

1 This is the English translation of the text published in Spanish in the *Journal of Teaching in*  
2 *Physical Education*, 2025, 44, 389-395. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jtpe.2024-0090>

3 **Influencers of Physical Education on Instagram: The assemblage among**  
4 **expert knowledge, microcelebrity strategies and platform affordances**

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9  
10 **Abstract**

11 **Purpose:** This study analyses the role of Physical Education (PE) teachers who are *influencers* in  
12 the area on the Instagram social network.

13 **Method:** Using a descriptive case study, the profiles of three Spanish *influencers* were analysed  
14 for seven months (159 posts and 73 stories) with a thematic analysis

15 **Results:** The results show that the PE *influencer* is the product of a complex interplay in which  
16 the dissemination of their knowledge and their identity as experts is developed through  
17 microcelebrity strategies and the management of the functionalities of the platform itself aimed at  
18 boosting their visibility and, ultimately, monetising their content.

19 **Conclusion:** It concludes with the tensions that exist for PE around this phenomenon within the  
20 neoliberal educational context and the need for teacher training to be adapted to this new  
21 educational reality.

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## Introduction

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Social media has become a space increasingly used by teachers for their professional development (Lantz-Andersson et al., 2018), including in the field of Physical Education (PE) (Parris et al., 2022). This type of professional development is informal and has allowed, for example, the creation of online communities of practice in which teachers interact with one another by posting and sharing resources and information about their teaching practices (Goodyear et al., 2019; Lantz-Andersson et al., 2018).

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In this study, we focus on the emergence of a new profile of educators on social media who act as educational influencers (Carpenter *et al.*, 2023) or *eduinfluencers* (Shelton *et al.*, 2020). These are educators who share educational content through their social media accounts and are ‘influencers’ because they accumulate a relatively large number of followers through the textual and visual narration of their lives, engaging with their followers as a means of monetization (Abidin, 2018). Their followers are mostly other educators (either in-service or in-training teachers), and these *eduinfluencers* capture their attention, gaining visibility on social media and within their community (Shelton *et al.*, 2020). In general, influencers are characterized by having built a reputation based on their knowledge and experience in a specific subject area about which they regularly post content (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017). They are regarded as opinion leaders and disseminators of information for their followers, being valued as credible sources of information (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017). *Eduinfluencers* profiles promote practices, philosophies, or products related to education and constitute a field of educational research that has gathered growing interest due to their significant role in the development of networks for informal professional learning among teachers (Shelton et al., 2020).

46 PE is field of knowledge with a limited autonomy, as it is highly permeable to discourses  
47 from other fields, such as sport or health (Brown, 2005). This could facilitate, to a greater extent  
48 than in other areas, that its influencers generate a diversity of online content related to the subject.  
49 The clearest example is Joe Wicks in the United Kingdom who, without having specific  
50 professional qualifications in the area, gained great popularity during the Covid pandemic as ‘the  
51 PE teacher’, being highly questioned for his impact on PE itself (Bowles *et al.*, 2022). Therefore,  
52 the aim of this study is to analyse the phenomenon of PE influencers as adopted by PE teachers in  
53 the field. This is a research area that, to our knowledge, has not been previously addressed, and  
54 which is of interest as it contributes to defining both the identity and informal professional  
55 development of PE teachers as well as the field of knowledge itself.

#### 56 *Educative influencers*

57 There are recent studies on this phenomenon focused on different social platforms. For  
58 example, on YouTube, the success factors of educational content creators (*edutubers*) have been  
59 characterised, highlighting the frequent uploading of short, explanatory videos in which the  
60 *edutuber* appears physically on the screen and makes extensive use of the platform functionalities  
61 and other social networks (Pattier, 2021). On Instagram, it has been observed that educators use  
62 this social network due to its possibilities for carrying out self-directed activities, which engage or  
63 capture the attention of other educators in any geographical area (Carpenter *et al.*, 2020). This  
64 network would function as a portal to like-minded professional spaces where teachers exchange  
65 ideas and self-affirmation, with a subset of users who monetize some of the ideas exchanged  
66 (Carpenter *et al.*, 2020).

