these appraisals. Life culture of a ball player is not the same as the one from an artistic gymnast or an artistic ice skater, because the levels of tolerance towards homosexuality changes due to the traits of the sport discipline.

For what was mentioned before, as the research was carried out and relevant information was being searched about the research topic, it was understood that we had to differentiate the appraisals about homosexuality in sport on behalf of the members of a sports team from those appraisals of people that don't belong to a sports team, such as fans or any role in sport speciality.

Several punctual examples can be taken in account to elucidate the previous idea. There are very punctual cases, beginning with the most watched and scandalously known, in television and social networks. One of these cases is the case of Bruce Jenner, Olympic champion in decathlon, in Montreal 1976, even though he does not fit in the category of homosexual, but is part of the LGBTIQ Community. For the whole world he was heterosexual, until three decades later he decided to be honest and submitted himself to surgery of change of gender (El Nacional, 2015). In Venezuela, people didn't pay much attention to Jenner as an Olympic champion, but instead they paid a lot of attention when he made public that he was not heterosexual (D'Amico, 2020).

Is it more attractive for people the sexuality of athletes that their sport achievements and the sacrifice they make training to become the bests in the world?

Another case is the one from South African Caster Semenya, Olympic champion in London 2012 and Rio 2016, in the athletics, specifically in the 800 meters event. Her physical and biological masculinity has impacted the whole world. Negative and positive comments in social media abounded, some with prejudice and others from a professional and scientific point of view (Vallenilla-Salvato, 2019). Apparently, Semenya is different from other runners and many people are not satisfied with it.

In Venezuela, the most recent sports pride is Yulimar Rojas, several times world champion in triple jump and silver medal in Rio 2016. It is expected that her masculine aspect is not object of the world critics, like the case previously mentioned, as well as it is expected that fans and the sports professional associations value her effort as an athlete, winner of the “Athlete of the Year” Award, from World Athletics 2020.

It is worthy to mention another case from Venezuela. It's the case of male basketball player José Rodríguez, from the Caracas Crocodiles, a team of the Venezuelan Professional Basketball League. Rodríguez, in an accidental and unfortunate way made public his sexual preference towards the same sex. Social media from the country burst out in several comments. There were comments of compassion and empathy, as well as destructive comments towards Rodríguez, not only through social media, but also in the social environment, homes, work places and the streets (La Patilla, 2020). Nevertheless, this man found words of encouragement and support from his team mates. Reaching this point marked the reflection that maybe the value judgments to non heterosexual people in sports were different, depending on which side the people are found, whether if it is inside the sports world as part of a professional team or outside it.

Once these examples have been analyzed, literacy review shows that, even though the community of sexual minorities such as lesbians, gays, transgenders, bisexuals or queers (LGBTIQ) has been fighting to eliminate discrimination in society, it is still a targeted and hated group in some sectors of society, such as the sports sector (Piedra, 2016). Following this statement, it has been found that a considerable number of authors have confirmed the existence of hostile climate in their societies towards diversity of sexual orientation in sport (Barbero, 2003; Davis-Delano, 2014; Griffin, 1998; Krane, 1997; O'Brien, Shovelton y Latner, 2013; Pronger, 1990; 2000; Piedra 2016).

Among the most recent studies reviewed in the literacy for this research, it was found that Piedra (2016) revealed that sport has been a heteronormative domain space in which women and men with different sexual orientations have been rejected as transgressing and questioning the 'heteronormative patriarchy'. The purpose of his research was to present an Attitude Scale towards Sexual Diversity in Sport. The initial version of the 32 item questionnaire was completed by 414 athletes of both genders, whose ages ranged from 13 to 44 years old ($M = 21.72$, $SD = 4.48$) (Piedra, 2016). The validity of the content of the initial battery of items was analysed by

four experts. Afterwards, two successive Exploratory Factor Analyses were carried out to assess internal validity determining a scale of 18 items and adequate internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .904$) (Piedra, 2016). The results also show that there are four factors that bring these attitudes together: Cognitive Attitudes towards diversity, Attitudes towards Gender Stereotypes, Attitudes towards Transgression and Affective Attitudes towards diversity. Item analysis and analysis of the internal consistency of the four factors were also carried out. Therefore, the study results support the conclusion that the scale, in general, shows good adaptation due to its validity and reliability (Piedra, 2016).

