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Original

## EL USO DE RECURSOS PÚBLICOS EN LAS CARRERAS DE NADADORES BRASILEÑOS DE ALTO RENDIMIENTO: UN ANÁLISIS DEL 2016-2019

## THE USE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES IN THE CAREERS OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE BRAZILIAN SWIMMERS: AN ANALYSIS FROM 2016-2019

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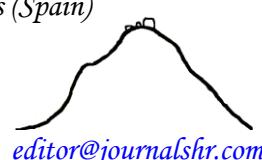
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## EL USO DE RECURSOS PÚBLICOS EN LAS CARRERAS DE NADADORES BRASILEÑOS DE ALTO RENDIMIENTO: UN ANÁLISIS DEL 2016-2019

### RESUMEN

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar la operacionalización de los recursos públicos recibidos por los nadadores brasileños de alto rendimiento mediante la identificación de los recursos y el seguimiento de las actividades y acciones desarrolladas. El estudio consistió en una investigación de monitoreo y evaluación ex post con un enfoque cualitativo. Se realizaron seis entrevistas semiestructuradas con gestores y beneficiarios del programa, además de un análisis de documentos. A través del análisis de los discursos, se identificaron las siguientes categorías de análisis: criterios de selección, mantenimiento y terminación del beneficio, construcción y ejecución del plan deportivo de los atletas beneficiarios, atribuciones del grupo de trabajo, criterios para el uso de los recursos recibidos, posibilidades de uso de los recursos, rendición de cuentas, acumulación de recursos, importancia de la gestión de los recursos recibidos y sugerencias para otras formas de descentralización de los recursos públicos. Los recursos destinados a los atletas generalmente se utilizan para cubrir los costos de recursos humanos y la contratación de un equipo multidisciplinario, viajes internacionales y entrenamientos, además de la compra de equipos y suplementos. Con respecto a la rendición de cuentas de los atletas, es posible observar que esta ocurre única y exclusivamente en relación con los resultados obtenidos y los objetivos deportivos alcanzados.

**Palabras clave:** Deporte. Políticas públicas. Financiación. Carrera deportiva.

## THE USE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES IN THE CAREERS OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE BRAZILIAN SWIMMERS: AN ANALYSIS FROM 2016-2019

### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the operationalization of public resources received by brazilian high-performance swimmers through the identification of resources and the monitoring of activities and actions developed. The study consisted of ex post monitoring and evaluation research with a qualitative approach. Six semistructured interviews were conducted with managers and beneficiaries of the program, in addition to document analysis. Through the analysis of the discourses, the following categories of analysis were identified: criteria for selection, maintenance and termination of the benefit, construction and execution of the sports plan of the beneficiary athletes, attributions of the working group, criteria for the use of the resources received, possibilities of use of the resource, accountability, accumulation of resources, importance of the management of the resources received, and suggestions for other forms of decentralization of public resources. Resources directed toward athletes are generally used for the cost of human resources and the hiring of a multidisciplinary team, international travel and training, in addition to the purchase of equipment and supplementation items. With respect to the accountability of athletes, it is possible to see that it occurs solely and exclusively in relation to the results obtained and the sports goals achieved.

**Keywords:** Sport. Public policies. Financing. Sport Career.



## INTRODUCTION

It is commonly agreed upon in the global specialized literature that financial resources have significant importance in the process of developing sports (Berry & Manoli, 2018; Dallmeyer et al., 2018; De Bosscher et al., 2010; De Bosscher et al., 2009; De Bosscher et al., 2006; Digel, 2002; Green & Oakley, 2001).

However, considering the existence of specificities on the part of each country, each nation structures its sports development model in different ways, which can be mostly private, public or even have mixed models (Green & Houlihan, 2008).

In the case of Brazil, sport is developed in a mixed way through public-private articulation (Castro et al., 2016; Ordonhes, 2019). Although at certain times in the history of the articulation between the State and sport in Brazil, public funding could not be granted to the private sector (Mezzadri et al., 2015), after the enactment of the Federal Constitution of Brazil in 1988, this scenario changed, incorporating the private sector into this structure (Castro, 2016; Castro et al., 2016). After this moment, several policies began to guide and standardize the Brazilian political-sports structure, as well as its sports financing mechanisms, such as the Zico Law (Law No. 8,672, of July 6, 1993), the Pelé Law (Law No. 9,615 of March 24, 1998) and the General Sports Law (Law No. 14,597, of June 14, 2023). These mechanisms established the general rules on sport and the supplementary actions of the Brazilian states and municipalities.

