

*Mini-Review/Systematic Review*

## The sport development and its socio-cultural and managerial aspects: an integrative review

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**Abstract - Aim:** The purpose of this study was to conduct an integrative review aiming to critically analyze the concept of sport development and the different variables that influence this process. **Methods:** We restricted the search to scientific journals in the area of sports science that published studies related to the social sciences and are indexed in the Scientific Journal Rankings (SJR). In total, 23 scientific journals were analyzed and the final sample of this review consisted of 65 articles. **Results:** Our findings highlighted that sport development is immersed in specific social, political, and economic factors that influence the extent to which different stakeholders can implement strategies and provide resources to improve participation and performance in sports. In addition to the quantitative aspect, researchers indicate the need for specific strategies that also enable the participation of women, people with disabilities, and other groups that historically have faced constraints to participate in sports. Despite the interesting criteria used to evaluate the sport development, they should be used with caution because most studies were conducted in English-speaking countries reflecting a tendency to report features only of the Western culture. **Conclusion:** The different stakeholders, strategies, and resources found in this review reinforce that there is no single way to develop sports, as different possibilities may be used according to the characteristics of each context. It also indicates the need to move research to unexplored fields and socio-cultural contexts to increase the reach that sport-based programs may have.

**Keywords:** participation, performance, management, strategies, resources.

### Introduction

The term “sport development” has been widely used by practitioners, sports managers, policymakers, and researchers worldwide to examine the process of increasing sport participation and its benefits, such as personal development and performance improvement<sup>1,2</sup>. On the one hand, researchers have focused on the social and health benefits associated with sport participation and paid attention to the number of participants involved in sport-based programs<sup>3-5</sup>. On the other hand, researchers have attempted to understand how sport development translates into better performance outcomes, specifically in international sporting success<sup>6-8</sup>. As such, sport development has been either examined in light of increased performance or participation outcomes<sup>2</sup>, which have been two distinct and major lines of inquiry in the area.

In the past decade, literature reviews were conducted to summarize the studies in these two lines of inquiry. For

instance, Schulenkorf et al.<sup>3</sup> synthesized scholarly contributions and provided an overarching and holistic picture of the sport-for-development literature. The study showed an increasing trend of publications since 2000, with a strong focus on educational and social outcomes related to youth sport, such as positive development, social capital, community development, and social inclusion. Similarly, a review conducted by De Bosscher et al.<sup>6</sup> summarized the sports policies for high performance. Their findings showed that financial support, integrated approach to policy development, foundation, talent identification, athletic and post-career support, training facilities, coaching provision and development, competition, and scientific research correspond to the nine policy areas, or “pillars”, that have an important influence on international sporting success. It logically follows that the purview of sport development is quite large and potentially complex, leading to literature reviews on specific topics and leaving some important themes out of their scope.

Literature reviews that have considered the stakeholders responsible for the sport development process are still scarce. According to Sotiriadou et al.<sup>9</sup>, an integrated understanding of the sport system should include a focus on how stakeholders can foster sport development strategies to increase the number of practitioners and the sport performance. Each social, cultural, and political context has specific characteristics that influence the different ways that sport development can be promoted<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, there is a practical need to know the strategies implemented by stakeholders to develop sports across different socio-cultural contexts. Such understanding may provide less naive conceptions about sport development and have numerous implications for research and practice. From the practical point of view, a literature review could provide valuable knowledge to implement more assertive sport policies and management strategies, considering the specificities of each sport and the socio-cultural context.

An integrative review on sport development could complement the previous reviews<sup>3,6</sup> by providing a broad portrait of the complex relationship between sport development stakeholders, strategies, and resources in different socio-cultural contexts. This type of literature review allows the inclusion of experimental and non-experimental studies, in order to better understand a phenomenon<sup>11</sup>. This possibility is important given that the sports development literature engages with diverse areas of knowledge and methodological approaches. In addition, integrative reviews allow different questions or hypotheses to be considered in the same review<sup>12</sup>. Besides the primary aim of this study, Pickering and Byrne<sup>13</sup> also recommend the following general questions to guide authors in conducting an integrative review: i) where, when and by whom was a range of studies published; ii) context where the research was conducted; iii) sample; iv) variables investigated; v) areas of knowledge involved; and vi) the patterns in the results. Therefore, all these items and the gaps in the literature will be addressed by this study.