The previous ideas allowed clarifying the starting point of this investigation, and that in order to begin the information search in this sensitive, delicate and virgin area in the country, it was necessary to approach to people that belong to a sports team, no matter what role they play. For this motive the following question arises: ¿Which will be the perception of homosexuality for sport workers in the national sports sector?

Research Objectives

General Objective:

-To know the perception of homosexuality, for sport workers in the Venezuelan sports sector.

Specific Objectives:

-To analyze theoretical contributions related with homosexuality and sport in Venezuela.

-To estimate the perception of active members of sport teams from diverse specialties towards homosexuality in their work field, through collection data instruments (survey and interview).

-To analyze the information collected in the field in order to submit the results of the investigation.

Method

This research had a mixed methodological method, where it was assessed with quantitative indicators the perception of homosexuality in the Venezuelan sports sector and, at the same time, qualitative categories in this perception. This is why this study consisted in two fundamental parts, based in the multimethod method of Haag (2004), which highlights the convenience offered by the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in order to collect, analyze and link up data of both methods, in the same study. It is pointed out that the mixed method is, according to Haag (2004), the approach for excellence in the area of sport and physical activity sciences, because it allows approaching to the study object in a holistic way, triangulating methods and data collection that come from different techniques and instruments.

Research Design

The design is delimited in a pragmatic mixed approach, with a work modality of hermeneutic descriptive-phenomenological level.

An emergent design was used, because:

a) it is assumed the lack of previous knowledge about the different realities, generating in the aperture of

the problem initially formulated, difficulties in the previous planning and focus of the problem; b) the particular context of the study determines in great extent the development of the latter; c) what emerges is in function of the integration between the research and the phenomenon and it is unpredictable; d) the system of values interact in an unforeseeable way in order to influence a product (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Wiesenfeld, 2001, p. 147).

Participants

The sampling used was intentional, with volunteer participants and non probabilistic approach (Hernández, Fernández & Baptista, 2010).

The sample consisted of 09 participants that agreed to be interviewed anonymously and voluntarily. The participants were stakeholders from different sports sectors, all heterosexual, such as coaches, judges, administrators and athletes, with an age range of 32-67 years old.

It was not easy to collect data. These participants were the only ones available to help with this research, from the different sports they work on, chosen from a big number of participants.

The following table describes the sample.

Cuadro 1:
Descriptive table of the participant's sample

N°	Sport	Age	Gender	Socioeconomic Status	Religion	Years of Experience
1	Baseball-Coach	63	M	Middle	Catholic	40
2	Baseball-Player	32	M	Middle	Catholic	26
3	Baseball-Umpire	37	M	Low	Christian	10
4	Skating-Manager	38	M	Middle	Catholic	20
5	Table Tennis-Player	38	M	Middle	Catholic	11
6	Tennis-Coach	36	M	Middle	Catholic	30
7	Boxing-Assessor	58	M	Middle	Atheist	50
8	Softball-Physician	67	F	Middle	Catholic	40
9	Wrestling-Coach	44	M	Middle	Catholic	25

Data Collection Techniques

Quantitative Phase

This investigation possesses a descriptive level, because the techniques of data processing used were descriptive statistics, like frequency and percentage that quantified the amount of times that the same answer was repeated.

The data collection technique was a questionnaire that consisted of two parts. The first part collected personal information about the environment where the participant lives, works and gets along. The second part was structured by a fifteen (15) item survey, with five (5) response alternatives (Likert): Totally Agreed, Agreed, Indifferent, Disagreed, and Totally Disagreed.

It is important to highlight that this instrument was submitted for a validity process through experts' judgment. Three experts in the area of research methodology and involved in the sports world were the assessors.

Qualitative Phase

An in-depth interview was applied Taylor & Bodgan (1994); Rusque, (2003). An interview guide was elaborated and submitted to an assessment made by the experts previously mentioned. Thus, it was validated this way. The aim of the interview was to have findings of emergent contents, then submit them through content analysis.

