

Research on sports migration: an analysis of methodological procedures

JEFERSON ROBERTO ROJO¹, WYCLIFFE W. NJORORAI SIMIYU², FERNANDO AUGUSTO STAREPRAVO³

^{1,3}Department of Physical Education, State University of Maringá, BRAZIL

²Department of Health and Kinesiology, University of Texas at Tyler, USA

Published online: March 31, 2020

(Accepted for publication: January 27, 2020)

DOI:10.7752/jpes.2020.02081

Abstract:

The present study aimed at analyzing the knowledge already produced on sports migration at an international level, emphasizing the methodological issues of the cataloged studies. The research was consolidated from a systematized review, which was searched in three databases using the following key words: Sport Migration OR Sport Labor Migration OR Athlete Migration. The search yielded a total of 1192 publications that were reduced to 190 that met the set criteria for the study. As a result, it was established that the production of knowledge about sports migration had a growth in the volume of publications in recent years. In addition, it was found that the journal that published most on the subject was the International Review for the Sociology of Sport. Additionally, the majority of articles were written in the English language. With regard to the research instrument, documentary research and interviews were the most used by researchers in the area. It is concluded that, despite the advances in studies in the area of sports migration, it is believed that expanding the use of empirical data collection methods in new studies would enhance the production and dissemination of knowledge on sports migration.

Key Words: Sport; Migration; Knowledge Production; Review; Methods

Introduction

Sports migration has been discussed by authors from different countries and for some years (Madichie, 2009; Maguire & Falcous, 2010). Although sports migration is an area of study in the field of sports sciences, it has previously been studied by scholars from a variety of academic disciplines. According Maguire and Falcous (2010), the area attracted scholarly attention of economists, historians, sociologists, geographers and political scientists. Also, in the 1980s, a researcher John Bale, a Geographer by training, began his research on migratory flows in individuals involved in sports (Bale, 1982, 2003; Agergaard, 2017). However, studies of sports migration, as an area proper, began to be developed as of 1994, the year in which the book, “*The Global Sports Arena: Athletic Talent Migration in an Interdependent World*” edited by the authors John Bale and Joseph Maguire was published.

Over the years, studies on sports migration have gained some specific conceptual frameworks such as the case of migrant typology (Maguire, 1996; Magee & Sugden, 2002). In addition, the studies on sports migration have focused on a variety of disciplines. After a period of more than two decades of contributions in the area of sports migration, no study has sought to analyze the literature already produced with a view of establishing the methods and language used. The major question is: how is the research on sport migration done? This study therefore sought to fill this void by doing a systematized search of the academic literature that already exists on the area of sports migration with the aim of establishing the frequency of publications annually, methodology used, the publication outlet, and the language used.

The studies of sports migration have a very close relation to researchers in the sports sciences. However, the area has a multidisciplinary dimension, involving questions of basic areas such as sociology, psychology, history, geography, among others. Thus, in addition to a debate about the theories used in the studies, the discussion is also carried out using the latest research methods.

As an example, we observed the dialogues between Magee and Sugden (2002) and Joseph Maguire (2004), where the authors discussed the means used to collect data from their research. Magee and Sugden (2002) critique the typology of migration proposed by Maguire (1996), is found in the methodological questions of the empirical data of the research. According to Magee and Sugden, Maguire's proposal was based on secondary data, thus generating inconsistency in its use. On the other hand, Maguire (2004) points to the idea that researchers on sports migration, as well as migration, should broaden their eyes and provide more complete data. To advance the area of study, the author argues that research done should rely on several sources of data, such as interviews, documents, among others.

Based on the understanding that the area of sports migration has attracted the interest of several sports researchers, as well as scholars from other disciplines, and accumulated academic publications over a period of approximately 25 years, this study aims to analyze the production of knowledge about the theme. This is because understanding the selection of data and the ways of doing research are an important part of the process of knowledge production. It is therefore important to have a deeper examination on the research methods used in the various studies so as to inform the work of future researchers on sports migration.

