



Gender Representation in Fitness Influencers: How Men and Women Convey Running Messages on Digital Platforms

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ABSTRACT

This study examines gender representation in running-related Instagram content produced by fitness influencers in Indonesia. Using qualitative content analysis, the research analyzes selected posts and reels from male and female influencers to explore how running is framed through narrative, message tone, and visual imagery. Drawing on Social Representation Theory, the study investigates the processes of anchoring and objectification in constructing gendered meanings of running. The findings reveal contrasting patterns: male influencers tend to portray running as performance-oriented and discipline-driven, while female influencers frame it as a holistic practice emphasizing well-being, personal experience, and community. These representations reflect differing constructions of masculinity and femininity in digital sports culture and highlight influencers as key actors in shaping gendered meanings of sport on social media

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of running has undergone a significant transformation in the last decade, shifting from being merely a physical activity to becoming an integral part of the modern lifestyle, especially among urban Indonesians (Manurung et al., 2025). In Indonesia, running is no longer understood solely as a form of fitness training, but also as a means of expressing identity, building community, and creating social meaning. Running communities in Indonesia (e.g., Indorunners) emerged from grassroots initiatives and regular group runs, creating a lasting network of urban middle-class people (Adi & Candra, 2024). Long-distance running forms a “social world” in which people construct runner identities, derive social satisfaction, and balance individual goals with a sense of belonging to a community (Shipway et al., 2013). This development goes hand in hand with the increasing use of social media, particularly Instagram, as a visual and narrative space to represent sports activities in everyday life. Social media has become a strategic space in the modern marketing world. Social media is growing rapidly in response to the growth and ease of access to information through the power of communication technology (Indrapuspita et al., nd).

Rapid technological progress in the current era of globalization brings many benefits in various social fields, including the development of information technology (Abror et al., 2025). Instagram offers visual-based features such as photos, videos, and reels that allow the practice of running to be symbolically represented through personal narratives. In this context, fitness influencers act as cultural and commercial intermediaries (Pilgrim & Bohnet-Joschko, 2019). They promote their bodies and lifestyles, associating exercise and disciplined diets with ideals of happiness and perfection, often through commercial content that is highly body-focused (Silva et al., 2021). Followers, especially young people, may internalize narrow body ideals and a desired world that shapes self-esteem and behavior (Feijoo et al., 2022). At the same time, credible and trusted fitness influencers can effectively motivate physical activity intentions and create supportive online fitness communities. Sharing photos on Instagram of recreational trail running builds social support and togetherness; inspiring and motivating images help people feel connected and sustain participation (Ehrlén & Villi, 2020). Ultra runners leverage Instagram's visual features (running videos, gear photos, data screenshots) to create and share information that captures effort, terrain, and bodily experience, extending the meaning of running beyond the activity itself (Williams et al., 2024). Recreational sports images become "communally meaningful experiences," not just documentation (Ehrlén & Villi, 2020). Social media offers numerous conveniences in achieving these goals (Primadesti et al., 2024).

Several previous studies have shown that media representations of sport often reproduce stereotypical gender constructs. Men are generally associated with performance, strength, and professionalism (Mills et al., 2022), while women are more often represented through narratives of emotions, social relations, and aesthetics (Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2018). However, most of these studies focus on professional athletes or institutional sports media, so there is

little examination of how gender representation is constructed by influencers as producers of personal, narrative, and everyday content.

In the context of running, studies on gender representation on social media are still relatively limited, particularly in Indonesia. Existing research tends to emphasize aspects of exercise motivation, community building, or digital marketing strategies, without delving deeply into how the meaning of running is constructed through the visual and textual content of gendered influencers. As a result, the symbolic and ideological dimensions of running practices as a representation of gender in the digital space remain unexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing gender representation in running influencers' Instagram content through a qualitative content analysis approach. This study of athlete self-representation and influencer culture emphasizes how digital content reproduces and transforms gender norms through aspirational and marketable identities (Lestari & Elfattah, 2025). Using Social Representation Theory, this study examines how the meaning of running is anchored to specific gender values and objectified through narrative, communication tone, and visual imagery. This aligns closely with the analysis of anchoring (linking running to gender-based ideals such as toughness, beauty, discipline, and caring) and objectification (the realization of these ideals in poses, clothing, camera angles, hashtags, and motivational captions) (Roberti, 2022). The research focuses on comparing male and female influencers to identify different representational patterns in framing running practices.

