

TRANSNATIONALISM AND PROFESSIONAL COACHES' MIGRATION PROCESSES: A SYSTEMATIC MAPPING REVIEW

TRANSNACIONALISMO Y PROCESOS MIGRATORIOS DE ENTRENADORES Y ENTRENADORAS PROFESIONALES: UNA REVISIÓN SISTEMÁTICA DE MAPEO

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to study the existing knowledge on migratory processes in professional coaches. To achieve this, a systematic mapping review of existing literature was conducted. The systematic search extended up to August 31, 2023, with no date or language restrictions established. Twenty-one studies were selected and analyzed, examining their objectives, design, and sample characteristics from three different migratory perspectives (i.e., emigrant, immigrant, and mixed). In the synthesis of the results of the included studies, it was observed that the majority of coaches were positive about migration and recommended it to others due to the personal and professional benefits it entails. However, difficulties were also found at both personal (e.g., loss of social ties) and professional (e.g., training standards and sports culture) levels upon arrival in the new country and adapting to the new sociocultural context. Future research should pay specific attention to female coaches, who have received less attention thus far, explore the impact of cultural transition on the mental health of coaches, and analyze similarities and differences between the migratory processes of athletes and coaches.

Keywords: Acculturation, coaches, cultural transition, transnationalism.

Resumen

El objetivo de este trabajo es estudiar el conocimiento existente sobre los procesos migratorios en entrenadores y entrenadoras profesionales. Para ello, se realizó una revisión sistemática de mapeo de la literatura existente. La búsqueda sistemática se extendió hasta el 31 de agosto de 2023 y no se establecieron limitaciones de fecha de publicación ni de idioma. Se seleccionaron 21 trabajos y se analizaron, desde tres perspectivas migratorias distintas (i.e., emigrante, inmigrante y mixta) sus objetivos, diseño y características de la muestra. En la síntesis realizada de los resultados de los trabajos incluidos se observó que la mayoría de entrenadores y entrenadoras fueron positivos en relación a la migración y la recomiendan a otros por los beneficios a nivel personal y profesional que conlleva. Sin embargo, también se hallaron dificultades a nivel personal (e.g., pérdida de vínculos sociales) y profesional (e.g., estándares de entrenamiento y cultura deportiva) al llegar al nuevo país y al adaptarse al nuevo contexto sociocultural. Conviene que futuras investigaciones atiendan de manera específica a las entrenadoras, que hasta ahora han recibido menos atención, que exploren el impacto de la transición cultural en la salud mental de entrenadores y entrenadoras, y que analicen similitudes y diferencias entre los procesos migratorios de deportistas y entrenadores y entrenadoras.

Palabras clave: Aculturación, entrenadores, transición cultural, transnacionalismo.



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Introduction

Globalization is a phenomenon based on the continuous increase in communication and interdependence among different countries worldwide in economic, political, social, technological, and cultural realms. This process of globalization has also reached elite sports, where we find that geographical mobility has increased on a global scale (Ryba et al., 2017) and has become a fundamental aspect today (Prato et al., 2020; Ryba & Stambulova, 2013). Nowadays, there are numerous international competitions taking place in various countries simultaneously (e.g., UEFA/AFC Champions League or Copa Libertadores in football, Euro League or Liga de las Américas in basketball), state competitions held in other countries (e.g., Spanish Football SuperCup in Saudi Arabia, NBA or NFL games in Europe), as well as athletes, referees/judges, coaches, and members of different technical teams pursuing their careers by moving from one country to another (Maguire & Falcous, 2011). Therefore, understanding migration processes in sports is important for developing sports policies and implementing strategies that facilitate successful adaptation for those involved (Borges et al., 2014). Over the last decade, interest in researching the migratory processes of coaches has increased, and several authors have attempted to explore elements such as the motives behind coaches' migration (Borges, 2014; Charbonneau et al., 2020), their migratory experiences (Lenartowicz, 2022; Samuel et al., 2020), or the processes of acculturation (Hall et al., 2021). However, several authors point out that there is still a scarcity of research in this area (Sain et al., 2022; Samuel et al., 2020).