The Zico Law and the Pelé Law presented what would be the sources of funding directed to sports (article 39 of the Zico Law and article 56 of the Pelé Law), namely, budgets of the Union, the States, the Federal District and the Municipalities, in addition to sports funds, lottery revenues, donations and sponsorships, tax incentives and other sources. Since then, several sports policies have been formulated and implemented with the aim of promoting sport, either institutionally or directly to Brazilian athletes, a case that can be observed in chapter III of the General Sports Law, when it states in article 50 that "the public power will promote training, the development and maintenance of athletes in training and performance through direct aid called scholarships". Therefore, the Athlete Grant program is established into law, as are its central information, its categories, its criteria and other measures.

The Athlete Scholarship Program was presented in 2000, was sanctioned on July 9, 2004, was regulated by Decree-Law No. 5,342 of January 14, 2005, and aims to direct public resources directly to Brazilian athletes who obtained expressive sports results in the year prior to the selection notice. The program has several categories, with different scholarship values, established according to the level of competition in which the athletes obtained their results, namely, Base (R\$410.00 monthly), Student (R\$410.00 monthly), National (R\$1,025.00 monthly), International (R\$2,051.00 monthly), Olympic, Paralympic and Deaflympic (R\$3,437.00 monthly) (Law No. 10,891 of July 9, 2004), in addition to the Podium category, established in 2013 through Law No. 12,395, of March 16, 2011 (Brazil, 2004). In the case of the Podium Athlete Scholarship, performance athletes who have obtained good results in Olympic Games, World Games, or even those who are among the top twenty in the ranking of their specific modality can be contemplated and receive an aid ranging from R\$ 5,543.00 to R\$ 16,629.00 per month, according to the position of the result obtained.

By observing the last editions of the Summer Olympic Games, it is possible to identify that a significant number of athletes from the Brazilian team have already been contemplated by some category of the Athlete Grant program. For example, of the 276 athletes in the Brazilian delegation who represented the country at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, 98.19% had already received government incentives at some point in their careers. Thus, considering the expressiveness of this promotion, especially the Podium category, the present study aims to analyze the operationalization of public resources received by Brazilian high-performance swimmers through the identification of resources and the monitoring of activities and actions developed by beneficiaries.

## METHODS

### *Characterization of the study*

The present study has a qualitative approach and is characterized by monitoring and evaluation research *ex post* (Januzzi, 2016). The reason for choosing this research design was in view of the possibility of carrying out robust analyses of public policy,



contemplating both the understanding of processes and contexts, as well as the identification and analysis of results. There are several possibilities to carry out data collection in evaluation surveys, and the present study uses a nonprobabilistic and intentional sample to this end through the execution of documentary analysis and semistructured interviews.

### *Sample and procedures*

Initially, the swimming athletes awarded the Athlete Scholarship Program in the Podium category between 2016 and 2019 were identified through a documentary consultation in the databases of the Ministry of Sports and the Sports Intelligence Research Institute (IPIE). After the documentary analysis stage, the sample identification and selection stage for interviews (managers and beneficiaries of the Podium Athlete Scholarship program in the swimming modality) began. For the selection criteria, initially, two managers who worked in the Ministry of Sports with the program were intentionally selected (convenience selection). From this, initial contact was made through digital media to invite participants to participate in the study. With respect to the criteria for selecting beneficiaries, first, which swimmers were contemplated in the Podium Athlete Scholarship program between 2016 and 2019 was identified. Later, two selection and approach strategies were chosen: online through digital media and in person in competitions of the modality.

This initial approach aimed to present the objective of the research and to invite participants to participate in the study. Among the 27 swimmers included in the Podium Athlete Scholarship program between 2016 and 2019, it was possible to contact 14 athletes. From this initial contact, approximately five athletes responded and expressed interest in participating; however, only four interviews were carried out. One of the athletes did not show up at the scheduled time for the interview and did not respond to the other scheduling attempts.