## Methods

Whittemore and Knaff<sup>11</sup> proposed five steps for conducting integrative reviews. The first step corresponds to defining the problem which was already addressed in the introduction section. The next steps include the literature search, data evaluation, data analysis, and presentation<sup>11</sup>. In the literature search stage, it is important to rigorously define the methods that will be used to identify relevant studies. Data evaluation involves analyzing the quality of the studies selected for the review. Data analysis refers to the process of ordering, coding, categorizing, summarizing, and integrating the results obtained. Finally, the presentation comprises the tables and diagrams used to describe

the conclusions of the integrative review. All of these steps will be described in detail in the section below.

### *Search method*

In order to filter the literature and find relevant publications on the subject, we restricted the search to scientific journals in the area of sports science that published studies related to the social sciences. As the focus of this study was on sport development, studies published in journals in the areas of life or formal sciences were not considered. By delimiting the search to scientific journals, we ensured that the studies were peer-reviewed.

The Scientific Journal Rankings (SJR) were used to select the journals for the analysis. In January 2019, a survey of all journals in sports science was conducted on the SJR's official website ([www.scimagojr.com](http://www.scimagojr.com)). The authors accessed the official websites of each journal to analyze the scope of the publication. Journals that published studies related to the social sciences field were selected for this review. In total, 23 scientific journals in the field of sports sciences were analyzed.

### *Literature search*

The keywords "sport" AND "development" were used in the scientific journals' search fields to identify relevant studies. As exclusion criteria, we did not consider studies that investigated physical activities that were not considered a sport (such as scouting) nor studies that aimed to investigate individual athlete development. Studies focused on sports policies for high-performance sports were not included in the present review. Finally, texts classified as book reviews, editorial reviews, opinions, and debates were also not considered in this research.

The study selection process was performed in three sequential steps: i) analysis of the title; ii) analysis of the abstract and keywords; iii) reading the full-text version. From the analysis of the keywords, 16597 articles were found and had their titles analyzed. From the analysis of the title, 127 studies were selected, and their abstracts and keywords were revised. From reading the abstracts, 84 articles were selected, and the final sample of this review consisted of 65 articles. [Table 1](#) shows all the examined scientific journals, their respective SJR, and the number of studies found in each phase. We did not set a date as the lower limit for the articles' publication. The upper limit was established in March 2019, the moment of the last data collection.

### *Data collection*

We used a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet in which the information of each selected article was tabulated. [Table 2](#) summarizes all the analytical steps taken in the present study.

**Table 1** - Journals used in the search for articles on the development of sport and number of studies found in each search phase.

Journal	SJR 2017	Keywords	Title	Abstract	Full text
Cultura, Ciencia y Deporte	0.155	266	1	1	0
European Physical Education Review	0.754	615	2	2	2
European Sport Management Quarterly	0.797	485	7	3	3
International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing	0.377	360	2	1	1
International Journal of Sport Marketing and Sponsorship	0.269	506	4	2	0
International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching	0.435	957	0	0	0
International Review for the Sociology of Sport	0.632	1517	18	13	11
Journal of Physical Education and Sport	0.284	46	0	0	0
Journal of Sport History	0.391	1169	11	6	4
Journal of Sport Management	0.943	973	8	6	6
Journal of Teaching in Physical Education	0.757	844	0	0	0
Journal of the Philosophy of Sport	0.31	384	1	0	0
Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy	1.209	535	0	0	0
Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise, and Health	0.792	364	2	0	0
RICYDE. Revista Internacional de Ciencias del Deporte	0.241	125	1	0	0
Sociology of Sport Journal	0.832	907	3	1	1
South African J. for Research in Sport, Physical Education, and Recreation	0.164	474	1	0	0
Sport History Review	0.101	431	5	2	2
Sport in Society	0.427	1504	20	14	8
Sport Management Review	1.159	544	12	10	9
Sport, Education, and Society	1.127	830	1	1	1
Sport, Ethics, and Philosophy	0.299	395	1	1	0
The International Journal of the History of Sport	0.275	2366	27	21	17
<b>Total</b>		<b>16597</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>65</b>