This study positions fitness influencers as key actors in the production of sporting meanings, not merely promotional agents or inspirational figures. Second, this study comparatively examines gendered representations of running, uncovering variations in masculinity and femininity within digital running culture. Third, this study integrates Social Representations Theory into an analysis of Instagram content, a technique rarely used in studies of sport and social media in Indonesia. Thus, this study contributes to the development of communication, gender, and digital media studies by demonstrating that running as a sporting practice is not neutral but is symbolically constructed through gendered representations on social media. The findings are expected to enrich understanding of the role of influencers in shaping sporting meanings and encourage more reflective and inclusive running narratives in the digital space.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Social Representation Theory (SRT)

Serge Moscovici's theory defines social representation as meaning that is collectively shared and shaped through communication, with anchoring (Moliner & Bovina, 2020). This theory classifies new things through known categories (Höijer, 2011) and objectivation (making abstract things concrete in everyday images and conversations) in the media (Balakina, 2025a). The theory is applied to runners on Instagram. Firstly, the association of "Runner" can be linked to familiar gender frameworks such as femininity/masculinity, health, beauty, discipline, or empowerment (Solodukhina, 2020). Second Objectification, namely, these meanings are manifested in body type, pose, clothing, metrics

(speed, distance), and narrative tropes that are repeated in captions and hashtags (Carrotte et al., 2017).

To analyze the construction of this running message, this study uses the Social Representations Theory (Serge Moscovici) as the main framework. This theory allows researchers to dissect how the meaning of "runner" (as a new social concept) is anchored and objectified through visual and textual content on Instagram based on established gender categories in society. The study of running and health on Instagram shows how users invite others to identify as runners, disrupt or reproduce stereotypes, and connect running with broader well-being (Flores & Sepúlveda, 2025). Content tagged with fitness/health typically reproduces binary gender and athletic ideals (Cameron, 2024). These patterns are exactly the kind of shared visual-textual codes that this theory is designed to analyze (Martikainen & Hakoköngäs, 2023).

Table 1. Focus of Social Representation Theory

Serge Moscovici's Theory Focus	Things to pay attention to on Instagram
Anchoring	Gender-based labels, stereotypes, the language of postfeminist "choice/empowerment" (Solodukhina, 2020)
Embodiment	Dominant body ideal, visual focus (face vs body parts), metrics, icons (shoes, medals) (Balakina, 2025b)

2. Conceptual Framework

This research's conceptual framework is designed to explain how gender representation is shaped through running influencer content on Instagram. This framework starts from the assumption that gender is not simply a biological category, but rather a social construct that influences how individuals produce messages, choose visual symbols, and frame the meaning of social practices, including running, in the digital space. Initially, influencer gender is positioned as the primary conceptual variable that differentiates content production actors into two categories: male influencers and female influencers. Male influencers in this study are represented by Ibnu Jamil and Dr. Tirta, while female influencers are represented by Soraya Larasati and Melanie Putria. These gender differences are assumed to influence communication preferences, message orientation, and the values attached to running practices.

The influencer's gender then influences the dimensions of representation, namely the concrete aspects that can be observed in Instagram content. These dimensions include running goals and themes, content focus, message tone, and the form of visualization used. In the goals and themes dimension, running can be represented as a performance-oriented and competitive activity or as a well-being and healthy lifestyle practice. The focus of the content can emphasize technical aspects and physical achievements, or conversely, emphasize personal experiences, social relationships, and emotional meanings. The tone of the

messages also varies, ranging from an assertive and competitive communicative style to a supportive and reflective one. These dimensions of representation are then analyzed using Social Representations Theory, specifically through two main processes: anchoring and objectification. Anchoring refers to the process of linking the meaning of running to established gender categories and values in society, such as masculinity associated with discipline, competition, and self-control, and femininity associated with balance, empathy, and self-care. Meanwhile, objectification explains how these abstract meanings are concretely realized through visual symbols, text narratives, body language, and aesthetic choices in Instagram content.