67 Finally, the most recent work on teachers as influencers focuses on TikTok. Vizcaíno-  
68 Verdú and Abidin (2023) have analysed the processes by which teachers become micro-celebrities  
69 and generate their own *TeachTok* subculture, in which the platform functionalities are key to reach  
70 their audience and improve their online pedagogy. In all the cases mentioned, educational  
71 influencers could be considered as a specific type of knowledge influencer (Maddox, 2023), as  
72 they are experts in their profession who adopt micro-celebrity strategies, turning their primary  
73 occupation into expertise and information that they share on social networks.

#### 74 *Educative influencers as micro-celebrities*

75 A micro-celebrity is an ordinary person who, by emulating celebrities or famous  
76 individuals, strategically shares information to be consumed by others. They regularly interact with  
77 their followers, regarded as fans, to enhance and maintain popularity and attention among their  
78 audience and within the network (Khamis et al., 2017; Marwick, 2016). In this study, we adopt  
79 Marwick's (2016) approach, which emphasizes that micro-celebrity is something one does (not  
80 something one is), referring to a set of practices, self-presentation techniques, and ways of thinking  
81 about oneself as if they were a celebrity or famous person. In this way, the self is strategically  
82 positioned as a commodity for audience consumption, regardless of the audience size (Marwick,  
83 2016).

84 Recent studies have shown how influencer teachers adopt these types of micro-celebrity  
85 strategies (Abidin, 2021; Carpenter et al., 2023; Shelton et al., 2020; Vizcaíno-Verdú & Abidin,  
86 2023). Among these strategies, authenticity stands out —presenting oneself as sincere and  
87 approachable, which increases the receptivity of the message by making the influencer be seen as  
88 “one of us” by their followers. Another strategy is to display both success and failures or  
89 vulnerability to seem relatable and facilitate identification with their followers (Hendry et al.,

90 2022). Recent studies have highlighted how the phenomenon of *eduinfluencers*, as knowledge  
91 experts and micro-celebrities, is possible thanks to by user interaction facilitated by social media  
92 platforms through their various features (Vizcaíno-Verdú & Abidin, 2023).

93 The rise of the *eduinfluencer* phenomenon, linked to teachers' interest and responsibility  
94 in informal education on social networks, should be understood within the current neoliberal  
95 context, which extends an entrepreneurial mindset to all forms of behaviour (Burchell, 1993).  
96 Thus, it is common for teachers with a large number of social media followers —i.e.,  
97 *eduinfluencers* with micro-celebrity status (Carpenter et al., 2023)— to adopt entrepreneurial  
98 strategies through which they seek to identify, evaluate, and exploit business opportunities on their  
99 profiles (Mei & Genet, 2024; Schmeichel et al., 2022). This teacher entrepreneurship occurs when  
100 they sell, distribute, and promote online their own classroom resources and ideas about the  
101 profession (Shelton & Archambault, 2018). Therefore, *eduinfluencers* navigate between the role  
102 of educators seeking the professional development of their followers and that of an entrepreneur  
103 in search of attention to monetize their social profile (Carpenter et al., 2023).

104 In this study, we focus on the analysis of Spanish *eduinfluencers* in the Physical Education  
105 (PE) subject, who could be referred to as *edufisinfluencers*, considering the term *edufis* originated  
106 on the social network Twitter to designate the online PE community in Spanish (Mellado et al.,  
107 2021). The specific research questions guiding this study were: What elements characterize the  
108 identity of *edufisinfluencers* as knowledge experts? What strategies do they use to position  
109 themselves as *edufisinfluencers* on Instagram?

## 110 **Methods**

111 The research design, situated within a critical interpretive paradigm (Sparkes, 1992),  
112 consists of a multiple case study in which each *influencer* analysed is considered a case. It is a

113 descriptive design (Yin, 2018) as it enables the illustration of the key characteristics of the  
114 *edufisinfluencer* phenomenon within its own context (Instagram).