Thus, a total of six semistructured interviews were conducted (two managers and four beneficiary athletes) through the Google Meet platform. All participants agreed to participate in the research, agreeing to the terms of consent. During the study, in accordance with the principles of confidentiality, all

interviewees were named by codes (A1 and A2 for managers and B1, B2, B3 and B4 for beneficiaries) (Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Paraná, CAAE No. 88770618.4.0000.0102; opinion No. 2.748.001). To perform the analysis of the interviewees' discourse, the NVivo-QSR International version 12 was used to assist in the identification and systematization of recurrent themes among the interviewees.

Finally, a triangulation of the data obtained from the interviews was carried out with the supporting bibliographic reference.

## **RESULTS**

To verify how the Podium Athlete Scholarship program was being operationalized in the swimming mode, interviews were conducted with individuals related to the program, such as managers or beneficiaries. The interviews revealed that most of the notes evidenced in the discourses were related to the way in which the resources obtained through the scholarships were distributed.

Regarding the main themes evidenced in the interviews, the suggestions of other forms of decentralization of public resources were the most recurrent category, and the notes on the attributions of the working group of the Podium Athlete Scholarship program were the lowest. The following table presents the distribution of all the categories of themes addressed, according to the frequency and percentage of approach by the managers of the Podium Athlete Scholarship program and beneficiaries in the swimming modality.

**Table 1.** General distribution of categories according to the recurring themes in the interviews

<i>Recurring theme categories</i>	<i>Frequency and percentage of overall approach</i>
Criteria for selection, maintenance and termination of the benefit	4,82%
Construction and execution of the sports plan of the beneficiary athletes	4,51%
Assignments of the working group	5,55%
Criteria for the use of the resources received	0,92%
Possibilities of using the resource	4,24%



Accountability	1,76%
Accumulation of resources	1,48%
Importance of managing the resources received	1,08%
Suggestions for other forms of decentralization of public resources	10,92%

With respect to the details of the themes of the interviewees, the interviews with the managers focused more on issues related to the criteria for selection, maintenance and termination of the benefit, whereas the interviews with the beneficiaries emphasized issues related to decentralization itself, the sports plan and the possibility of using the resource. The details of the themes according to each interview are available in the following table.

**Table 2.** Distribution of categories according to recurring themes by interviews

<i>Recurring theme categories</i>	<i>Frequency and percentage of approach per interview</i>					
	<i>A1</i>	<i>A2</i>	<i>B1</i>	<i>B2</i>	<i>B3</i>	<i>B4</i>
Criteria for selection, maintenance and termination of the benefit	11,47%	17,40%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Construction and execution of the sports plan of the beneficiary athletes	1,47%	7,60%	2,86%	7,94%	2,99%	4,20%
Assignments of the working group	3,70%	1,85%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Criteria for the use of the resources received	3,83%	7,10%	1,16%	1,82%	1,33%	2,00%
Possibilities of using the resource	0%	0%	0%	5,25%	5,38%	14,80%
Accountability	0,29%	2,13%	1,95%	1,50%	1,98%	2,70%
Accumulation of resources	1,87%	0%	1,34%	3,06%	0,55%	2,08%
Importance of managing the resources received	2,58%	2,26%	1,66%	0%	0%	0%
Suggestions for other forms of decentralization of public resources	2,34%	0%	21,25%	7,84%	12,99%	21,10%

*Criteria for selection, maintenance and termination of the benefit*

For the criteria for selection, maintenance and termination of the benefit, initially, it is important to emphasize that, through a specific ordinance, there is the composition of a working group that will be responsible for such processes, composed of representatives of the ministry, the confederations and the Olympic and Paralympic committees (A2). Once the working group is established, the notices are formulated and disseminated. At this moment, there is a process of nomination by the sports confederations to the ministry, with the name of the twenty best athletes in each modality (A1, A2).

This list is analyzed by the working group, and the list with the name of the approved athletes is published in the Official Gazette of the Union. From this moment on, the contemplated athletes need to fill out a sports plan with the details of the competitions and goals to be achieved (main and secondary goals).