Material & methods

The present study is exploratory, which according to Gratton & Jones (2010), is the type of research that occurs where there is little or no previous knowledge. Observing the prior non-systematization of the revision of knowledge on the subject, this study seeks, through this methodology, to identify the patterns and ideas that arise from the analyzes of the published academic literature on the methods used to conduct the research. An analysis of the scientific production on the issue of Sports Migration was made available in international journals. The articles indexed in the following databases were chosen for inclusion in the scope: *Web Of Science*TM (Thomson Reuters); *Scopus* (Elsevier); e *SPORTDiscus* (EBSCOhost). The first two were chosen because they are comprehensive in terms of indexing a large number of journals from different areas of knowledge and widely used by researchers from different backgrounds (Vieira & Gomes, 2009; Chadegani et al, 2013). SPORTDiscus has established itself as a sport-specific database, covering a large number of academic journals in several countries and languages (Chiasson, 1997), which corroborates the concerns of Mongeon and Paul-Huss (2016) in trying to minimize the limitations of the study by inserting a database from the specific field of sports science. The keywords or search words used in the three databases included Sport Migration OR Sport Labor Migration OR Athlete Migration. We selected only the documents available online, regardless of the publication period, to compose the search scope. The searches were carried out during the months of May and June of the year 2018.

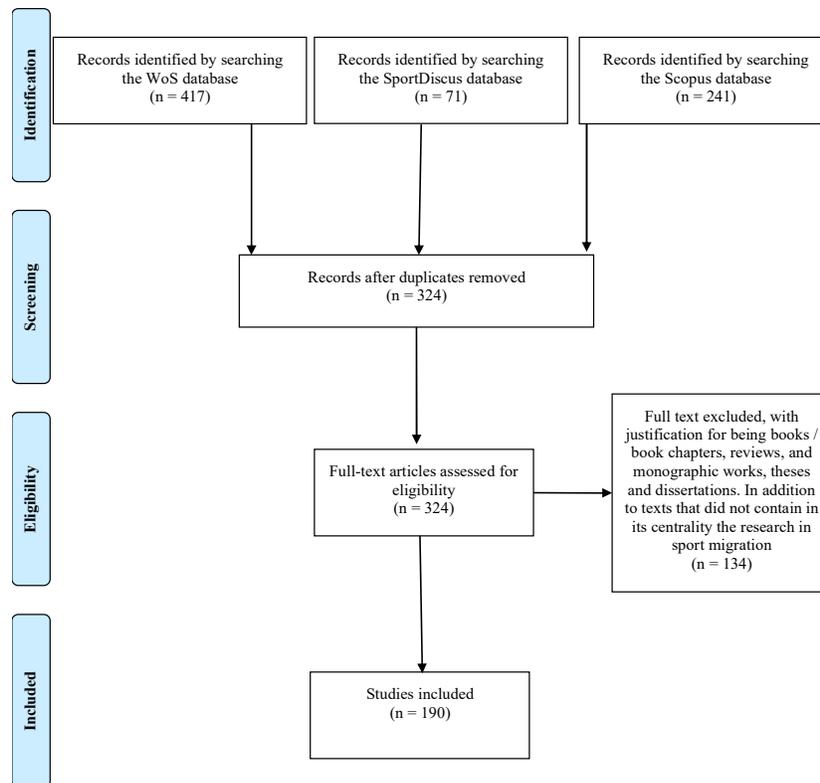


Fig. 1: Articles search flowchart.

After the searches in the three databases, an analysis of the articles was done by characterizing the publications as books / book chapters, reviews, peer review articles and monographic works, theses and dissertations. Publications were removed from consideration if they did not have a focus on n Sport Migration, were duplicate articles, or were not available online. In order to identify the analyzed information, the following procedures were followed: 1) reading the abstracts and, when necessary, the complete works; 2) listing the main issues discussed by the articles. Subsequently, Microsoft Office Excel software was used to catalog the information of the articles. These are: title, year of publication, journal, type of article and research instrument.

For the exposition of the results of the research, basic descriptive statistics were used, in which the frequency distribution and number of occurrences in the variables analyzed were presented. Initially, the general

numbers indicating the number of publications on sports migration are presented, and the journals published on the subject will be presented later. In the sequence, an analysis will be made of the methods used to do research on sports migration.

Results and Discussion

The presentation of the findings is divided into two sections. The first section, presents the data on the number of published articles, and the second section deals with the data referring to the means used to carry out the research, including exposing, and analyzing which type of document and the most used research instruments.

Number of published articles per year

After selecting the articles that fit the criteria of inclusion of the research, a total of 190 documents were added, these being distributed over 24 years. The data regarding the number of articles published online per year on the area of sports migration is shown in figure 1.