**Table 2** - Description of the data and collection method used in this review.

Category	Description	Data collection
Bibliographic information	Article's title, journal, year, volume, number	Direct
Author details	Authors' name	Direct
Research institutions	Universities under which the authors conducted the research and their respective geographic locations	Direct
Area of study	The articles were sorted in the areas of sociology, history, and management according to the object of study and title of the journal	Interpretation
Thematic area	The studies were classified in relation to their focus of analysis (stakeholders, strategies, resources, historical or sociological approach)	Interpretation
Investigated country	Country where sports development was investigated	Direct
Concept of sport development	Excerpts that explicitly presented the concept of sport development were extracted, or the variables used to characterize the term were identified	Direct and interpretation
Investigated sport	Sports that had their development process investigated	Direct
Gender	Study population (men and/or women)	Direct

### Data analysis

Directly collected data were analyzed by only one researcher and those that required interpretation were discussed and analyzed by two researchers. Data were ana-

lyzed using descriptive statistics procedures such as absolute, relative frequencies, and bar graphs. However, a literature review should not only be a series of abstracts, but also an integrated report capable of identifying research patterns across studies<sup>14</sup>. A figure that summar-

ized the findings, as well as the relationships between them, was used given that figures and schemas make it easier to visualize the relationships between data and serve as a starting point for interpretation<sup>14</sup>.

## Results and Discussion

### *Year and journals of publication*

The first studies on sport development date from the 1960s showing an exponential increase in the number of publications over the years (Figure 1). These initial researches coincide with the emergence of the “sport for all” movement, and the foundation of associations and journals on sport sociology and sports history. In this scenario of political and social recognition of the sport value, the International Sociology of Sport Association (1964) and The North American Society for Sport History (1972) were founded and started to organize scientific events for these areas. The two associations also created the International Review for the Sociology of Sport and the Journal of Sport History, journals that rank among the leading publications on sport development to this day.

The 1990s are marked by the foundation of sport management journals and the emergence of publications on sports development in the area, especially in the Journal of Sport Management. In the 2000s, Sport Management Review and The International Journal of the History of Sport become the leading publications on the theme. According to Schulenkorf<sup>3</sup>, this scenario reflects not only the interest in social and cultural aspects related to sport development but a growing interest in management strategies that promote access to sports. Therefore, these findings reinforce that sport development can be investigated by researchers from different areas of knowledge and that, more recently, sport management has become a protagonist area investigating the stakeholders and actions that

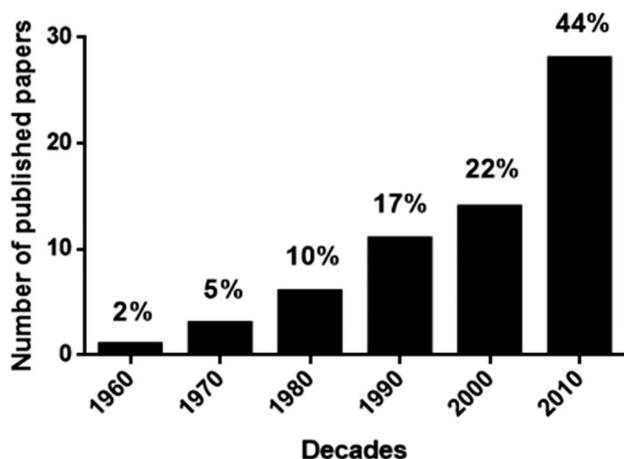


Figure 1 - Year of publication of the studies on sports development.

contribute to the development of sports in different historical-cultural contexts.