115 Instagram was selected as the social network platform for this study because it is a  
116 multimodal platform that allows for the visualization of the inherently practical component of  
117 motor skills, in addition to the text and audio published by profiles. Instagram was created in 2010  
118 and currently has around 1.2 billion users. This social network platform allows users to share video,  
119 photo, and text content, either permanently (posts) or for just 24 hours (stories). It also enables  
120 users to send and receive private messages, tag other profiles in posts, and create traceable content  
121 through hashtags that index content and can be accessed via a mobile app or web browser.  
122 Instagram serves as a space for teachers to connect through resources, support, and inspiration  
123 (Carpenter et al., 2020), making it a rich context for studying in the educational field.

124 To identify PE influencer teacher accounts, the terms "edufis" and "PE" were entered into  
125 the Instagram search feature (the "magnifying glass"). This method returned the top-ranked public  
126 accounts. Considering that follower and following lists are accessible, profiles with the highest  
127 number of followers followed by the initially selected account and subsequent ones were sought,  
128 continuing this process until saturation, where the same high-follower profiles repeatedly  
129 appeared.

130 The selected accounts had to meet the following inclusion criteria: Public accounts;  
131 belonging to PE teachers and displaying content related to the subject; belonging to Spanish  
132 teachers and teaching in Spain (this could be verified through the biography and by observing the  
133 published content). Once the ten accounts with the highest number of followers were identified,  
134 three were chosen for an in-depth content analysis. For this selection, the first author observed the

135 Instagram activity of the ten initially selected accounts over one month and chose the three most  
136 relevant, considering both the quantity and diversity of published content, as well as its theoretical  
137 significance in answering the research questions posed. Two accounts belonging to women  
138 (identified with the pseudonyms @aliciaedufis and @elretodelaef<sup>1</sup>) and one account belonging to  
139 a man (renamed as @educafis) were selected, with follower numbers ranging between  
140 approximately 10,000 and 40,000.

141 For each selected account, posts (videos, photos, or text content permanently shared on the  
142 main Instagram profile wall) and stories (videos, photos, or text content shared for 24 hours and  
143 viewable by clicking the profile icon) were analyzed. The biography section (the area at the top of  
144 the profile where a description of the profile or enabling functions are provided) was also  
145 examined. As a timeframe, posts were analyzed over six months (September 2022 to March 2023)  
146 and stories published daily over three weeks (September 2022). Across the three cases, a total of  
147 159 posts and 73 stories were analyzed.

148 The images, videos, and texts from the posts, stories, and biographies were imported into  
149 Atlas.ti 23 for coding and analysis. The data analysis involved thematic analysis (Braun et al.,  
150 2016) of both textual and visual content. Initially, one researcher (first author of this work) engaged  
151 in deep immersion in the data to achieve thorough familiarization. Subsequently, codes were  
152 identified through an inductive process. With the collaboration of the second author, these codes  
153 were grouped into themes and key concepts, always addressing the research purpose. The meaning  
154 and significance of these themes were described and interpreted based on theory. Finally, the codes  
155 and resulting data from each case under study were compared.

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<sup>1</sup> An English translation of this name could be “TheChallengeOfPE”

156 The ethical dilemma that arises when analyzing online data generated by individuals was  
157 addressed through a deep, collaborative, and contextualized reflection (Goodyear, 2017), guided  
158 by existing ethical standards protocols (Bruckman, 2002; Franzke et al., 2020) and previous studies  
159 (Schmeichel et al., 2022; Shelton et al., 2020). The possibility of identifying the accounts was  
160 eliminated through data and account anonymization via the following procedures: 1) renaming the  
161 accounts using pseudonyms, aiming to maintain the tone and type of username of the original  
162 account; 2) the verbal/text content published on the accounts was paraphrased, partially altering  
163 the sentences while preserving their meaning, in order to prevent tracing back to the original  
164 source; 3) Regarding images (photos, videos), their use was not considered, but detailed  
165 description of them was provided. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the  
166 University Complutense of Madrid.