This sports plan will be the main beacon for maintaining the benefit and may even lead to possible termination. According to A1, "What you have is what is provided for in the legislation, you have to meet the goal, you stipulate the competitions you are going to participate in, to give a direction to the preparation. In addition, the final goal is to win a medal."



Regarding this process of maintaining the benefit, A1 stated that the evaluation of the beneficiaries can occur at any time, so the working group constantly evaluates whether the athletes are respecting the sports plan delivered and if, by any chance, any new situation occurred, such as the cases of retirement and doping (A1). In relation to this, the interviewee stated that "the athlete scholarship is based on what the athlete obtained in the previous year, so the athlete treats it as a prize he earned the right to receive that scholarship, the podium scholarship is for what the athlete will do in the future" (A1); therefore, it can be seen that the investment made in the Podium Athlete Scholarship consists of an investment that has this particularity in relation to the other categories of the Athlete Grant program, being characterized as an investment to obtain sports medals. According to A1, "you're giving him the scholarship so he can go there and win a medal, not for what he's already won. Therefore, it has happened, like, a few times 'ah, the athlete retired' from the moment the athlete retires his scholarship is cut".

#### *Construction and execution of the sports plan of the beneficiary athletes*

With respect to the category "construction and execution of the sports plan of the beneficiary athletes", all the athletes interviewed were aware of the need to present a sports plan. Therefore, the goals to be used as a parameter of "control" after contemplation are established by the athletes themselves, and from the delivery of this sports plan to the Ministry of Sports, it starts to use it as the main parameter for achieving goals, obviously, as long as this plan is aimed at obtaining new expressive sport results through obtaining medals (A1). In fact, B1 noted that the results consisted of the central point of measurement regarding the control after contemplation, stating, in his words, that "you do not have a charge, you need to have results". Corroborating this point, B4 stated, "We had to send a sports plan [...] Then, we knew that to maintain or move up in level, the result had to be at least the same or better than the previous year to be able to contemplate a higher scholarship".

In addition, it is evident that this sports plan is formulated together with the athletes' coaches (B2), and other professionals who work with these athletes (such as physiotherapists and physical trainers)

should be indicated, considering that, in the absence of these services, the athletes could "hire" them through the resources of the scholarship.

#### *Assignments of the working group*

The attributions of the working group are perceived to be related mainly to the monitoring of the athletes' results on the basis of the sports plan delivered. As mentioned earlier, the working group is composed of a representative of the Ministry of Sport, one from each respective Committee (Olympic and Paralympic) and representatives of the confederations (A1, A2). According to A1, the working group is established so that decisions are made collectively: "the one who disapproves is the working group and the one who approves is the working group".

With respect to the specific attributes of each member of the working group, the confederations are in charge of indicating the athletes who are eligible to receive the benefit and are among the twenty best in the modalities, whereas the committees contribute to the evaluations together with the Ministry of Sports, which maintains direct contact with the other members.

In fact, when reporting on the attributions of the working group, A1 stated that, sometimes, athletes have difficulty understanding that, for example, there is a collective reflection on the process of granting the Podium Scholarship, stating: "So much so that if you look on the internet, there is a lot like 'ah the confederation did not want to give me the scholarship'. The confederation does not decide anything alone; in fact, the confederation is the one that has the least power because it is the one that is indicating the athlete" (A1).

#### *Criteria and possibilities for the use of the resources*

Regarding the existence of criteria for the use of the resources received, it was possible to perceive through the interviews that there are no specific criteria related to the use of the resources received and that the contemplated athletes can use the resources in the way they want (A1, A2, B1). Therefore, the use of the resource can vary from athlete to athlete, in addition to being able to be used with issues related to the sport itself or even with personal issues, as long as, regardless of the way in



which the athlete uses this resource, he continues to practice the modality and respect the previously established work plan. Interviewee A1 even stated that "in the law, in the public notices and ordinances it is not written anywhere that he needs to spend on something specific, so this is open in the legislation" (A1). When questioning the possibility of modifying this understanding, the interviewee stated that Podium Athlete Scholarship is a direct resource for the athlete, so it makes no sense to determine what he will spend on; according to A1, "it goes into his pocket without intermediaries, that is right man, it fell into his account he does what he wants". Corroborating this point that there are no criteria for the use of resources as a result of this being direct financing, B1 stated that this is one of the main differentials of the program, also emphasizing the importance of specificity regarding the use according to each modality.