### *Areas and themes of investigations*

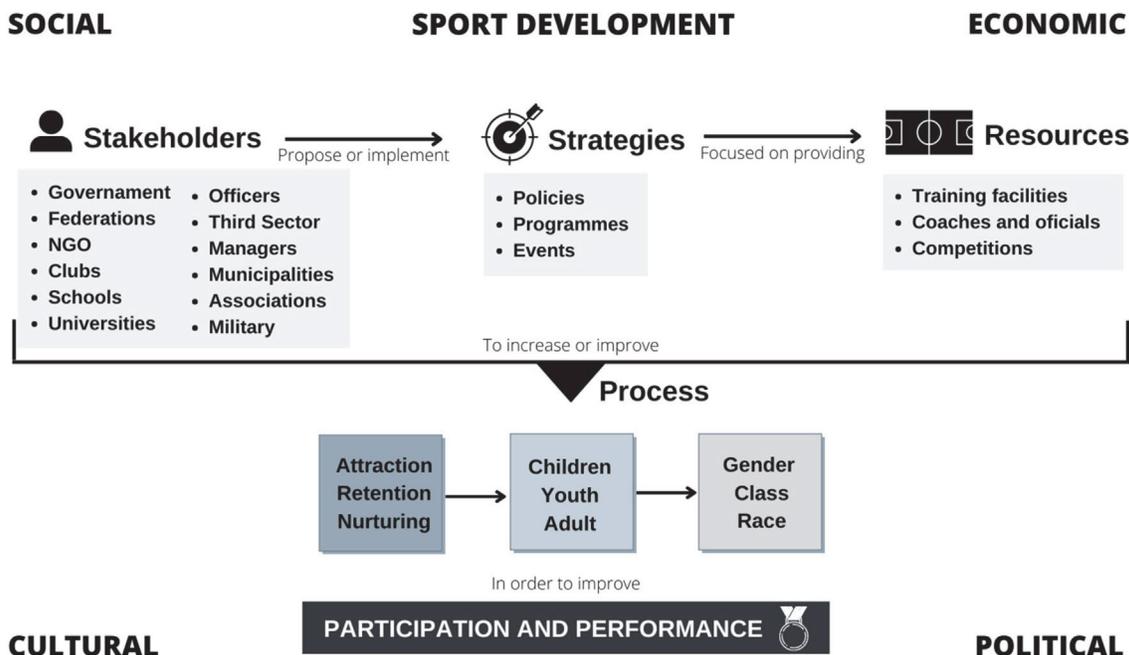
The journals mentioned above also reflect the main areas of sport development studies: history, sociology, and management. If development is necessarily a longitudinal and progressive process, historians provide rich information about the sport over time. Similarly, if sport is considered a social construction and influenced by social, political, economic, and technological change<sup>15</sup>, studies in the field of sociology provide knowledge about the close and complex relationship between sport and society. Themes such as civilizing process<sup>16,17</sup>, commercialization<sup>18</sup>, and professionalization<sup>17,19</sup> appeared as the focus of studies in the area of sociology of sport.

In addition, studies in the sociology area reinforce the importance of a nation's cultural aspects for a sport to develop. For example, the development of women's netball in New Zealand was possible because it was a sport played and managed by women, with no male influence<sup>20,21</sup>. Similarly, wushu developed in China because the sport had close and lasting connections to aspects of Chinese culture, such as philosophy, literature, art, religion, ethics, and folklore<sup>22</sup>. These studies corroborate that sport development takes place within a complex network of political, economic, and sociocultural processes<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, when investigating the development of a sport, it is necessary to understand the context in which it is inserted.

Management studies explored a variety of stakeholders, strategies, and resources that contribute to developing sports in different contexts. These categories (stakeholder, strategies, and processes) were initially proposed by Sotiriadou, Shilbury, and Quick<sup>9</sup> and allowed the organization of our findings (Figure 2).