Through the processes of anchoring and objectification, gendered social representations are formed. These representations manifest in two main patterns: masculine performance narratives emphasizing achievement, strength, and consistent training, and feminine well-being narratives emphasizing experience, personal meaning, and social connectedness. Thus, this conceptual framework demonstrates that representations of running on social media are not neutral practices, but rather the result of a gendered meaning-construction process mediated by the communication practices of digital influencers.

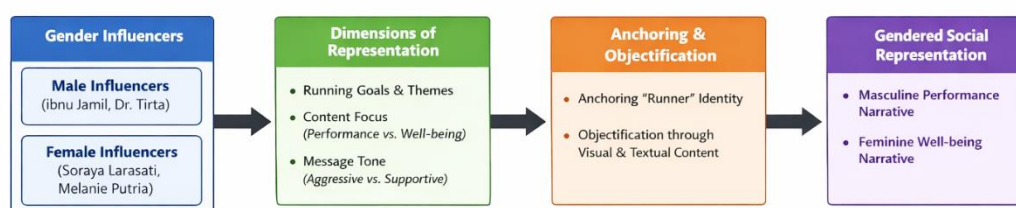


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Gender Representation in Running Influencer Content

METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative content analysis or thematic analysis of Instagram posts (images, captions, hashtags) to examine narratives about gender, health, and sport, and to examine gender representation in the Instagram content of running influencers (Vai et al., 2025). A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the meaning, symbols, and construction of representations contained in visual and textual messages in depth, especially in the context of social media-based digital communication (Adami & Jewitt, 2016). Qualitative content or discourse analysis is used to interpret how images and captions together construct social identities, values, and meanings (Highfield & Leaver, 2016). This research was conducted over one month, in December 2025, focusing on Instagram content published by influencers during that period. The subjects consisted of male and female running influencers purposively selected based on the criteria of active involvement in running activities, consistent running content uploads, and significant levels of audience interaction. Male and female influencers were

selected to enable a comparative analysis of the construction of gender representation in sports communication practices on social media. The research objects were Instagram posts that explicitly displayed activities, experiences, or reflections related to running. The unit of analysis in this study was a single Instagram post, either in the form of an image post on the feed or an Instagram reel in video format. To maintain the depth and sharpness of the analysis, each influencer analyzed 1 to 5 of their best posts uploaded during December 2025. Content selection was based on the relevance of the running theme, the richness of the visual and textual narrative, and the level of audience response reflected in interactions such as the number of likes.

Data collection techniques were conducted through non-participant observation and documentation. Researchers observed influencers' Instagram content without engaging in direct interaction, then documented the data in the form of visual screenshots, caption transcriptions, and transcriptions of verbal narratives in video reels. In addition, contextual information such as upload date, video duration, and number of likes was recorded as supporting data to strengthen the analysis. Data analysis was conducted in stages. The first stage was an initial coding process to identify emerging themes in the content. The second stage was grouping the data into categories based on dimensions of representation, including running purpose, content focus, message tone, and visualization form. The third stage was data interpretation using Social Representations Theory to examine the processes of anchoring and objectification in the formation of gendered running meanings. Analysis was conducted comparatively between male and female influencers to uncover similarities and differences in representational patterns. Data validity was maintained through the application of theoretical triangulation by comparing empirical findings with the concept of gender representation and Social Representations Theory. Furthermore, the consistency of analytical categories was maintained through repeated readings of the data and reflective adjustment of categories to minimize researcher subjectivity.