## 167 **Results**

168 The themes and categories of analysis detailed below allowed us to characterize the  
169 *edufisinfluencers* profiles as knowledge experts in Physical Education (PE), as well as to identify  
170 the micro-celebrity and visibility strategies on the platform that enable them to position  
171 themselves as PE influencers on Instagram.

### 172 ***Edufisinfluencers as experts of knowledge in Physical Education***

173 The analysed *edufisinfluencers* profiles present themselves as experts in the teaching of  
174 Physical Education (PE), whether through their academic qualifications, professional  
175 achievements, and/or practical expertise. Specifically, @aliciaedufis and @elretodelaef highlight  
176 their high level of university education (e.g., doctoral degrees) or their participation in academic  
177 activities such as courses, seminars, publications, or research projects. Furthermore,

178 @elretodelaef shares professional milestones, such as giving a speech or being invited to a  
 179 professional event or conference. Additionally, all three influencers analysed exhibited in their  
 180 posts a close connection to the practical teaching of PE by sharing information about teaching  
 181 strategies, classroom resources, or activities they implement in their own classes. For example:

182 “Activities for the first days of class just as I do with my students” (@educafis).

183 “We are about to carry out the third AMRAP session [*a CrossFit workout*] with the  
 184 students. Groups will be randomly formed, and each will have a peer-assessment sheet”  
 185 (@aliciaedufis).

186 “I am showing you these proposals for the development of balance. This term we are  
 187 starting to work on it with the third-grade students” (@elretodelaef).

188 It is also common for these influencers to share their students’ learning as a success  
 189 achieved thanks to their teaching work, as illustrated by @aliciaedufis: “Is today the day for peer  
 190 assessment, teacher?” while smiling and forming a heart with her hands. In this way, they inspire  
 191 other teachers to follow their recommendations, training, and resources.

192 *Edufisinfluencers* share a vast amount of information on Instagram about what it takes to  
 193 be an effective PE teacher. One of the most recurring types of content (especially in the cases of  
 194 @aliciaedufis and @educafis) is the dissemination of a wide variety of activities, often presented  
 195 as “ready-to-use exercises for your PE class” (@elretodelaef). For example: “paddle alphabet:  
 196 with letter A, do 10 hits while CROUCHED; with letter B, do 3 hits the EDGE, etc.”  
 197 (@elretodelaef), “5 exercises for strength development with a partner” (@aliciaedufis), or:

198 “20 cooperative soccer challenges. Very useful material in #edufis classes for introducing  
199 students to do sport [...]. Ball in the air! The group, in a circle, will pass the ball using  
200 their feet and thighs without letting it touch the ground. The player who touches the ball  
201 must turn around once. The attempt with the highest number of touches counts over five  
202 trials” (@educafis).

203 The above examples illustrate the performance of motor tasks that establish a single level  
204 of difficulty, often assuming prior mastery of the technical movement (even one of notable  
205 complexity), and prescribe fixed rules and a specific number of repetitions or attempts for their  
206 execution. Frequently, the tasks are presented in the form of challenges, a motivational strategy  
207 widely used in social media.

208 Nonetheless, there are occasional instances in which the influencers acknowledge the  
209 need to adapt content to the characteristics of the student group. As @aliciaedufis notes: “Offer  
210 various options for exercises and activities so that students can choose those they prefer and find  
211 most accessible while achieving the same objectives”.

212 Furthermore, all three *edufisinfluencers* share definitions or brief theoretical explanations  
213 on a range of topics that, due to their introductory nature, appear to be aimed at novice  
214 audiences. For example, they explain the difference “between game and sport” (@aliciaedufis),  
215 key ideas about “warm-up” (@edufis) or “laterality” (@elretodelaef), or about programming  
216 (@aliciaedufis), the latter aspect linked to the sale of training courses. Two influencers also  
217 disseminate information on new trends or innovations in PE that educator followers should know  
218 to benefit their students. For example, a course on inclusive education (@aliciaedufis) or new

219 trends in digital technologies (@elretodelaef). Both influencers present key ideas and invite their  
220 followers to enrol, upon payment, in their training courses via the link in their profile.