The stakeholders were the most investigated category (48%) in the area of management and each of them, that were cited at least one time by the reviewed studies, is shown in Figure 2. We found a diversity of stakeholders reflecting the different political, cultural, and economic characteristics of contexts in which they can act. For example, Lindsay<sup>24</sup> investigated the influence of military bases on sports development in Canada during the nineteenth century due to the social importance of military practices at that time. Clubs and schools also appeared as important stakeholders in the early development of modern sports and form the basis of various sports systems to date<sup>16,25-27</sup>. Currently, federations and associations also play an important role in organizing and promoting the sport and have recently attracted the attention of the literature<sup>28-31</sup>.

This variety of stakeholders reinforces that there is no single way to develop the sport, as each stakeholder may assume a greater or lesser role according to the



**Figure 2** - Summary of the aspects investigated by the studies that can foster the development of the sport.

characteristics of each context. Therefore, one of the first steps in designing development strategies is to identify the main stakeholders for a particular sport in a defined context. We can mention the success of Title IX, a North-American policy to improve women's participation in sports, that in part can be explained by the use of schools and universities as the main vehicle of transformation since the education system represents an important stakeholder in the promotion of sport in the USA<sup>32</sup>. Similarly, Houlihan<sup>33</sup> showed how the United Kingdom proposed sport policies focused on schools to improve participation and performance in sports considering the education system an important stakeholder in promoting opportunities for practice and talent development. At last, Sotiriadou<sup>27</sup> proposed a sport development plan to be used in sport clubs to encourage the attraction and retention of practitioners in places where clubs play a central role in offering sports practices. Future studies can investigate the main stakeholders that promote the development of sports in different sociocultural contexts.

The strategies are proposed by the stakeholders and are characterized by actions that enable sustainable development<sup>9</sup>. It is common for stakeholders to have different responsibilities in this process. Typically, organizations with higher positions in the sport system are responsible for proposing, and those with lower positions, for implementing strategies<sup>34</sup>. At this moment, it is important to reinforce the role of sport organizations, such as federations and confederations, that are at the top of the sport system and can achieve the entire chain below them when proposing development strategies. In the case of football,

we know that sports organizations played a fundamental role in the promotion and dissemination of the sport in the past century<sup>35-37</sup>. Still, most of their actions were focused on men's practice and did not include women, people with disabilities, and other groups that historically have faced social challenges for the sport practice. Therefore, when analyzing the success of development strategies, it is important to measure their ability to promote diversity and inclusion in sport in addition to the increase in the number of practitioners.

The strategies include policies, programs, and sporting events, with the development programs being the most investigated while sporting events have received the attention of researchers in the last decade. Both programs and events are proposed to provide training facilities for playing sports, developing coaches and officials, and promoting sport competitions. For example, Taks et al.<sup>38</sup> evaluated the sport development outcomes of a medium-sized, international sport event (2005 Pan American Junior Athletics Championships) and the related strategies that were implemented to increase sport participation. The authors found that the coaching certification and training facilities were the main targets of the strategy and the expected legacy of the event. However, they showed that only the new facilities seemed to be successful in increasing participation while the coaching clinic was not. Bell<sup>39</sup> also found contradictory outcomes when analyzing the effects of Euro 2005 in improving women's football development in England. The author showed that, although there was increasing funding and opportunities for sport practice, the competing interest of the stake-

holders and the additional burden of inequity in the sport impaired the positive legacies of the event for sport development. Therefore, although sport events represent an important development strategy, they need to be aligned with the cultural characteristics of each context to potentialize their effects.

All the elements for developing sports, and the complex relationship between them, were summarized in Figure 2. Our goal with this figure was not to propose a rigid and universal model. Rather, we aimed to summarize the findings of this review so that future studies can further the understanding of the theme and improve this picture to the needs and particularities of each context. For didactic purposes, the elements were presented separately and statically. As for the reality of developing sports, it is characterized by the constant interaction between them and by their dynamic structure. Finally, the methodological procedures used in this study also embody a western perspective of development, an aspect that will be discussed below.