RESEARCH RESULT

1. Results of Content Analysis – Male Running Influencer Ibnu Jamil

The analysis shows that Ibnu Jamil consistently represents running as an arena for performance, competition, and social legitimacy, which are integrated into the formation of masculine identity in the digital space. Running is not positioned solely as a fitness or recreational activity, but as a practice imbued with the values of achievement, self-discipline, and social recognition. This representation is evident through the choice of narratives, visual symbols, and the emphasis on the results and accomplishments that accompany running. In several of the analyzed content pieces, Ibnu Jamil presents running as a medium for demonstrating performance, both individually and collectively. The emphasis on rankings, distance traveled, and participation in competitions demonstrates that running is understood as an activity with a hierarchy of values, where success is measured through concrete achievements. This narrative positions the body as an instrument that must be continuously trained,

controlled, and improved, in line with constructions of masculinity that emphasize strength, endurance, and physical toughness.

Beyond its performative aspect, running is also portrayed as a means of developing masculine character. Content highlighting the training process, consistency, and patience, even when performance is less than optimal, demonstrates that the values of discipline and mental fortitude are essential to the meaning of running. In this context, running serves not only as physical exercise but also as a moral practice, shaping masculine subjects who are resilient to pressure, able to manage limitations, and remain committed to long-term goals. Furthermore, Ibnu Jamil also frames running as a source of social legitimacy and a status symbol. Awards, public recognition, and affiliation with prestigious sporting events are presented as consequences of consistency and dedication to running. Through visuals of awards and narratives of success, running is objectified as an activity that generates symbolic capital, whether in the form of prestige, authority, or recognition as a public figure worthy of emulation. Thus, running is not only interpreted as a personal practice but also as a means of building reputation and social credibility in the digital space.

When examined through the Theory of Social Representation, the construction of the meaning of running in Ibnu Jamil's content occurs through two main mechanisms: anchoring and objectification. Through anchoring, running is anchored to established masculine values within sports culture, such as competition, achievement, and self-mastery. Running becomes familiar because it is associated with narratives of success and hard work that are culturally attached to male identity. Meanwhile, through objectification, these abstract values are manifested in the form of visual symbols and concrete narratives, such as running distances, rankings, awards, and documentation of training and competition journeys. Thus, the representation of running in Ibnu Jamil's content reflects what can be called performative masculinity, a form of masculinity constructed through publicly observable actions, achievements, and recognition. Instagram serves as a space where this masculine identity is not only displayed but also legitimized through audience interactions, such as likes and comments. These findings suggest that influencer communication practices are inseparable from the reproduction of established gender values, even though packaged in a personal format and everyday narrative.

Table. 2 Ibnu Jamil's Instagram Content Analysis

N o	Conte nt Type	Main Theme	Runnin g Goals	Content Focus	Messag e Tone	Visual Image	Gender Represent ation
1	Photo Posts	Team & Competit ion Achieve ments	Perform ance achieve ments and recogniti on	Compet ition results, team ranking s	Assertiv e, competi tive	Symbol of victory and achieve ment	Competiti on-based performat ive masculinit y

2	Photo Posts	Discipline & Patience	Character building	Practice process and consistency	Reflective-masculine	Regular running activity	Reflective – disciplinary masculinity
3	Photo Posts	Physical Endurance	Stamina and endurance testing	Mileage (21K), body performance	Relaxed yet competitive	Physical toughness	Athletic masculinity
4	Photo Posts	Social Legitimacy	Public recognition	Awards and public figure status	Assertive, emotionally controlled	Award visuals	Symbolic hegemonic masculinity
5	Instagram Reels	Travel Reflection	Continuity of achievement	Narrative of travel and ambition	Symbolic, motivational	Personal travel video	Long-term performative masculinity

2. Results of Content Analysis – Male Running Influencer Dr. Tirta

The analysis shows that Dr. Tirta presents running as a rational, scientific, and body-control-oriented practice, significantly different from the symbolic, performative representations presented by other male influencers. In his content, running is positioned not as a competitive arena or symbolic achievement, but as an activity that must be understood scientifically and carried out based on health principles and medical knowledge. The narrative Dr. Tirta constructs consistently positions the body as an object that can be analyzed, measured, and managed through a science-based approach. The emphasis on aspects such as heart rate, physiological capacity, exercise intensity, and the risk of overtraining demonstrates that running is understood as a practice that demands knowledge, awareness, and rational decision-making. Thus, the meaning of running shifts from mere physical activity to an educational practice aimed at improving public health literacy. Dr. Tirta's communication tone is informative, assertive, and didactic. The language he chooses tends to be straightforward and argumentative, often accompanied by cause-and-effect explanations that refer to medical logic. This pattern establishes Dr. Tirta's position as an authoritative figure who not only runs but also possesses the knowledge and legitimacy to explain and correct his audience's running practices. In this context, the relationship between influencers and followers is hierarchical, where influencers act as educators and guardians of health norms.