To describe these migratory processes, Koser and Salt (1997) differentiated between the terms "mobility," which refers to short-term or intermittent stays (e.g., training camps in another country in preparation for a competition), and "migration," which carries a connotation of long-term stay or permanence (e.g., signing a multi-season contract). Ryba and Stambulova (2013), on the other hand, introduced the term "transnational" to define those individuals who build their careers abroad and/or who develop both athletically and personally across borders. Later, a distinction was also made between an "immigrant athlete," who moves to a new country with the aim of settling, and a "transnational athlete," who moves back and forth between their country of origin, building their career across borders and undergoing cyclical transition processes (Ryba et al., 2017). Another term used in the study of migratory processes is "acculturation," which describes the process of psychological and cultural changes in practices, values, and identity that occur as a result of continuous direct contact between people from different cultural groups (Berry, 2005). The strategies and attitudes developed when becoming part of this new social and cultural context allow migrants to adapt to a greater or lesser extent to the new reality in which they live, defining to what extent their previous cultural heritage is maintained and/or the new culture is embraced (Schinke et al., 2013). This process can have an impact on performance and psychological well-being (Schinke et al., 2014).

To explain migratory processes and adaptation to a new culture, theoretical models such as the Cultural Transition Model (Ryba et al., 2016) or Berry's Acculturation Model (1997) have been developed. According to Ryba et al. (2016) Cultural Transition Model, the process of sociocultural adaptation involved in transitioning from one context to another consists of three phases: (a) the pre-transition phase, which is when individuals begin to consider the possibility of migration. One of the main objectives at this stage is to gather information about the potential destination (e.g., sports facilities, social and sporting customs, city life), initiate the necessary bureaucracy for the transition, and start preparing psychologically for the challenges they will face (Borges et al., 2014); (b) the acute cultural adaptation phase, characterized by the renegotiation of cultural practices in daily life, social repositioning, and coping with various personal (e.g., language, customs, cultural practices) and professional challenges (e.g., integrating into the new technical team or club, adapting to their work routines, adjusting to different coaching styles); and (c) the sociocultural adaptation phase, which refers to the process of adapting to the social and cultural norms of the new country and developing interpersonal relationships with people in the new environment (Ryba et al., 2016). Depending on the balance between the demands of the transition and the individual's coping strategies, the transition can (a) be favorable, enhancing sports and/or personal development, (b) lead to a crisis that delays favorable transition, or (c) become an unfavorable transition, associated with negative outcomes such as dropout or substance abuse (Stambulova & Samuel, 2019). Berry's Acculturation Model (1997) positions individuals' attitudes toward acculturation along two dimensions: (a) cultural interaction, referring to the extent to which individuals or groups wish to engage with the host culture, and (b) cultural maintenance, referring to the extent to which individuals or groups wish to maintain their own culture when interacting. According to Berry (1997), four acculturation strategies are associated with these two dimensions: (a) assimilation: actively engaging with the new culture, showing little or no desire to maintain one's own culture; (b) separation: maintaining cultural norms without the desire to embrace the new culture; (c) marginalization: neither maintaining the original culture nor embracing the new one; and (d) integration: seeking to maintain cultural behaviors while participating in the host society. It is important to note, as Prato et al. (2020) highlight, that this process is not linear and that migrants may move from one phase to another depending on their circumstances.

Regarding migration transition processes, research has primarily focused its efforts on professional team sports athletes (e.g., Prato et al., 2020; Wicker et al., 2017). Some studies have analyzed the various reasons that lead athletes to migrate (e.g., Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire & Falcous, 2011) or their acculturation experiences (e.g., Hirose & Meijen, 2022; Schinke et al., 2013). Prato et al. (2020) identified challenges that migrant and transnational professional athletes must face at both sporting (e.g., different playing style, new training routines) and sociocultural levels (e.g., new language, new cultural customs), and other authors have described how these athletes have experienced stress (Hobson et al., 2023), loneliness, social isolation, and homesickness (Ronkainen et al., 2019), even leading to the development of clinical mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, or burnout (Hassmén et al., 2019; Nixdorf et al., 2023). Regarding coaches, research to date has explored topics related to their stress, burnout, or well-being, as well as their influence on athletes (e.g., Carson et al., 2019; Norris et al., 2017; Oglesby et al., 2020; Ramis et al., 2017). Over the last decade, there have also been, albeit to a lesser extent, publications exploring transnationalism and the migratory processes of coaches (e.g., Hall et al., 2021; Samuel et al., 2020). However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no systematic review on this topic has been found that provides an overview of the current state of research.