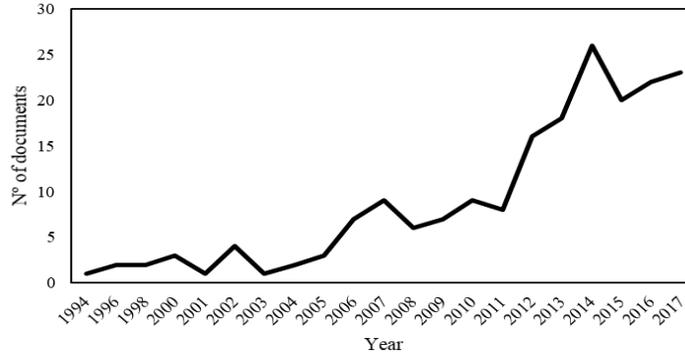


Fig. 2: Number of publications on sports migration per year

Analyzing the temporal distribution of the documents included in the analysis, it was established that the first publication in scientific journals on the subject of sports migration occurred in 1994. It is the study carried out by Joseph Maguire, in which the author brings the first proposals of categories relevant to the study of sports labor migration (Maguire, 1994). The production and publication of documents related to the area of Sports Migration obtained a weighted growth until the year 2011, after this period the increase of publication was expressive, reaching the peak of 26 documents in 2014, with little variation in the number in the subsequent years. This quantitative increase in the annual publications illustrate the surge in interest on the area of sports migration by scholars around the word drawn from different disciplines.

The previous surveys that are closest to this effort were not able to capture the increased rate of production of knowledge about sports migration after the year 2010 because their timeframes were for prior periods. For example, the time frame used by Crossan (2012) was up to 2008, while Gavira et al (2013) focused on the period between the years 2000 and 2011. With regard to the beginning of scientific publications on the subject, the survey carried out by Crossan (2012), diagnosed work on a date prior to the first finding of the present review, the first text presented by the author refers to the year 1984, that is, 10 years before the first publication presented here. However, it should be noted that Crossan's scope of research also considered other types of documents such as books and book chapters, and the searches were conducted in places other than those made here.

Publication outlets and number of articles

The next element to be parsed is where those articles were published. It is evident that sports migration articles have been featured in a wide variety of scientific journals. Figure two presents the journals and the number of published articles on sports migration between 1994 and 2018.

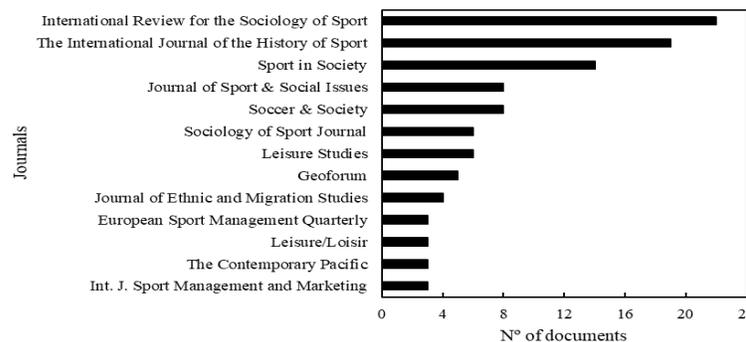


Fig. 3: Number of articles published by periodical

Figure two shows that the online articles on sports migration were published in a variety of journals. Indeed, a total of 87 scientific journals were identified that published articles related to Sports Migration. Of these, two journals stand out in quantity of publications, the “International Review for the Sociology of Sport”, which published a total of 22 texts and the “The International Journal of the History of Sport” which carried 19 manuscripts. This shows that the area of sports migration gained traction with readers and researchers in the areas of Sports History and Sociology.

Subsequently, other important journals for the field of sports sciences emerge, with a scope focused on the sociocultural area, as “Sport in Society”, “Soccer & Society”, “Journal of Sport & Social Issues”, “Leisure Studies”, and “Sociology of Sport Journal”. In this aspect, it was also observed that of the 87 journals, a total of 62 published only one (1) manuscript on Sports Migration. This fact indicates a sprinkling of knowledge in different journals.