Procedure

The survey that was applied in the quantitative phase was handled with the proper ethical cares, handing the participants informed consent together with the survey.

After the survey was applied, the interview was applied to the participants. The different answers obtained in the interview were grouped together, with the aim of gathering the best way possible the reality expressed in the words of the participants, in order to make the correspondent analysis.

This analysis is known as *content analysis*, which is defined as a method that contains "several analysis techniques of communications that use systematic procedures and description objectives of the content of the messages in order to obtain indicators (...) that allow an inference of all the knowledge related to the conditions of production and reception of the messages" (Bardin, 2002).

Data Analysis

Once the interviews were performed, the information collected was grouped in analysis units. The analysis units are segments of the message contents that are characterized to be located inside dimensions, categories and subcategories of contents, with the aim of integrating and regroup their meaning in order to make the correspondent analysis.

Results

Due to the multi-methodic characteristics that shaped this investigation, results are shown in

two moments, that are described in a systematic and organized way, beginning with the quantitative aspect, followed by the qualitative aspect.

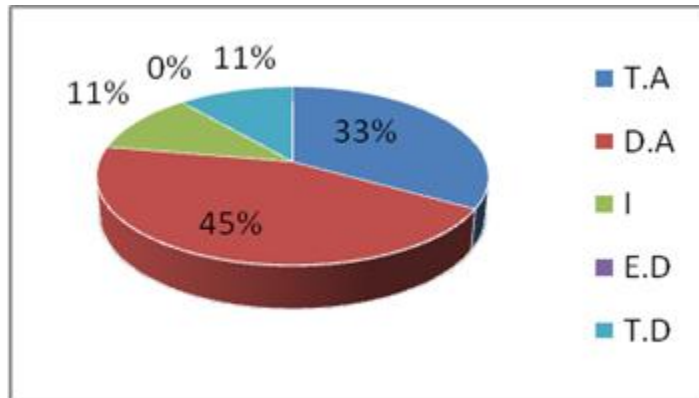
Quantitative Moment

Cadre 2.
Descriptive Table of Results Frequency of the Survey

Answers Items	T.A.	A.	I.	D.	T.D.
1	3	4	1	0	1
2	0	0	4	3	2
3	0	2	0	2	5
4	2	4	1	1	1
5	2	2	3	1	1
6	0	0	2	0	7
7	0	1	1	1	6
8	0	0	4	0	5
9	1	2	2	2	2
10	0	2	1	2	4
11	0	4	2	0	3
12	6	3	0	0	0
13	0	0	0	0	9
14	0	0	0	0	9
15	0	0	0	1	8

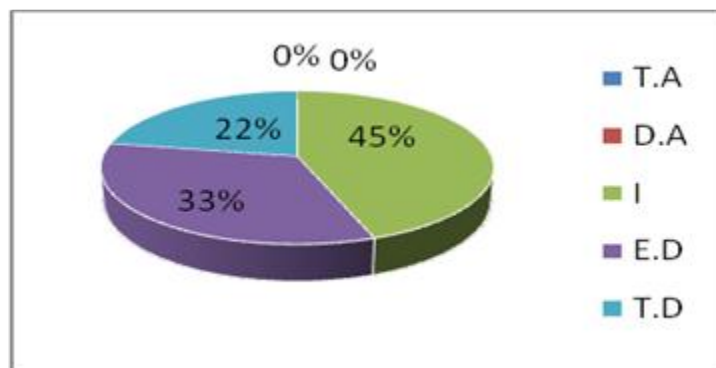
Once the results were recorded, a graph for each item was made.

Graph 1. Answer Percentage for Item 1: In your sports team do you interact with people associated with homosexuality?



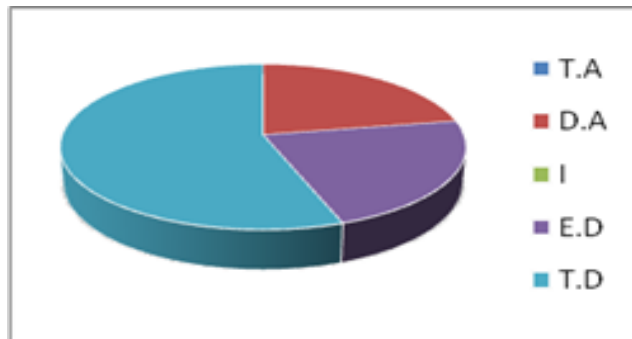
Here it is highlighted that the most answered option was “Agreed”, with 45%.