Through Social Representation Theory, the meaning of running in Dr. Tirta's content can be understood as the result of an anchoring process that links running with the values of rationality, self-control, and responsibility for the body. Running is anchored in modern health discourse that emphasizes efficiency, risk prevention, and optimization of bodily functions. Furthermore, through a process of objectification, these values are manifested in the form of visual data, technical explanations, and educational narratives that concretize the abstract concept of health into everyday practice. Thus, Dr. Tirta represents a form of rational-scientific masculinity, where legitimacy is not obtained through competition or symbols of achievement, but through the authority of knowledge and the ability to explain the body scientifically. Instagram functions as a medium for disseminating knowledge as well as an arena for the formation of masculine identity based on intellect and expertise.

Table. 3 Dr. Tirta's Instagram Content Analysis

No	Content Type	Main Theme	Running Goals	Content Focus	Message Tone	Visual Image	Gender Representation
1	Instagram Reels	Health Education	Optimization of body functions	Heart rate, VO ₂ max, medical explanation	Informative, firm	Graphs, body data	Rational-scientific masculinity
2	Video Posts	Health Awareness	Risk prevention	The dangers of overtraining	Educational, persuasive	Scientific demonstration	Protective masculinity
3	Photo Posts	Physical Discipline	Consistency of practice	Exercise routine	Firm, normative	Active body	Functional masculinity
4	Video Posts	Knowledge Authority	Public health literacy	Science-based explanation	Didactic	Technical language	Intellectual masculinity
5	Instagram Reels	Body Control	Performance efficiency	Physiological and technical data	Objective, rational	Visual analytics	Technocratic masculinity

3. Results of Content Analysis – Female Running Influencer Soraya Larasati

Unlike male influencers, Soraya Larasati represents running as a holistic practice integrated with emotional experiences, self-empowerment, and women's solidarity. In her content, running is positioned not as a result-oriented activity or merely symbolic recognition, but as a personal and collective process with emotional and social significance. Soraya emphasizes running as a space for self-reflection and the development of mental resilience. The narrative she constructs often focuses on the process, journey, and personal meaning gained through running. Running is understood as a medium for self-care, managing emotions, and building a healthier relationship with the body. This approach demonstrates that the primary value of running lies not in speed or distance, but in the experience and psychological impact it brings.

Beyond the personal dimension, Soraya also consistently presents running as a communal social practice, particularly within the context of women. Visuals of togetherness, participation in women's running communities, and narratives of mutual support demonstrate that running is positioned as a safe space for mutual empowerment. Thus, running becomes a means of forming a collective identity for women connected through bodily and emotional experiences. Within the framework of Social Representation Theory, running in Soraya's content is anchored in feminine values such as empathy, emotional resilience, and togetherness. These values are then objectified through visuals of community, narratives of personal experiences, and symbols of female solidarity. This process makes running a concrete representation of holistic femininity that integrates the body, emotions, and social relations.

Thus, Soraya Larasati constructs a representation of empowering femininity, where running functions as a medium for self-liberation, strengthening female identity, and creating a supportive social space in the digital realm.