The aim of this study is to explore the existing knowledge regarding the migratory processes of professional coaches, specifically addressing (a) the trend and location of evidence, (b) the characteristics of the studies, considering their objectives and design, the migratory perspective of the studies, and the sample characteristics, and (c) synthesizing the results obtained in the included studies and identifying possible gaps in the literature to be addressed in future research.

Materials and Methods

Design

This study is a systematic mapping review conducted following the criteria proposed by the PRISMA method (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses; Page et al., 2021) and its three steps: (a) identification, (b) screening, and (c) inclusion. This design was chosen because systematic reviews contribute to advancing knowledge by synthesizing existing evidence, identifying gaps in knowledge, and facilitating evidence-based decision-making (Page et al., 2021). The reviewed and synthesized evidence was analyzed using previously established theoretical frameworks, such as the Cultural Transition Model (Ryba et al., 2016) and Berry's Acculturation Model (1997).

Systematic Search

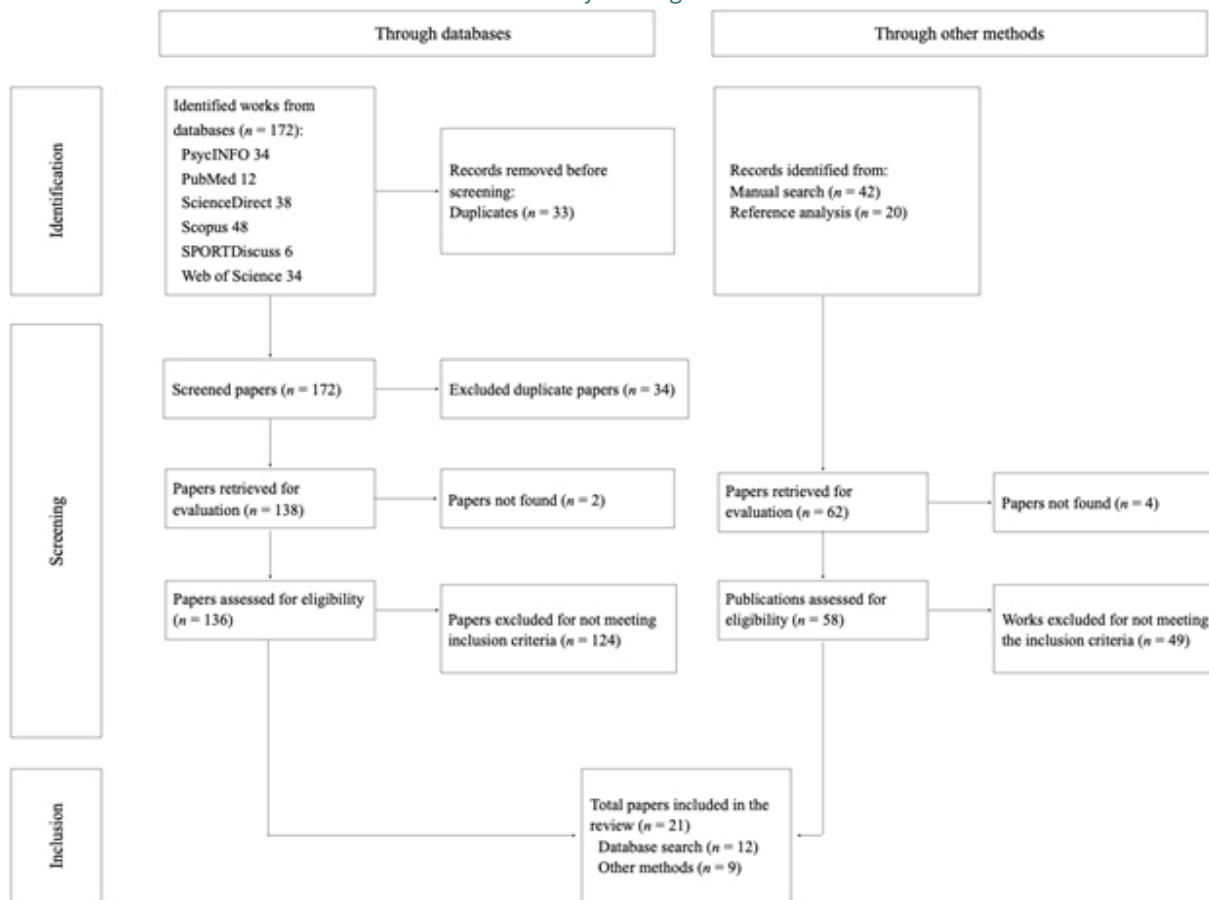
To systematize the process, the CHIP tool (Context, How, Issue, Population; Shaw, 2010) was utilized, facilitating the identification of terms, keywords, and synonyms related to the review's objective (Prato et al., 2020). The CHIP formula was used in English to detect abstracts of articles in any language (document available upon request to the corresponding author). This formula was applied across six databases: PsycINFO, PubMed, ScienceDirect, SCOPUS, SPORTDiscuss, and Web of Science. Additionally, a manual search was conducted by examining the references of all identified evidence. The search was extended until August 31, 2023.