Graph 2. Answer Percentage for Item 2: Is it uncomfortable for you to train with homosexual people?



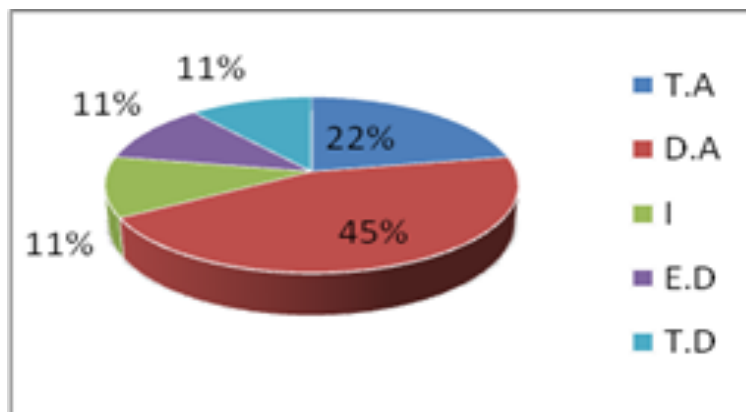
It is highlighted that the most answered option was “Indifferent”, with 45%.

Graph 3. Answer Percentage for Item 3: Have you experimented unprofessional insinuation from a homosexual colleague?



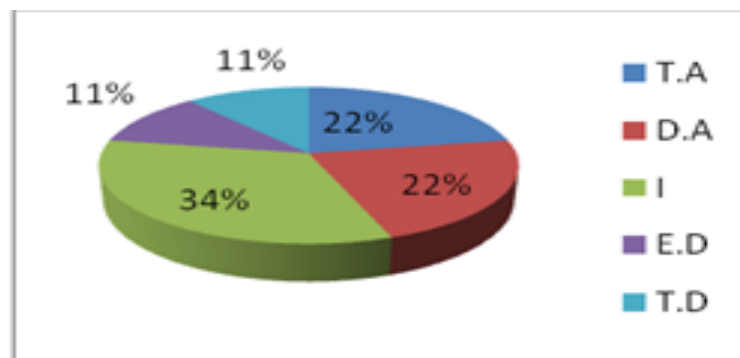
It is highlighted that the most answered option was “Totally Disagreed”, with 70%.

Graph 4. Answer Percentage for Item 3: Do you listen to scornful comments among heterosexual colleagues towards homosexual colleagues?



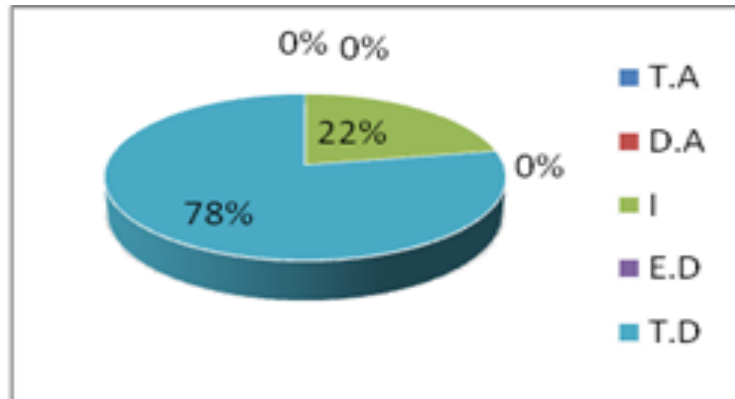
It is highlighted that the most answered option was “Agreed”, with 45%.

Graph 5 Answer Percentage for Item 5: Do you feel uncomfortable sharing bathrooms or dressing rooms with homosexual team members?