This type of analysis in relation to the most published journals on the subject, something very close to the bibliometric studies, that is, that tries to quantify the information about the already produced knowledge of some field, was not realized by the previous studies supported here. However, Wai-Chung (2001) in an editorial, the author reflecting on the production and dissemination of knowledge in the social sciences points out some points for some journals to be considered more as a means of disseminating the research reports of scholars. For the author, there is a need for publications in journals that are particular to the research area, in addition to being reviewed with better impact factors. This occurs, in the words of the author, both by institutional collections, as by means of being recognized and consolidated in the academic field.

The researcher's position of establishing some journals as central to receiving his academic contributions can be analyzed from the discussion of the scientific field proposed by Pierre Bourdieu (2001) in the book “*Science de la science et reflexivité*”. The journals with high impact factor are considered by the scientific field as the most prestigious, the researcher who publishes productions in these media consolidates as a form of demarcation within the social space in which one is inserting the self. In addition, publications become symbolic capitals that make it possible to ignite their positions vis-à-vis the scientific subfield in which they are inserted, in this case that of sports migration. The need for consolidation of knowledge suggests that time may be ripe for a specific journal to be devoted to sports migration publications.

From a perspective of analysis of the way in which scientific knowledge is produced, in this sub-topic of the results, some questions will be addressed regarding the process of elaboration of research on Sports Migration, as well as how this material is disseminated.

Language used

At a first glance, the language in which the documents were written was observed. Figure three shows the frequency of publications on sports migration and the language used. See the chart below.

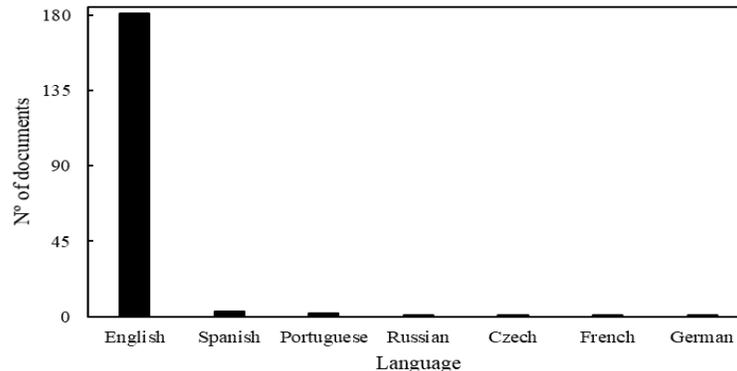


Fig. 4: Number of documents per language

As can be observed, among the documents analyzed, the predominance is those written in English. In all, 181 texts are published in English, corresponding to 95.3% of the total. Subsequently, the Spanish language appears with only three (3) manuscripts, the Portuguese with two (2), and in the languages, Russian, Czech, French and German is written one document each.

In the analysis of publications on sports migration carried out by Gavira et al (2013), the authors included in the corpus of sources only the articles presented in English, which does not allow counterpoint with other productions. However, in analyzing the table presented here, one can observe a picture in which almost all production is concentrated in the English language. This motive may be for geographical and cultural reasons, as it may be viewed as the most producing countries are English-speaking, in addition to the journals where these materials have been disseminated, generally or sometimes in English only.

In this sense, some authors raise concerns about this need to adapt the English language by non-native countries in the language. Since English is constituted as the international academic language (Flowerdew 1999),

and the process of globalization of science, thinking that according to Archambault et al. (2006) a large percentage of the most quoted texts are those written in English, the insertion of the researcher in this field depends on writing in the internationally used language.

Distribution by document type

Another relevant point of analysis regarding the way in which the knowledge about Sports Migration has been disseminated is the type of document in which the information is materialized. In the next figure we see the distribution in this sense.