Evidence Selection

The criterion defined for the inclusion of identified evidence was that they explored transnationalism and migratory processes of professional coaches. Professional coaches were understood as those who have a full-time professional contract, regardless of the category or age group they coach. Evidence focused on transnationalism or migratory processes of other social agents (e.g., athletes) were excluded. No restrictions were established regarding language or publication date.

The database search identified a total of 234 studies: 172 were found through searches in scientific databases, 42 through manual searches, and 20 through citation examination (see Figure 1). Once duplicate articles were excluded (34), screening was conducted in two phases. Firstly, six studies that could not be located were excluded, and the titles and abstracts of the remaining studies were analyzed, resulting in the exclusion of 118 studies that did not meet the inclusion criteria. Secondly, eligibility was assessed by reading the full text of each study, and an additional 55 studies were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria. After this screening, a total of 21 studies were included in this review.

Figure 1
PRISMA flow diagram



Data Extraction Process

The data extraction process involved conducting a descriptive analysis of the studies, identifying elements such as the format of the study (i.e., article, book chapter, book, doctoral thesis), the journal or publisher that published it, the country where the study was developed, its objectives and design, the perspective from which the migratory process is analyzed, the country from which it is studied, and the characteristics of the sample (e.g., population, average age, country of origin). A content analysis was also conducted using the Cultural Transition Model (Ryba et al., 2016) as a reference to explore the results obtained in the included articles on issues related to motives for migration, mediating factors, or existing barriers and challenges in adaptation, and Berry's Acculturation Model (1997) for the analysis of results on acculturation. All this information was recorded in a Numbers file composed of several tabs for subsequent analysis and relevant selection of information to highlight in the results section (document available upon request to the corresponding author). In order to ensure the rigor and methodological coherence of this research, and as pointed out by Tod (2019) and Tod et al. (2022), the second and third authors encouraged reflection and exploration of alternatives throughout the entire process of design, analysis, data presentation, and writing of this article.

Results

The results have been organized by presenting, firstly, the trend and location of the evidence. Secondly, the characteristics of the included studies are analyzed, focusing on (a) the objectives they pose and their design, (b) the perspective from which they study migratory processes, and (c) the characteristics of the sample. Finally, a synthesis of the results of the included studies is shown, organizing them into three temporal moments: (a) before migrating, (b) upon arrival in the new country, and (c) adapting to the new sociocultural context.

Trend and Location of the Evidence

Out of the total of 21 studies included in this review, 16 are research articles, three are books or book chapters, and two are theses (one doctoral and one master's). Although no limitations were set regarding the publication date or language, all studies were published in English between the years 2010 and 2023.