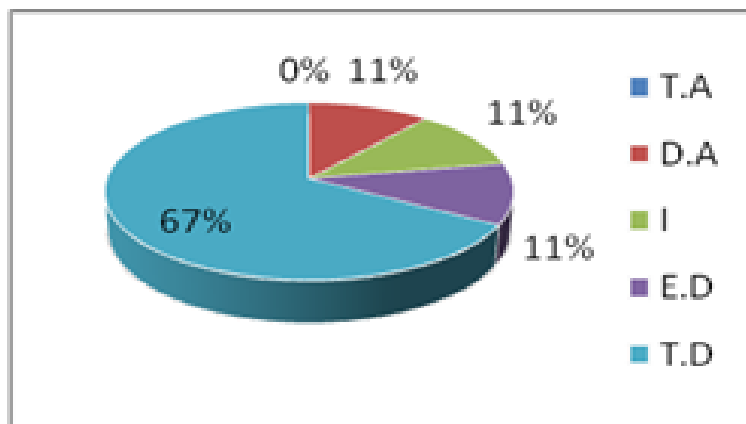
It is highlighted that the most answered option was “Indifferent”, with 34%.

Graph 6. Answer Percentage for Item 6: Do you make negative comments with heterosexual team members towards homosexual team members?



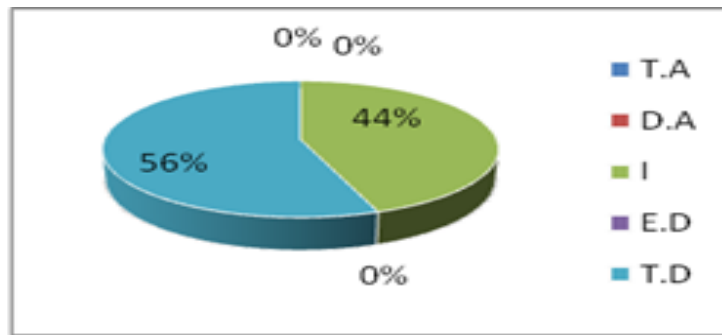
It is highlighted that the most answered option was “Totally Disagreed”, with 78%.

Graph 7. Answer Percentage for Item 7: Is the physical condition of your homosexual team members inferior to the rest of the sports team?



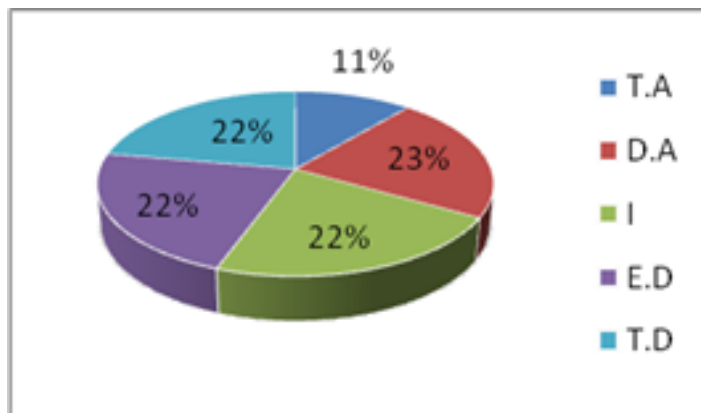
It is highlighted that the most answered option was “Totally Disagreed”, with 67%.

Graph 8 Answer Percentage for Item 8: Is the sports spirit of your homosexual team members, superior to the rest of the team?



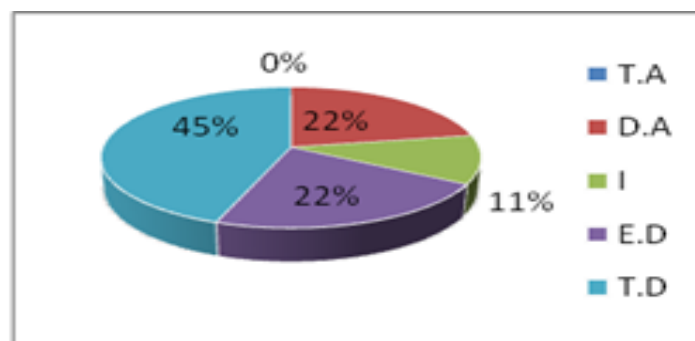
It is highlighted that the most answered option was “Totally disagreed”, with 56%.