It was possible to find the same indications from the speech of interviewee B1, who stated "the following happens, they made a wonderful ceremony for the delivery of the... let us put in quotation marks, the recipients of the resource and here is the money, do what you want, the money is yours" (B1), also, specified "the guy wants to buy a car, the guy buys, the guy wants to buy an apartment, the guy buys, anyway, The guy does whatever he wants with money" (B1).

When the use of the resource received was questioned, several forms of use were mentioned by the athletes, such as investments in human resources (coaches, assistants, physical trainers), travel costs for training at altitude or competitions, practice equipment and supplementation (B2, B3, B4). On this basis, B2 stated "I think it helps us a lot, especially with competitions, because we always need to be competing or training altitude, you know, investing in it, in the material and everything". B3, on the other hand, stated: "You will want to buy supplements, you have to invest in yourself". On the other hand, B4 stated that "the Athlete Grant subsidy allowed me to insert people within my multidisciplinary team (such as nutritionists, physiotherapists, other people) and even compete more abroad"; however, B4 stressed the importance of the benefit and said that he was able to direct the program's resources specifically to the sports

universe: "Many times even though I had a club, I had to pay the coach, I had to pay assistance, I had to pay for a physical trainer [...] I paid for travel, I paid for a competition swimsuit, a supplement". In addition, B4 said that the results obtained in the 2017 season were the result of the resources received and the investments made.

### *Accountability*

When questioned about receiving instructions related to possible ways to use the resource, several interviewees stated that they did not receive instructions (B1, B2, B3, B4). With respect to accountability, when the interviewees were questioned about the existence of accountability in terms of resources, both managers and athletes stated that there was no accountability in the resources received and only in relation to the results. A1 stated that "no, you do not ask what he spent or what he did with that money, that is not asked (A1). A2 stated that accountability "she is sporty, let us say".

Corroborating the previous notes, B2 also stated that it did not need to make any type of accountability on the resources. B1 stated that "we did not have to make the accountability of this large amount that we received, so you received, you had to present the result was basically that". B3 argued that "you have to send an accountability, but she was not like that, keeping invoices for things, it does not need to be so detailed." On the other hand, B4 stated that it carried out the detailing and accountability of expenses only when it was in the previous categories of the Athlete Grant program, a fact that is no longer necessary in the Podium category.

### *Accumulation of resources*

With respect to the category of accumulation of resources, all the athletes interviewed stated that they receive some type of overlapping of resources, whether through sponsorship, the club or the armed forces (whether by the army, navy or air force). When questioning agent A1 about the legality within the program of receiving more than one source of funds, he stated that "for the athlete scholarship, it is totally indifferent", showing that for the Ministry of Sports, this is not a concern. A1 stated that "it was taken to the secretariat that the more money the



athlete receives, the better, so there is no reason for this to be modified".

When questioning B2 about receiving another resource while receiving the Athlete Grant, he replied: "I have a sponsorship from Speedo and I earn the club's salary too, they sponsor. In addition, I'm from the Navy too." Similarly, B3 argued that "in the beginning, I only received these resources from the government, and then, when I became a junior, I started to receive allowances from Pinheiros and then added the two. In addition, then I added the air force", and B4 said "in addition to the athlete scholarship, I received my club's salary". Therefore, in general, the athletes interviewed were subsidized by their respective clubs and by the armed forces (either by the army, navy or air force) while receiving Podium scholarships.

#### *Importance of managing the resources received*

Regarding the category related to the importance of managing the resources received, the interviewees noted the existence of difficulty related to the administration of resources directed to athletes (A1, A2, B1). About this, A1 stated "we realize that there is a lack of financial education and a part of planning" (A1). Corroborating this point, B1 said, "I see that the people got lost, you understand, so there is a lack of instruction from those who are investing the money in the athlete". On this basis, A1 stated that this is a general characteristic of our country that ends up being reflected in the athletes, who receive the incentive and do not know how to carry out long-term planning.