#### *Sport development concept*

In general, studies refer to sport development as the increase in the number of practitioners and opportunities for practicing sports, from initiation to high performance<sup>38,42</sup>. In the introduction to Sport Management Review's special issue on sport development, Shilbury et al.<sup>1</sup> suggest that "sport development is about participation and promoting opportunities and benefits of participation". The definition presented by the authors is cited by different studies in the area of sport management<sup>43-47</sup>. Studies, especially in the areas of sport sociology and sport history, which do not present the definition of development, implicitly also use indicators of participation to evaluate the process.

For Shilbury et al.<sup>1</sup>, opportunities for participation in sports, whether for leisure or in high-performance competitions, should include children, youth, and adults. Despite the attempt to diversify this participation, many studies use the increase in the number of boys and men in sport to assess its development. Authors argue that for the development to be effective, it is necessary to diversify and generate participation opportunities for women, people with disabilities, and indigenous people. Although some initial studies have been developed with this groups<sup>21,48,49</sup>, it is necessary more investigations on specific actions that can facilitate the entry and maintenance of these people in the sport. Therefore, when planning sport development strategies, the quantitative metric should also analyze the success of the proposal in reaching individuals whose participation in sports is usually hindered by social barriers.

In addition to the sport participation, Green<sup>50</sup> brings a new element to the definition by suggesting that performance is also an important element in sport development.

According to the author, the main objective of the sport development process is to "increase the number of participants actively engaged in sport and to enhance the quality of performances in sport". Although less frequent in the scientific literature, studies define the process of developing sports as the increase in the participation and performance of practitioners<sup>38,41,51,52</sup>.

#### *Geographic representation*

The results of this study show that over 70% of the publications on sport development were produced in English-speaking countries considered high-income, located in North America, Europe, and Oceania (Table 3). Africa and Asia were the continents with the lowest number of studies, and no publications were found in Latin America. The author's country of origin also relates to the places where development was investigated, which, for the most part, were Australia, the UK, the USA, South Africa, and Canada. We also found that football, athletics, cricket, basketball, tennis, and surfing were the most investigated sports reflecting sports rooted in their culture. For example, tennis was investigated in England<sup>53</sup>, rugby in Australia<sup>52</sup>, and surfing in the United States<sup>54</sup>. It is important to expand this scope of the investigation to provide

**Table 3** - Location of the research institution and investigated country.

Country	Research institution		Investigated country	
	Quantity	Quantity (%)	Quantity	Quantity (%)
Australia	28	24%	11	24%
UK	23	20%	8	18%
USA	18	15%	7	16%
Belgium	7	6%	0	0%
South Korea	6	5%	0	0%
New Zealand	5	4%	2	4%
South Africa	5	4%	5	11%
China	4	3%	2	4%
Malaysia	4	3%	0	0%
Canada	3	3%	3	7%
Norway	3	3%	0	0%
Israel	2	2%	3	7%
Nigeria	2	2%	2	4%
Poland	2	2%	0	0%
Austria	1	1%	0	0%
Denmark	1	1%	0	0%
Germany	1	1%	0	0%
Scotland	1	1%	0	0%
Spain	1	1%	0	0%
Singapore	0	0%	2	4%
Other	0	0%	12	27%
Total	117	100%	57	100%

information for managers that work with different sports in a variety of socio-cultural contexts.

The data collection method used in this review allows partly explaining this geographic disparity. The search for articles was performed in scientific journals indexed in the SJR that publish papers in English only. Therefore, the language required for publication in these journals may have been a limitation in the dissemination of studies conducted in African, Asian, and Latin American countries. This pattern was also found in the integrative review on “sport for development” showing that 92% of the research was conducted under institutions in North America, Europe, and Australia<sup>3</sup>. According to the authors, researchers from low-income countries may face inadequate opportunities to develop research projects, reflecting a lower frequency of publication. Furthermore, it is also interesting to note that studies centered on Europe and the USA are usually considered global while studies centered on Latin America are considered regional. This is another disparity and barrier that the authors have to face. This predominance of publications from high-income countries is certainly worrisome and should be addressed in future research<sup>3</sup>.