Table. 4 Soraya Larasati's Instagram Content Analysis

N o	Conte nt Type	Main Theme	Running Goals	Content Focus	Messag e Tone	Visual Image	Gender Represen tation
1	Photo Post (1 Dec 2025)	Self-care & Women's Empowe rment	Self- empowe rment and inspirati on	Transiti oning a hobby into a social moveme nt	Inspirati onal, empath etic	Medals, a symbol of collecti ve achieve ment	Femininit y empower ment
2	Photo Post (Dec 6, 2025)	Process & Consiste ncy	Gradual self- develop ment	Small steps, personal process	Reflecti ve, supporti ve	Daily running activitie s	Reflective femininit y

3	Photo Post (13 Dec 2025)	Life Values & Consistency	Mental resilience	Legacy of values (discipline, courage)	Narrative, motivational	Visual running as a metaphor for life	Resilient femininity
4	Instagram Reels (Dec 8, 2025)	Together ness & Recovery	Holistic health	Running as a process of healing and growth	Emotional-positive	Visual of women's community	Communal femininity
5	Instagram Reels (Nov 20, 2025)	Community & Sisterhood	Collective empowerment	Safe space for women to live healthily	Persuasive, inclusive	Community visuals & shared activities	Solidaristic femininity

4. Results of Content Analysis – Female Running Influencer Melanie Putra

Melanie Putra's content presents running as an inclusive and reflective practice, emphasizing self-acceptance, emotional experiences, and diverse motivations for running. Diverging from competitive or technically educational narratives, Melanie explicitly challenges the assumption that being a runner must always be associated with participating in a particular race or achieving a specific goal. Through dialogic and interactive narratives, Melanie positions running as a legitimate activity pursued for a variety of purposes, including health, enjoyment, and mental balance. The content, which discusses the need for runners to be recognized as runners, demonstrates an effort to deconstruct the symbolic hierarchy within running culture. In doing so, Melanie presents an alternative, more inclusive discourse on runner identity.

Melanie's communication tone is empathetic, persuasive, and participatory. She actively engages her audience in dialogue, sharing experiences, and reflecting on their own journeys. This pattern creates a horizontal relationship between influencer and followers, where the audience's experiences are positioned as equal and valid. Instagram serves not only as a medium for conveying messages but also as a space for interaction and negotiation about the meaning of running. From the perspective of Social Representation Theory, running in Melanie's content is anchored in the values of balance, self-acceptance, and the meaning of life experiences. The process of objectification occurs through visual events, emotional expressions, and narratives of personal experiences, making abstract concepts like "experience" and "meaning" concretely understandable. This representation forms an inclusive femininity, one that

rejects a single standard of achievement and emphasizes the diversity of ways of being a runner.

Thus, Melanie Putria represents running as a flexible and meaningful life practice, where the body, emotions, and personal experiences become central to the construction of identity in the digital space.

Table. 5 Melanie Putria Content Analysis

N o	Content Type	Main Theme	Running Goals	Content Focus	Message Tone	Visual Image	Gender Representa tion
1	Instagram Reels (December 1, 2025)	Communi ty Events & Celebratio ns	Social participati on and enga gement	Race exciteme nt, finishers , commu nity pride	Enthusias tic, friendly	Visual events, podiums, social interaction s	Communal - participato ry femininity
2	Instagram Reels (Dec 5, 2025)	Personal Experienc e	The meaning of running experienc e	Race stories, emotion al memori es	Reflective , emotion al-positive	Visual journey and race atmospher e	Narrative- emotional femininity
3	Instagram Reels (Dec 7, 2025)	Motivatio n & Manifesta tion	Mental strengthe ning and optimism	Law of attraction, the process of endeavo r	Inspiratio nal, persuasiv e	Expressive visuals, communic ative gestures	Motivation al femininity
4	Instagram Reels (Dec 2025)	Normalizi ng Runner Identity	Personal health and consistenc y	Non- competit ive running, self- validatio n	Educatio nal, empathet ic	Dialogic and informativ e visuals	Inclusive- holistic femininity

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the representation of running in fitness influencer content on Instagram is significantly shaped by gender constructions (Carrotte et al., 2017). Although all the influencers analyzed produce content related to running, the way they frame the meaning of running, its purpose, and the values attached to the practice demonstrates consistent differences between male and female influencers. These differences are not coincidental, but rather reflect broader social processes of reproducing and negotiating gendered meanings in the digital space. Male influencers, represented by Ibnu Jamil and Dr. Tirta, tend to represent running as a practice oriented toward performance, control, and legitimacy. In Ibnu Jamil's case, running is positioned as an arena for achievement and self-verification, where the primary values lie in competition, physical endurance, and social recognition. The emphasis on rankings, distance traveled, and symbolic rewards suggests that running is understood as a hierarchical activity that generates prestige. In this context, the body is treated as a performative instrument that must be continuously trained, improved, and displayed as proof of success (Mayoh & Jones, 2021).