221 Finally, although less frequently, some critical content can be found, aimed at raising  
222 awareness about social inequalities. For example, @aliciaedufis shares videos from other  
223 accounts addressing body stereotypes and gender inequalities in sport. On the International  
224 Women's Day, @educafis offers a resource based on cards containing information about female  
225 athletes to highlight their achievements. However, followers are required to interact with the  
226 platform to access this resource, and the same post promotes discounts for a sportswear brand,  
227 which raise questions about the genuine intent of the initiative.

### 228 ***PE influencers as micro-celebrities: Authenticity and relatability***

229 The data show that the analysed *edufisinfluencers*, in addition to trying to inspire  
230 admiration for their professional success, present themselves as authentic and approachable  
231 individuals to their followers, with the aim of generating interest in their persona, just as celebrities  
232 or famous people do. The micro-celebrity strategies they adopt are as follows:

233 Firstly, the *edufisinfluencers* offer help to their followers by presenting themselves as a  
234 friend to be admired and who seeks to make their teaching job easier. For example, "Here are some  
235 guidelines to help you" (@aliciaedufis), or "if the illustrations can help you, you just have to ask  
236 for them" (@educafis). This desire to help persists even under difficult circumstances, as shown  
237 by @elretodelaef in this story: "I feel terrible with this cold, but don't worry, I'll try to send you  
238 the guide so you have it in time for your groups".

239           Additionally, in two of the accounts analysed (@elretodelaef and @aliciaedufis), they were  
 240 portrayed as authentic individuals by sharing intimate, sincere content, as well as personal aspects  
 241 of their daily lives. For example, they show images or videos of their hobbies like dancing  
 242 (@aliciaedufis) or practicing a sport (@aliciaedufis, @elretodelaef), everyday situations and  
 243 spaces like being in pajamas (@aliciaedufis), going on trips or moving to a new city  
 244 (@elretodelaef), sharing the books they are reading while showing their home (@elretodelaef), or  
 245 creating resources at home (@aliciaedufis), among other examples.

246           Another strategy typical of micro-celebrities observed in the analyzed accounts is the  
 247 predominance of positivity in both textual and visual content. For example, they present  
 248 themselves to their audience through their own avatars (exclusively in the case of @educafis),  
 249 smiling, posing, or engaging in physical activities. When they appear in person (@elretodelaef and  
 250 @aliciaedufis), they also show up smiling and with a carefully curated aesthetic. The messages  
 251 are accompanied by motivational phrases along with emojis that express strength, love, and joy.  
 252 For example, @elretodelaef shares her avatar image holding dumbbells and running on a treadmill  
 253 with a determined expression, along with the phrase: “Let's tackle Monday with everything we've  
 254 got!” or “Hello PE teachers! ❤️ Are you ready to bring out your most fun side in class?” 🏋️ 😊”  
 255 (@aliciaedufis).

256           The *edufisinfluencers* balance this positivity and success with moments of vulnerability,  
 257 carefully show their imperfections as a strategy to appear relatable and foster identification with  
 258 their audience. For example, @elretodelaef admits feeling nervous before giving a presentation or  
 259 facing the typical challenges of teaching:

260 “I wanted to share with you that no one gets everything right all the time. Sometimes we  
 261 see fun activities, beautiful materials, but the reality of teaching 28 students in a class is  
 262 different, and it’s inevitable that problems arise” (@elretodelaef).

263 There are also messages in which failures are seen as temporary obstacles that must be  
 264 overcome with a resilient attitude. For example: “No one wins without losing” (@educafis), or  
 265 “Getting up after a ‘failure’ is not only a sign of resilience but also of self-confidence ☺”  
 266 (@aliciaedufis).

267 In addition, they use humour around their flaws, problems, or situations common to the  
 268 teaching profession, further enhancing their relatability. For example, they share memes or funny  
 269 videos about the complexity of bureaucracy or the new educational law (@aliciaedufis), or  
 270 @educafis jokes about students' euphoria when they pass the subject or how hard it is to return to  
 271 work on Mondays. Finally, the three profiles self-promote through the micro-celebrity strategy of  
 272 participating in popular trends and challenges (which are unrelated to their profession). For  
 273 example, posts about Christmas, Halloween, Black Friday, or creating resources linked to famous  
 274 online personalities (e.g., streamers).