The fact that studies were mostly conducted by North American, English, and Australian research institutions is of particular importance when we look at the concept and components of sport development. Scholars agree that the term “development” is synonymous with improvement<sup>55</sup>, and is used to characterize a longitudinal, progressive, and evaluative process. When analyzing sport development, the researchers do so from a perspective pervaded by elements of Western culture, using criteria set by high-income countries. For post-development theorists, the development represents a hegemonic, monolithic, and homogenizing discourse, a construct intended to disseminate Western values and mentality<sup>56</sup>.

This critical analysis of the concept of development was brought by some studies of this review. For instance, Straume and Steen-Johnsen<sup>56</sup> analyzed the tensions and power relations in the process of implementing a sport development program, carried out by Norwegians in Tanzania. The authors showed that the Norwegian Confederation of Sports coordinated and controlled the project's entire implementation process by applying a new sport system based on the European model. As a consequence, the authors question the contradiction between the discourse of equality and the actual practice, as well as the sustainability of the project once the target population was not involved in its implementation. In another study, Connor and Mcewen<sup>57</sup> analyzed the development projects of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), showing that their processes reproduced the western development rhetoric. When analyzing the federation's projects, the authors questioned if, to democratize

access to sport, it is necessary to follow an approach based on western models.

These studies have drawn attention to two important findings. First, the limitations of the “donor-recipient relationship”<sup>56</sup> in sport development when the recipient culture and involvement is disregarded impairing its sustainability and diversity. Second, for limitations when analyzing the literature and the discussed strategies for sport development which are mostly based on the western culture. Therefore, the scheme presented in [Figure 2](#) must be analyzed while considering its bias towards the western development rhetoric. The proposed figure can and should be adapted in the analysis of the sport development in eastern countries, countries in the southern hemisphere, or in places that do not have the same structure, resources, and culture as high-income countries.

### Limitations

Although this integrative review has advanced the understanding and provided further discussions about sport development, it is important to recognize the limitations of our research. The studies were necessarily published in journals linked to the area of Sports Science of the SJR. There may be more publications in journals from other areas of study, as well as in journals not indexed on this platform. In addition, the linguistic limitations of the present researchers also restricted the search to articles in English only. Relevant studies in other languages were excluded, generating a linguistic bias. We also need to recognize that some of the most influential texts on sport development are published in book format and were not included in this review. We encourage sport development researchers to use these classic texts to extend the findings of this study.

### Conclusion

Integrative reviews can critically analyze and summarize literature related to a particular topic. We believe our study is extensive and rigorous enough to provide a robust synthesis of the current landscape of scientific articles on sport development. We found that publications on the subject started being produced in the 1960s, showing exponential growth to this day. Most studies are related to sport history and sport sociology, but the theme has gained space in the area of sport management in recent decades. History studies investigate the longitudinal development of sports at specific locations and periods. The sociology studies investigate the characteristics and/or social changes that allowed the sport development, exploring the complex relationship between sport and society. Sport management researchers investigate the stakeholders, strategies, and resources that may be part of the sport development process.

Overall, we found a consensus on the concept of sport development. Most studies define it as a process of increase in the number of practitioners and opportunities for playing sports. In addition to the quantitative aspect, researchers warn of the need for specific strategies that also enable the participation of women and people with disabilities in sports. Improving sport performance also appears in some studies as a key element in sport development. Despite the interesting criteria used to evaluate sport development, they should be used with caution as they are permeated by elements of Western culture.

More than presenting the state of the art of studies on sport development, this review aims to critically analyze the scientific production of the area, identify research gaps, and present new possibilities to be explored by future studies. In this sense, we reinforce the importance of investigating the process of sport development in African, Asian, and South American countries that do not have the same structure and culture of western and/or high-income countries. We also indicate the need to investigate successful strategies that promoted the practice for groups that historically have faced challenges for sport participation.

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