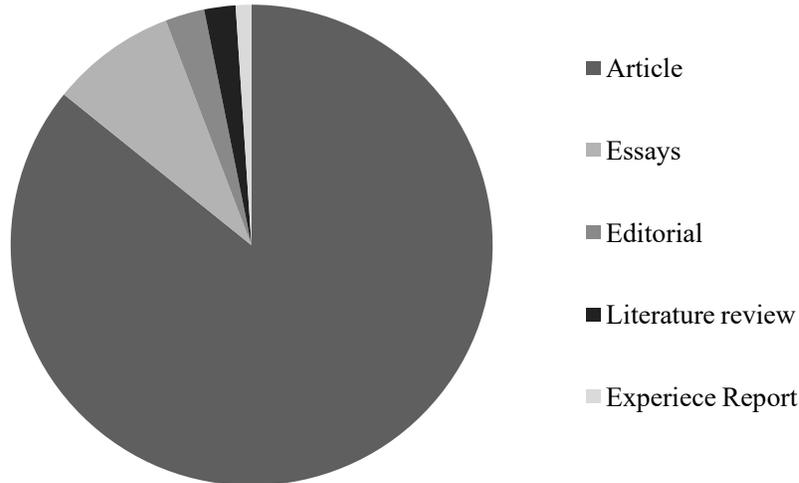


Fig. 5: Distribution by document type

The distribution of the documents selected for analysis were 163, or 85.8%, texts framed as an article. By Article, it is understood here the case studies, original articles, derived from researches and analyzed data. Then, with 8.4%, appear the texts framed as Essays, these types of documents are the theoretical texts that seek to broaden the discussions on the subject, without the need to rely on the empirical data. Subsequently, five (5) Editorial in journals appear, which are the calls for the publication numbers of a journal number, four (4) Literature reviews, which are studies based on the scientific knowledge already published on the subject, and finally, two (2) Experiment Reports were diagnosed, manuscripts that describe the experience of the individual himself as a migrant being. In this respect, previous studies did not analyze this scenario. However, the number of studies from original research is relevant and it is deserving of empirical analysis at a later stage.

Number of studies by sport modality

In relation to the sports modalities that were studied by the researchers in relation to Sports Migration, a total of 32 modalities were diagnosed. For analysis we selected the ones that had the highest number of studies performed.

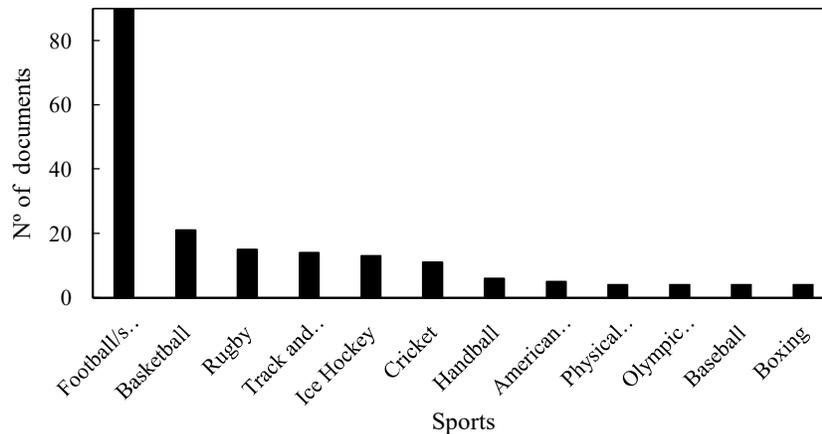


Fig. 6: Number of studies by sport modality

The modality with the greatest number of studies carried out in the area of Sports Migration is Soccer, a total of 91 documents were on the mobility of individuals linked to soccer practice. Other globally known modes later appear as a research object, for example basketball with 21 texts, rugby (15), athletics (track and field) (14), and Ice Hockey (13). On the other side of the table, 16 modalities present themselves with only one publication on Sport Migration. These are modalities, less marketable in relation to global parameters.

Frequently the literature indicates that the investigations on the sport migration were directed in diverse sports modalities (Falcous & Maguire 2005, Lee 2010, Orłowski, Wicker & Breuer 2018). However, some authors point out that soccer is markedly predominant in the interest of researchers (Elliot & Maguire 2008). According to Agergaard (2008), the minor sports modalities do not find space in the academic literature. The fact pointed out by the cited researchers, as observed here, was proven by the quantitative data raised by this review.

Number of research instruments used in the studies

The research tools used to collect the information about the migrants within the sports field are relevant to think about how the knowledge in the area is produced. In the survey in the databases revealed a series of them.