### 275 ***Visibility and online community through platform functionalities***

276 The analysis of the studied profiles reveals how *edufisinfluencers* seek to take advantage  
 277 of the functionalities (or affordances) offered by the platform’s design to capture users’ attention  
 278 and thereby encourage their active participation on the social network (through likes, comments,  
 279 tagging, etc.). In this regard, in the three analysed accounts, we observe strategic communication  
 280 actions aimed at achieving that participation. For example, when sharing information, they express  
 281 a willingness to help and resolve doubts, but they also indicate to their followers how they wish

282 them to interact with the platform. As exemplified by @elretodelaef: “Any questions about the  
 283 talk or anything else, I'll be happy to answer them ♥, but please leave them in the comments of the  
 284 post”. However, at another time, she conveys an ambiguous message: “It is not necessary to share  
 285 this in your stories or mention anyone or take any unusual steps (although I really appreciate it if  
 286 you do) hahaha” (@elretodelaef).

287 Nevertheless, the most frequent strategy is a direct request for interaction, typically by  
 288 posting questions or expressing interest in followers’ opinions regarding a shared resource or a  
 289 recent event. They also ask for additional examples related to a previously shared idea, such  
 290 as: “Do you use any rubric like this in your classes?” (@aliciaedufis); “How do you manage  
 291 conflicts with your students?” (@elretodelaef); and “Can you think of any play-based ideas!? (...)  
 292 Has something like this ever happened to you?” (@aliciaedufis).

293 Another strategy frequently employed by the three *edufisinfluencers* to increase the reach  
 294 and impact of their expert content within their online community is the offering of gifts, discounts,  
 295 and even giveaways. To obtain the material, followers are required to make use of the platform’s  
 296 interactive tools, such as likes or comments on posts, sharing content via stories, or engaging other  
 297 potentially interested users by tagging their accounts. For example, @edufis shares free materials  
 298 and specifies:

299 ✦ Interested in getting the MATERIAL ? ? Follow these 3 steps to receive the free  
 300 version: 1) Like the post and follow the account @educafis. 2) TAG 3 colleagues in the  
 301 comments #edufis so they can discover the material. 3) SHARE this post in your stories  
 302 😊 (@educafis).

303 Other strategies that demonstrate how *edufisinfluencers* take advantage of the platform's  
304 functionalities include: (1) the use of hashtags, which allow other users to locate their content when  
305 searching for topics of interest via the search function (“the magnifying glass”), a strategy  
306 frequently used by @educafis; (2) the consistent publication of content through stories, which  
307 appear automatically in the stories feed of their followers; and (3) references to their “bio” section  
308 to encourage users to view and purchase materials. It is also worth noting that some Instagram  
309 posts originate from TikTok (either from their own account or from other users) which illustrates  
310 the *transmedia* relationships between platforms and the cross-posting of content.

### 311 **Discussion**

312 The analysed *edufisinfluencer* profiles are characterized as knowledge influencers  
313 (Maddox, 2023) in Physical Education (PE), as they present themselves as experts in the PE  
314 teaching profession, while simultaneously adopting strategies of micro-celebrity and managing  
315 the platform's functionalities to gain visibility online and, ultimately, monetize their content.  
316 Their self-presentation as experts in teaching is supported by their academic and professional  
317 credentials, but also firmly grounded in their close connection to practical knowledge. Through  
318 numerous examples drawn from their own classroom experiences, they not only legitimize their  
319 expertise in the real-world PE setting but also foster empathy and a sense of closeness with their  
320 educator-followers (Shelton et al., 2020).