Graph 9. Answer Percentage for Item 9: The showing of affection gestures when celebrating a good play, such as hugging, kissing, patting bottoms among homosexual team members should be restricted?



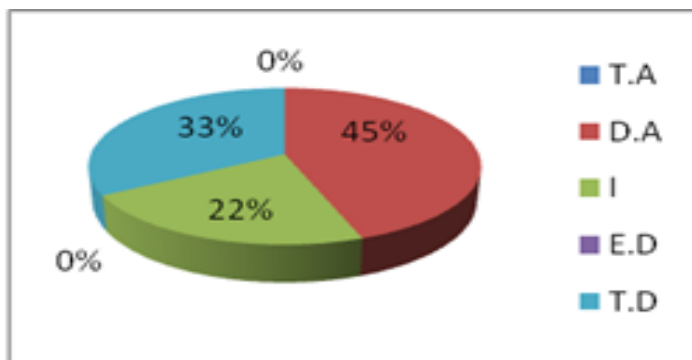
It is highlighted that the most answered option was “Agreed”, with 23%.

Graph 10. Answer Percentage for Item 10: Does it make you uncomfortable physical contact in training sessions or competitions, with your homosexual team members?



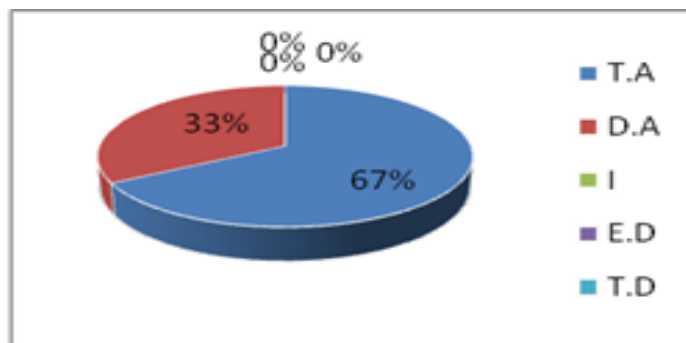
It is highlighted that the most answered option was “Totally Disagreed”, with 45%.

Graph 11. Answer Percentage for Item 11: Do you limit yourself in the interaction with homosexual team mates?



It is highlighted that the most answered option was “Agreed”, with 45%.

Graph 12. Answer Percentage for Item 12: Do homosexual athletes have the right to participate actively in a sport of their choice?



It is highlighted that the most answered option was “Totally Agreed”, with 67%.

The following items scored 100 % in the option “Totally Disagreed”:

- Item 13: Have you insulted or attacked a team mate for being homosexual?
- Item 14: Have you been insulted or attacked by a homosexual team mate due to sexuality differences?
- Item 15: Do you think it's right that people in the crowd, during a competition, scream with offensive names to an homosexual athlete?

Qualitative Moment

Firstly, categorization of every answer of the interview was made.

Secondly, results are showed. They have been divided in two great groups, denominated *blocks*:

-The first one concerns the **Homosexuality in Sports**. This refers to the knowledge the participants have about this topic.

-The second one concerns the **LGBTIQ Community in Sports**. This refers to the knowledge the participants have about this topic, specifically in our country.

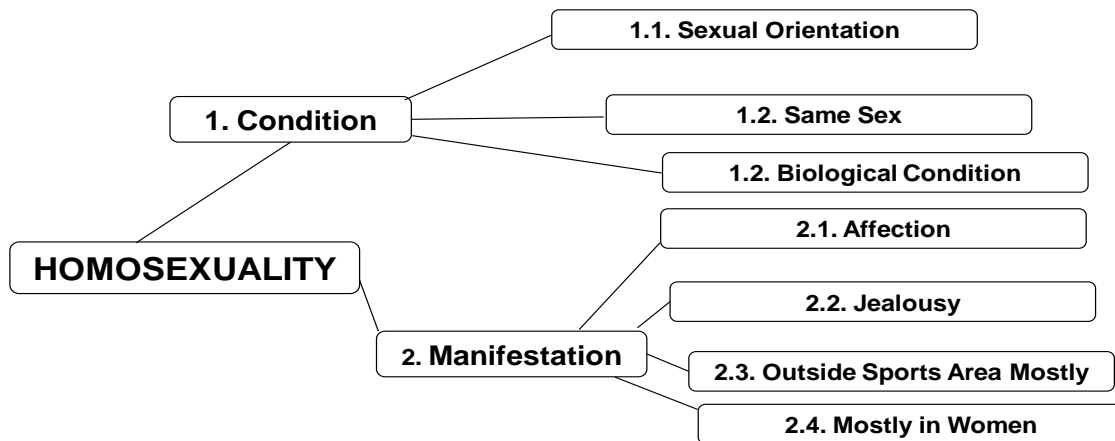
In each block, a scheme is presented with the set of dimensions, categories and subcategories of contents, in which the answers of the interviewees were grouped, shaping the analysis units. Subsequently, the analysis of the categorized contents is made.