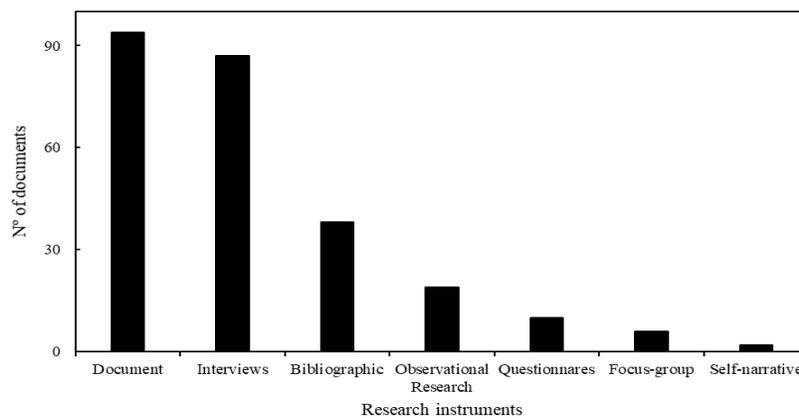


Fig. 7: Number of research instruments used in the studies

Documentary research emerges as the largest form in which the researchers of the Sports Migration collected the data. The documentary sources are present in 94 texts. Another important research instrument used is the interviews, which can be structured, semi structured, among others. With a total of 87 texts using this instrument, they were performed by various agents, such as athletes, managers, friends, coaches, etc.

The use of the academic literature already published on the topic, appears as the third largest form of information gathering for research on Sports Migration. Observational research, questionnaires, focus groups and self-narratives were also used as research instruments. This framework shows the diversity of instrumentation to carry out research on the subject, which allows choices according to the aims of the researcher and the study.

Regarding the methods used for studies on sports use, it is apparent that the methods of data analysis used were unclear in most texts. This situation converges with the results presented by the study by Dart (2014), where the author analyzes three journals of sociology of sport, but does not show results. There is no longer an accumulation of productions or author indicating the predominant use of content analysis and interviews.

On the other hand, when approaching the theme of sports migration, we find the study by McSweeney and Nakamura (2019) in which the authors analyzed the production of knowledge about the term “diaspora”. In this case, the research presented a number of 26 documents that used empirical data, and of these 24 were ethnographic studies.

Both present differences with the data presented in the present study. However, Dart (2014) states that it is healthy for a research area to use a variety of research instruments. In this sense, it is observed that the data presented here show a path of maturity of research on sports migration, since they adopted a varied number of research methods.

Conclusions

The objective of this article was to analyze the production of knowledge about sports migration, emphasizing the methodological issues of the cataloged studies. For this, a systematic search was made for the documents from three databases, including Web Of Science™ (Thomson Reuters); Scopus (Elsevier); and SPORTDiscus (EBSCOhost). At the end of the search process, inclusion and exclusion of the documents, a total of 190 files were selected.

Consequently, some movements relevant to the field of research on sports migration were identified. The publications of the studies in scientific periodicals increased in considerable volume after the first identified publication, realized by Joseph Maguire. Different journals were diagnosed among those that published studies on sports migration. The variety of journals used for publishing sports migration articles cut across different knowledge and disciplines. Nevertheless, it is evident that there is a predominance of journals related to the sports sciences. For example, the “International Review for the Sociology of Sport” and the “The International Journal of the History of Sport” are heavily used as publication outlets for sports migration articles and both are within the field of sports science. It has also been identified that most of the research is on football (soccer), and most articles are also written in English. Additionally, the methods used for data collection in the sports migration literature reviewed are varied, but with a predominance of documentary research and interviewing.

It is understood that the analyzes carried out here are important and relevant contributions to the literature. However, it should be noted that there are some limitations in this study. It is important to remember that the searches were carried out in three databases, with descriptors in English, so some publications may not have entered the scope of the research. This is because not all the journals that may be thematic transmitters are indexed in the databases used in the present study including texts published in regional / national journals. In addition, documents in book formats and book chapters were excluded, which is still an important tool for disseminating knowledge of research in the humanities and social sciences.

It is believed that these limitations may occur, leaving some studies out of the analysis performed here. Nevertheless, it is considered that the study presents a good panorama on the research of sport migration, and constitutes as a good guide for the discussions and future productions on the subject.

However, from the scenario observed by research on sports migration, it is believed that to qualify the studies on the subject it is necessary to establish some additional points. Regarding the sporting modalities, it is pointed out that it is relevant to focus on other modalities with more accentuated particularities, even already analyzed, but still at an early stage.

In relation to research methods, less than 46% of the studies used interviews as data collection instruments. Documentary sources account for less than 50% of the studies. In this sense, it is believed that expanding the use of empirical data collection methods in new studies would enhance the production and dissemination of knowledge on sports migration.