In addition to stating that there is a lack of financial education and long-term planning on the part of athletes, A1 said that "one thing I see a lot is like this 'in Brazil, there are no resources'. It is not quite like that, there are resources, the problem is that people do not know how to use it" (A1), showing, again, the lack of management of the resources received, which, if used efficiently, can be characterized as a support capable of providing security to the contemplated athletes (A2).

#### *Suggestions for other forms of decentralization of public resources*

Regarding the category of suggestions for other forms of decentralization of public resources, A1 stated that before considering the forms of decentralization, it is important that it is very clear on the part of those responsible for the distribution of resources the objective of this investment and what is intended to be achieved with it, a fact that does not always occur in Brazil. Nevertheless, A1 cites the absence of a central structure related to the decentralization of public resources and the lack of establishing clear roles in the Brazilian sports political structure, which results in overlapping resources.

From this, A1 states that resources exist; however, there is a need for an adjustment regarding the decentralization structure in the country. Corroborating this issue, B1 noted that in addition to financial resources, alignment with other factors is fundamental. Corroborating this aspect related to the importance of a training support structure, B3 stated that "as people are going to do sports, practice, no one can [...] People do not have access, so I think the structure has to invest a lot in it". On this basis, B1 stated that the form of financing that directs resources to athletes who have already shown significant results during their sports careers can be considered essential; however, it needs to be reviewed.

Importantly, when talking about structure, B1 did not talk specifically about physical structure but rather about structure as a support. In this regard, he also exemplified the following "if you take it, 90% of the athletes do not know how to invest this money or do not need this money" (B1). During his notes, B1 stated that more important than directing significant amounts of resources to athletes would be providing instruction strategies on the use of resources, as well as enabling a complete structure and support network.

Corroborating these notes, B2 also stated that, as important as directing resources to athletes, differentiated support strategies could be created, such as the provision of structure (in this case, physical structure), the organization of training at altitude, and the organization of competitions. Another interviewee who highlighted the importance of competitions was B3, when he stated that in the Brazilian calendar, there are few high-level competitions and that, therefore, it would be



interesting if there was an incentive for Brazilian athletes to experience different competitions and, from this experience, they could obtain sports experiences and significant improvements. In addition to the notes already evidenced, B2 noted that the existence of specialized monitoring for each athlete could be a significant support strategy.

In relation to this, B2 suggested that there should be a closer dialog between the government (as a financier) and the coach of the contemplated athletes to diagnose and meet the specific demands of each athlete, including the interviewee stating that the coach could receive a percentage of the resource. Finally, B3 suggested the existence of some constraints, such as the following "I think that transfer has to be conditioned; there have to be some conditionings. We are talking about underage athletes; there has to be a criterion that the athlete has to continue studying. There must be some kind of financial education, especially for minors".

These notes corroborate the notes of interviewees B1, B2, B3 and B4 about the importance of providing instruction to athletes who receive public resources. Nevertheless, B4 stated that government aid in the way it has occurred is significant; however, some strategies need to be considered when monitoring entities related to the contemplation process.

Nevertheless, with regard to the specific differences related to the decentralization of resources to beneficiaries, B4 stated that "if it is observed that there is a disparity in the nature of gender, race, sexual orientation, geographic position, I think that this has to be mitigated through public policy" (B4). In this way, we can highlight the importance of sports policies that propose strategies to mitigate disparities, whatever they may be.

## DISCUSSION

By observing the process of contemplating and maintaining the resources of the Podium Athlete Scholarship by the athletes of the Brazilian performance swimming, it is observed that the objectives of the Podium Athlete Scholarship are not properly clear to the beneficiaries, who sometimes think that the resource was awarded exclusively for the results they have already obtained in the past, as in the other categories of the program. However, in the case of the Podium Athlete Scholarship, it aims to

achieve future results, so remaining in the race for this result is essential to continue receiving the resource. The way in which the program has been operationalized corroborates the notes of Barker-Ruchti et al. (2018), considering that, in addition to distributing resources to athletes, it seeks to monitor the progress of financed athletes. For this reason, the sports plan ends up being the main beacon of continuity in this policy. The need to present the plan is provided for item VI of Article 3 of Decree No. 5,342 of January 14, 2005 (Brazil, 2005).