Meanwhile, Dr. Tirta builds a different representation of running but remains within the framework of masculinity (Mills et al., 2022). Running is not presented as a symbolic competition, but as a rational and scientific practice that demands physiological understanding and body management based on medical knowledge. The emphasis on heart rate, exercise intensity, and risk prevention demonstrates that the meaning of running is anchored in modern health discourse. In this case, masculine legitimacy is achieved not through victory or awards, but through the authority of knowledge and the ability to scientifically explain the body to an audience (Busanich et al., 2012). Despite their differing communication styles, both male influencers represent running within a framework of performative and rational masculinity, where the body is positioned as an object to be controlled, optimized, and publicly accounted for. Instagram serves as a symbolic space that allows these values to be visualized and legitimized through audience interaction.

In contrast, female influencers, represented by Soraya Larasati and Melanie Putra, represent running as a holistic, inclusive practice oriented toward emotional experiences and social relationships. Soraya Larasati consistently frames running as a medium for self-care, mental resilience, and women's empowerment. Running is positioned as a meaningful process, not simply a physical activity measured by distance or speed (Ahrens et al., 2022). The emphasis on togetherness, female community, and emotional support demonstrates that the primary value of running lies in collective experience and social solidarity. Melanie Putra, on the other hand, presents a representation of running that explicitly challenges dominant norms within running culture. By asserting that becoming a runner does not always involve participating in a race, Melanie deconstructs the symbolic hierarchy often attached to running practices. Running is positioned as a legitimate activity for various purposes, including health, mental balance, and life experiences. Melanie's dialogic and empathetic

approach creates a horizontal relationship with her audience, where followers' personal experiences are acknowledged and validated.

Within the framework of Social Representation Theory, these differences in representation can be understood through the mechanisms of anchoring and objectification. For male influencers, the meaning of running is anchored in established masculine values, such as competition, rationality, and self-control. These values are then objectified through visual symbols such as data, awards, distance traveled, and narratives of achievement. Conversely, for female influencers, running is anchored in feminine values that emphasize empathy, emotional balance, and togetherness (Lincoln, 2021). The objectification process occurs through community visuals, narratives of personal experiences, and emotional expressions that bring the meaning of running closer to everyday life. These findings suggest that, although Instagram as a platform offers space for diverse expression, influencer communication practices still tend to reproduce different gender representations. Male influencers more often present running as a measurable, competitive, and legitimacy-based practice, while female influencers present running as an inclusive, meaningful, and socially relational life experience (Munawan et al., 2025). However, women's representation also creates space for resistance to dominant performative standards, particularly through narratives of self-acceptance and rejection of the obligation to compete.

This study confirms that running as a cultural practice on social media is not neutral, but rather constructed through gendered frameworks that influence how bodies, emotions, and identities are represented. Influencers play a crucial role in shaping and disseminating these meanings, both by reproducing established values and by offering alternative, more inclusive representations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that gender representation in Instagram influencer fitness content is shaped through the construction of different meanings between male and female influencers. Qualitative content analysis of Instagram feeds and reels posts during December 2025 shows that male influencers tend to represent running as a performance-oriented activity, disciplined, and physically accomplished, reflecting values of performative masculinity. In contrast, female influencers more often present running as a holistic lifestyle practice that emphasizes well-being, personal experience, and social relationships, thus constructing a narrative of supportive and reflective femininity. Through the perspective of Social Representations Theory, these findings demonstrate that running is anchored and objectified differently based on gender, both through verbal narratives and visual symbols. Although social media provides a more personal space for expression, running influencer content still tends to reproduce normative gender representations in digital sport culture. This research enriches the study of communication, gender, and social media by positioning influencers as key actors in the construction of sport meanings in the digital era.

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