Conflicts of interest - The authors state that there is no conflict of interest.

References:

- Archambault, É., Vignola-Gagné, É., Côté, G., Larivié, V., & Gingras, Y. (2006). Benchmarking scientific output in the social sciences and humanities: The limits of existing databases. *Scientometrics*, 68(3), 329-342.
- Agergaard, S. (2008). Elite athletes as migrants in Danish women's handball. *International review for the sociology of sport*, 43(1), 5-19.
- Agergaard, S. (2017). Learning in landscapes of professional sports: transnational perspectives on talent development and migration into Danish women's handball around the time of the financial crisis, 2004–2012. *Sport in Society*, 20(10), 1457-1469.
- Bale, J., & Maguire, J. (2013). *The global sports arena: Athletic talent migration in an interdependent world*. Routledge.
- Bale, J. (1982). *Sport and place. A geography of sport in England, Scotland and Wales*. C. Hurst & Co.(Publishers) Ltd..
- Bale, J. (2002). *Sports geography*. Routledge.
- Pierre, B. (2001). Science de la science et réflexivité. *Raisons d'Agir, Paris*.
- Aghaei Chadegani, A., Salehi, H., Yunus, M., Farhadi, H., Fooladi, M., Farhadi, M., & Ale Ebrahim, N. (2013). A comparison between two main academic literature collections: Web of Science and Scopus databases. *Asian Social Science*, 9(5), 18-26.
- Chiasson, G. (1997). SPORTDiscus and information utilization. *Quest*, 49(3), 322-326.
- Crossan, W. (2012). Applying social theory to sport migration. *Acta Universitatis Carolinae: Kinanthropologica*, 48(1), 99-117.
- Dart, J. (2014). Sports review: A content analysis of the International Review for the Sociology of Sport, the Journal of Sport and Social Issues and the Sociology of Sport Journal across 25 years. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 49(6), 645-668.
- Elliott, R., & Maguire, J. (2008). Thinking outside of the box: Exploring a conceptual synthesis for research in the area of athletic labor migration. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 25(4), 482-497.
- Falcous, M., & Maguire, J. (2005). Globetrotters and local heroes? Labor migration, basketball, and local identities. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 22(2), 137-157.
- Flowerdew, J. (1999). Problems in writing for scholarly publication in English: The case of Hong Kong. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 8(3), 243-264.

- Fernández Gavira, J., Ries, F., Huete García, M. Á., & García Fernández, J. (2013). Análisis de la bibliografía existente sobre inmigrante, actividad física, deporte e integración en lengua inglesa. *Movimiento*, 19 (1), 183-202.
- Gratton, C., & Jones, I. (2014). *Research methods for sports studies*. Routledge.
- Lee, S. (2010). Global outsourcing: a different approach to an understanding of sport labour migration. *Global Business Review*, 11(2), 153-165.
- Madichie, N. (2009). Management implications of foreign players in the English Premiership League football. *Management Decision*, 47(1), 24-50.
- Maguire, J. & Falcous, M. (2010). *Sport and migration: Borders, boundaries and crossings*. Routledge.
- Magee, J., & Sugden, J. (2002). "The World at their Feet" Professional Football and International Labor Migration. *Journal of sport and social issues*, 26(4), 421-437.
- Maguire, J. (1996). Blade runners: Canadian migrants, ice hockey, and the global sports process. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 20(3), 335-360.
- Maguire, J. (2004). Sport labor migration research revisited. *Journal of sport and social issues*, 28(4), 477-482.
- McSweeney, M., & Nakamura, Y. (2019). The "diaspora" diaspora in sport? A systematic literature review of empirical studies. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 1012690219869191.
- Mongeon, P., & Paul-Hus, A. (2016). The journal coverage of Web of Science and Scopus: a comparative analysis. *Scientometrics*, 106(1), 213-228.
- Orlowski, J., Wicker, P., & Breuer, C. (2018). Labor migration among elite sport coaches: An exploratory study. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 53(3), 335-349.
- Vieira, E. S., & Gomes, J. A. (2009). A comparison of Scopus and Web of Science for a typical university. *Scientometrics*, 81(2), 587-600.
- Wai-Chung, Y. H. (2001). Redressing the Geographical Bias in Social Science Knowledge. *Environment and Planning A*, 33(1), 1-9.