Thus, the legislation highlights the requirement to deliver the sports plan from the moment of contemplation of the athletes and, in addition, details how this sports plan must be completed (contemplating the following items: identification of the athlete, the head coach, the club, the sponsors, as well as the forecast of participation in competitions for the next 12 months, goals, antecedent results, position in the ranking, health, training plan, multidisciplinary team, materials and equipment, scientific procedures to achieve the proposed goal) and how it will be analyzed (if the forms are filled out correctly, if it meets the conditions for progression of international results, relevance of goals, compatibility with a multidisciplinary team and scope) (Brazil, 2005).

Considering that the sports plan is the main beacon of continuity in the program, the fact that the athlete himself sets goals can be a limiter. For example, this athlete may set "easy-to-achieve" goals, so he or she influences the main parameter of "progress" (Barker-Ruchti et al., 2018). Thus, the presentation of a sports projection could even be delivered by the athlete, with a view to its realization together with his technical team; however, universal goals could be established for each modality, such as, for example, the obligation to participate in the world championship of the modality. In this way, there would be participation of the funder in the establishment of goals, which could occur in an articulated way and aim at the athlete's long-term permanence (Barker-Ruchti et al., 2018).

The fact that there is no offer of instructions on how to use the resource may contribute to the observed management problems. It would be interesting to offer instructions on some possibilities for efficient use. Given that athletes receive other subsidies, it was



possible to verify that, according to the interviewees, this is not a limiting factor, considering that, in this way, it becomes easier to achieve significant results in the modality. As the Podium Athlete Scholarship is placed as a "sponsorship", it does not matter if the athlete receives other resources, such as state, municipal, club or armed force resources (whether by the army, navy or air force). With respect to this factor, we can establish relationships with the study of Costa et al. (2023), who reported that receiving different incentive scholarships contributes to the achievement of medals by an athlete.

It is clear that the resource is relevant for athletes (De Bosscher et al., 2009; De Bosscher, 2008; Digel, 2002; Green & Oakley, 2001; Paz et al., 2018), and, in accordance with the notes in the literature, it can act as a facilitator for sports development (De Bosscher et al., 2010; De Bosscher et al., 2009; De Bosscher et al., 2006; Digel, 2002; Green & Oakley, 2001), in addition to contributing to several specific demands being better managed, such as work, family, and studies (Hollings et al., 2014). However, in the case analyzed, even with the receipt of resources, there are other demands that athletes are unable to develop, and, according to the notes evidenced, if these other spheres were developed, the resource directed to athletes could even be lower than what is decentralized today. This result corroborates the findings in the literature that financial resources facilitate other fundamental aspects, such as food, the existence of quality equipment and training establishments, and technical support, among other factors (De Bosscher et al., 2010; De Bosscher et al., 2009; Digel, 2002; Green & Oakley, 2001; Paz et al., 2018). Therefore, it is perceived that financial resources without proper articulation of the specific needs of athletes ultimately lose their effectiveness.

On the basis of this, the interviewees described some indications of new possibilities for the decentralization of resources related to the following items: an improvement in the training structure (enabling training, for example, in the structure of Team Brazil), as well as providing possibilities for specific training such as displacement for training at altitude; the offer of instruction on the use of resources, considering that for many athletes, this resource becomes one of the largest "revenues" received and not everyone knows the best way to use

the money; the importance of participating in high-level competitions; and, in Brazil, there are few opportunities to participate in these competitions, in view of the reduced calendar of opportunities, for example, to participate in relevant competitions; however, as those who develop the calendar of competitions of the modality are FINA and CBDA, this would not be an attribution related to the Ministry of Sports; therefore, the athletes themselves stated that there could be an incentive to participate in international competitions, such as, for example, the ISL, an event in which most Brazilian athletes have started to participate in recent years, directing certain percentages of the scholarship to the technician. This finding corroborates the results of the study of Costa et al. (2023) concerning the importance of participating in events relevant to the careers of athletes, which also contributed to the achievement of significant sports results.