Block 1: Homosexuality in Sport

This theme was explored through the following questions:

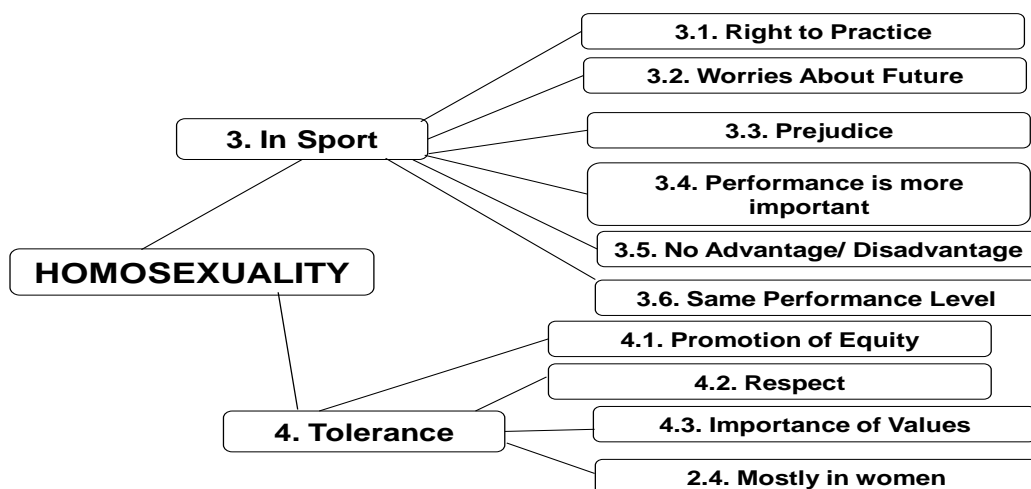
1. What's your opinion about homosexuality?
2. What manifestations of homosexuality have you seen in the sports context?
3. What importance do you concede to homosexual people in sports?
4. Which aspects must be worked in order to enhance tolerance towards homosexuality in sport?
5. What advantages or disadvantages exist while working with homosexual people in sport?

The purpose of these questions was to explore the meaning of homosexuality and its importance for the participants in the sport context.



Graph 13. Block 1-Part 1: Homosexuality in Sport

In this group of interviewees, the criteria that predominated consisted in that homosexuality is considered a human, biological condition, a sexual orientation, where people from the same sex like each other. This human condition is manifested in the sports area is expressed in affective such as kisses, jealousy, and it was reported that it usually occurs mostly outside sports areas and mostly in women, more than men.



Graph 14. Block 1-Part 2: Homosexuality in Sport

In this part of the interview, as showed in the graph, the participants reported that there is a very important aspect that must be worked up, in order to foment tolerance towards the LGBTIQ community in sport. This aspect is awareness in sport. This must be worked through the cultivation of values, education of all citizens, especially children a youngsters, making emphasis in respect and tolerance.

Also, as a proposal, participants reported that there needs to be the management of inclusion, acceptance, communication and making society understand that the LGBTIQ in sport is made up of common people.

Conclusions

The investigation reveals, putting the qualitative and the quantitative moments altogether, that homosexuality is perceived in a positive way for most participants. Even though this sample consisted of a few subjects, it shows ad advance for Venezuelan Sport Literacy.

It was revealed in the participants of the investigation, that even though there are things to be aware of, they believe that with education and training, the perception of homosexuals in the Venezuelan sports context will be more positive.

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