321 In this way, the *edufisinfluencer* positions themselves as a facilitator of their followers'  
322 teaching practice by prescribing specific tasks and classroom dynamics that anyone could  
323 implement in their PE classes. Generally, these are tasks that do not present progressions or  
324 adaptations according to different learning contexts or student diversity. Thus, they represent a

325 form of universal and standardized instruction which implicitly assumes that all students and  
326 class groups could follow the same activities with the same instructions (Reeves, 2018). This  
327 kind of “recipes” as a model of “good teaching” is typical of a technical approach to PE teaching,  
328 characterized by ignoring context, power relations and students’ perspectives (Tinning, 2010).  
329 Frequently, these tasks are framed as challenges, reinforcing a narrative of self-improvement,  
330 individual responsibility, and identification with the online community (Camacho-Miñano *et al.*,  
331 2019). The result is a standardized curriculum aligned with a neoliberal vision of education  
332 (Meshulam & Apple, 2014), which also serves as the foundation for marketing and selling  
333 teaching resources and materials. Alongside this dominant trend, there are occasional posts with  
334 a more critical focus or that acknowledge the need to adapt teaching strategies. Although these  
335 messages might appear contradictory, it is important to highlight that the persuasive influencer,  
336 possessing a form of a celebrity status, can be accepted by followers in any of their multiple and  
337 contradictory identities (Crocker *et al.*, 2015).

338         The *edufisinfluencer* as an expert in PE on Instagram is developed through micro-  
339 celebrity strategies, aimed at carefully curating their online presence in order to generate interest  
340 around their persona (Abidin, 2018). Basically, they try to present themselves as authentic  
341 individuals close to their followers, portraying themselves as “ordinary” teachers who love their  
342 profession and try to help their followers. This type of personal interaction, which leads them to  
343 share intimate, sincere content and aspects of their daily life, makes the audience more interested  
344 and engaged with the content they post, feeling that, in some way, they know the  
345 *edufisinfluencers* —that is, the person behind the profile (Van Driel & Dumitrica, 2020).

346         The analysed accounts predominantly convey messages of positivity and motivation  
347 aimed at becoming a “good” PE teacher. This attitude is consistent with neoliberal ideas of

348 personal effort, discipline, and empowerment, promoting an entrepreneurial conception of the  
349 self (Camacho-Miñano & Gray, 2021). In doing so, differences in teaching contexts and career  
350 trajectories are ignored, hiding both social inequalities (due to gender, ethnicity, social class,  
351 etc.) and the precarious nature of the teaching profession itself (Kirk, 2020). Alongside this  
352 positivity, the influencers also share their struggles and even failures, deliberately framing their  
353 imperfections as a way to appear more approachable and relatable people with whom followers  
354 can identify, thereby increasing the receptivity to their message (Hendry et al., 2022). Failures  
355 are often portrayed as temporary obstacles to be overcome through a resilient mindset  
356 (Camacho-Miñano & Gray, 2021), adopting an attitude in which failures and negative  
357 experiences are reframed in positive terms. This is frequently achieved through the use of  
358 humour, which helps reframe these setbacks by creating a general sense of well-being, thus  
359 minimizing their impact (Kanai, 2019). In this way, a form of “collective affective attachment”  
360 (Kanai, 2019, p. 20) is generated toward the desire to become the perfect teacher, which also  
361 includes the efforts and failures involved in trying to achieve it.

362 In addition to micro-celebrity strategies, the analysed *edufisinfluencers* actively manage  
363 platform functionalities to enhance their visibility on Instagram, particularly among PE teaching  
364 audiences. Specifically, they engage in strategic communication actions to capture the  
365 community’s attention and encourage followers participation on the social media network: they  
366 request likes, shares, comments, tagging, etc. They also pose questions and propose discussion  
367 topics, which are presented as genuine efforts to listen to and understand their audience (Shelton  
368 et al., 2020), and to maintain their loyalty but, at the same time, these are key strategies to  
369 increase the number of comments on their posts. Moreover, in some cases, they offer free

370 resources, but to access them, followers must use the tools available on the platform, which is  
371 crucial for the account's visibility (Nadeem et al., 2020).