With respect to the monitoring of entities related to the contemplation process, to avoid interference in the "final choice" of the athletes, it can be said that the change that occurred on the obligation of the initial indication of all athletes able to receive the benefit by the confederation was a change to avoid these issues, safeguarding the principle of impersonality (Brazil, 1988; Canan et al., 2018).

On the other hand, the point made about the need to think about strategies on the basis of disparities evidenced is a significant argument, considering that, for example, in the case of swimming, most bags are directed to male athletes. Therefore, specific strategies could mitigate such disparities and reduce existing gender asymmetries in sports (Dunning & Maguire, 2010; Goellner, 2008; Knijnik, 2010; Louro, 2003).

With respect to the management of the resources received, previous research has noted the most recurrent forms of use by the recipients of the Athlete Grant program, such as the acquisition of materials and equipment for training and competitions and assistance with food, transportation and travel, among other factors (Martins, 2019; Paz et al., 2018). On the basis of the notes of the swimming athletes interviewed, several forms of use were identified by the athletes, such as investments in human resources, travel costs for training at altitude or competitions, practice equipment and supplementation. With



respect to the management of the resources received, the difficulty related to the administration of resources to athletes was recurrent, as evidenced by problems with financial education and the absence of long-term planning.

Regarding the process of accountability of the funds received, the interviewees stated that there is no specific accountability for the funds received and that the only accountability requested in the beneficiaries' notice is related to the sports plan established at the time of contemplation. By conducting an analysis of the public selection notices of athletes to benefit from the Podium Athlete Scholarship, it was observed that there are specific items on accountability to be considered by the athletes.

When observing what the selection notice indicates about accountability, it is noted that it must contain the declaration of the national sports administration entity and the sports practice entity attesting to the registration and full sports activity of the athlete; in addition, it highlights the need for the athlete to send the sports plan, referring to the subsequent twelve months for reassessment.

Therefore, the notes of the interviewees corroborate what the notice points out, showing that in the Podium Athlete Scholarship category, there is no specific accountability for the use of the resources transferred.

It was also possible that the absence of structuring related to the decentralization of public resources and the lack of establishment of clear roles in the Brazilian sports political structure is characterized as a limiter. This fact corroborates the notes of Maoski (2016) that there is "organized disorganization" in the development of sport in Brazil, which could be mitigated through the existence of shared management between the different entities, a strategy that, although it can help, is difficult to implement in the country owing to the need for a mechanism for this purpose.

In view of this, the importance of the General Sports Law was emphasized in 2023 (Law No. 14,597, of June 14, 2023) (Brazil, 2023), considering that, through this legal mechanism, it was sought to consolidate sport as a state policy, creating the National Sports System (SINESP) and the National

System of Sports Information and Indicators (SNIIE), in addition to seeking to specify the role of the Union and each federative entity, as well as the interaction between public and private entities in sports and other provisions. Thus, the implementation of the General Sports Law was a significant milestone for sport in Brazil in the midst of this "organized disorganization". Additionally, through the General Sports Law, the existence of mechanisms for direct aid to athletes by the government becomes an item of a general sports rule, bringing specific measures to be considered, for example, in the Athlete Grant program.

Even with the relevant findings of this study, we can highlight some limitations, mainly linked to the small number of beneficiaries who agreed to participate in the research. If all the athletes who benefited in the time frame analyzed had agreed to participate in the research, it is understood that other findings could be evidenced, contributing to the expansion of the understanding of this specific reality, in addition to having greater possibilities of counterpoints.

## CONCLUSIONS

The present study aimed to analyze the operationalization of public resources received by Brazilian high-performance swimmers through the identification of resources and the monitoring of activities and actions developed by beneficiaries.

Through data analysis, it was found that the resources directed toward athletes are generally used to fund human resources and the hiring of a multidisciplinary team, international travel and training, in addition to the purchase of equipment and supplementation items. With respect to the accountability of athletes, it is possible to see that it occurs solely and exclusively in relation to the results obtained and the sports goals achieved.

After carrying out the study, it is possible to see the importance of constant monitoring and evaluation of beneficiaries of public resources in sport, since it is only through monitoring actions that it is possible to reflect on the efficiency of the resource, its applicability, in addition to identifying possible adjustments.

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