372 All this continuous audience interaction with influencer content can be understood as a  
373 constant effort to avoid the invisibility created by the algorithm (Van Driel & Dumitrica, 2020).  
374 In addition, large numbers of followers, likes, comments and views function as symbolic capital  
375 on Instagram. It legitimises the content shared by *edufisinfluencers*, acting as an indicator of their  
376 expert knowledge since the larger the following, the more powerful the brand and its content  
377 (Khamis et al., 2017). Moreover, there is also evidence of cross-posting between Instagram and  
378 TikTok, reflecting the mimicry and convergence of both platforms (Abidin, 2021). All of these  
379 actions require a considerable amount of invisible labour (Abidin, 2021; Vizcaíno-Verdú &  
380 Abidin, 2023), aimed at managing platform content to increase popularity and reinforce their  
381 status as knowledge influencers within the *edufis* community on Instagram.

## 382 **Conclusions**

383 This study has demonstrated how the figure of the *edufisinfluencer* on Instagram is a  
384 complex phenomenon. Grounded in their expert knowledge on Physical Education (PE) teaching,  
385 *edufisinfluencers* build their presence through the use of micro-celebrity strategies, aimed at  
386 conveying authenticity and relatability, and by leveraging platform functionalities to capture  
387 attention and promote user participation. These actions are strategically designed at modulating  
388 the Instagram's algorithm to achieve greater visibility of their profile (Van Driel & Dumitrica,  
389 2020). Ultimately, this complex dynamic enables, in all three analyzed cases, the monetization of  
390 expert knowledge and, consequently, the commercial exploitation of the account, in what is termed  
391 the figure of the entrepreneurial teacher (Carpenter et al., 2023; Shelton & Archambault, 2018).

392 Therefore, the knowledge of PE circulating on Instagram can be understood as digital and social  
393 construct, in which the shared knowledge is co-constructed by the knowledge influencer  
394 themselves as both expert (Maddox, 2023) and entrepreneur, the Instagram platform and the  
395 teacher audiences.

396 This research highlights the tensions surrounding the role of PE within this emerging  
397 dynamics. On one hand, *edufis* communities led by *edufisinfluencers* constitute accessible informal  
398 learning spaces, collectively created, led and shared by peers within the teaching profession  
399 (Carpenter et al., 2020). Such online spaces offer potential opportunities for mutual support,  
400 learning, and reflection on PE and teaching practices. On the other hand, and without questioning  
401 the good intentions of *edufisinfluencers*, their activities must also be understood within the broader  
402 framework of an individualistic, consumerist and neoliberal culture (Attick, 2017), and the  
403 development of a teaching profile as an entrepreneur who does business online and, therefore,  
404 considers fellow educators as clients (Schmeichel et al., 2022).

405 Future research should explore the process by which “ordinary” teachers become PE  
406 influencers, examining the development of micro-celebrity dynamics and the dilemmas that arise.  
407 Similarly, it would be interesting to investigate the perspectives of teachers who engage with these  
408 accounts (motivations, perceived usefulness, potential conflicts, etc.) in order to better understand  
409 the influence these profiles exert on teachers’ professional identity and development as PE  
410 educators. Finally, deeper insight is needed into how current social and educational contexts  
411 contribute to the emergence, success and legitimization of these profiles, and what consequences  
412 this has for the PE field itself.

413           Regarding its practical application, this study points to the urgent need for PE teacher  
 414 training centers to address this phenomenon and to co-investigate with teachers about the complex  
 415 online interplay between influencers, expert knowledge, celebrity strategies and  
 416 algorithmic/platform dynamics. This would enable educators to harness the potential benefits of  
 417 social media (e.g., connecting with the *edufis* community) while mitigating potential risks, such as  
 418 time loss or exposure to inadequate content (Shelton et al., 2020). What becomes evident is that,  
 419 given the widespread use of social media and the growing role of *edufisinfluencers* in the field of  
 420 PE, teacher training must adapt to this new educational reality.

## 421           **Notes**

- 422           1. List of stories in continuous update of the accounts that are followed, located at the top of  
 423 the home profile.

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