The 16 articles included in this review were published in 14 different journals (e.g., Sport, Education and Society; Psychology of Sport & Exercise; Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy), and only three of these journals published more than one article: International Sport Coaching Journal (Charbonneau et al., 2020; Hall et al., 2021), Leisure Studies (Borges et al., 2014; Kerr & Obel, 2018), and Sociología del Deporte (Borges et al., 2020; Sain et al., 2022). The three books or book chapters included were also published by three different publishers (i.e., Bennion Kearny Limited; Palgrave Macmillan; Routledge). Cummings's thesis (2014) was defended at Laurier University (Canada), and Bespomoshchnov's thesis (2023) was defended at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences (Finland).

Characteristics of the Evidence

Table 1 presents, in reverse chronological order, information about the studies included in this review: authors, type of evidence, perspective from which the migratory process is studied, design, objectives, and characteristics of the sample (i.e., population, average age, country of origin, and destination).

Migration Perspective of Coaches

Based on the perspective from which migratory processes were studied, we have classified the included studies into: (a) those that explore from the perspective of the emigrant coach, (b) those that explore from the perspective of the immigrant coach, and (c) those that explore from a mixed perspective.

Table 1
Description of Included Evidence

No.	Authors	Type	Perspective	Design	Objective/s	Sample	Origin - Destination
[1]	Bespomoshchnov (2023)	Master's Thesis	Emigrant	Qualitative study Case study Semi-structured interview Thematic analysis	Enhance understanding of the work of high-performance coaches in a globalized sports context. Provide insights into the work of transnational, developmental, and administrative coaches	$N = 14$ coaches Age: N/S ($M_{age} = N/S$; $SD = N/S$)	O: Finland D: Sweden, Slovakia, Austria, England, Switzerland, Poland, Italy, Russia, USA, Germany, and Slovenia
[2]	Guo et al. (2023)	Article	Emigrant	Qualitative study Semi-structured interview Thematic analysis	Analyze the professional development of international football coaches in the context of their transnational migration	$N = 8$ coaches Age: 25-40 ($M_{age} = N/S$; $SD = N/S$)	O: Brazil, Colombia, Serbia, United Kingdom, Spain D: China
[3]	Mckenna (2022)	Book	Emigrant	Non-empirical work	Showcasing the personal and professional experiences of eight migrant coaches	$N = 8$ coaches Age: N/S ($M_{age} = N/S$; $SD = N/S$)	N/S
[4]	Sain et al. (2022)	Article	Immigrant	Qualitative study Semi-structured interview 38-questionnaire for immigrant coaches Thematic Analysis (MAXQDA11)	Analyzing (a) immigrant coaches' perceptions of their experiences and (b) native coaches' perceptions regarding the migration of coaches	$N = 15$ coaches $n = 10$ migrant coaches ($M = 4$; $F = 6$) Age: 19 - 44 ($M_{age} = 30.7$; $SD = 9.04$) $n = 5$ native coaches ($M = 4$; $F = 1$) Age: 20 - 40 ($M_{age} = 30.5$; $SD = 9.25$)	O: Italy, Spain, Croacia, Bulgaria, and Brazil D: United Kingdom

[5]	Hall et al. (2021)	Article	Inmigrant	Qualitative study Semi-structured interview Thematic analysis	Increase knowledge about acculturation in elite sports following Berry's theoretical model	N = 5 coaches M = 5; F = 0 Age: 47-56 ($M_{age} = 50.8$; $SD = 3.42$)	O: England, Ireland, Wales, and New Zealand D: England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and Italy
[6]	Borges et al. (2020)	Article	Emigrant	Quantitative study Online questionnaire Regression analysis	Identify migration patterns and networks of Portuguese football coaches between 2009 and 2013	N/S	O: Portugal D: Multiple countries (e.g., Saudi Arabia, China, Cyprus, Spain, Greece, Iran, Mozambique)
[7]	Charbonneau et al. (2020)	Article	Mixta	Qualitative study Semi-structured interview Interpretative phenomenological analysis	Analyze the motives and experiences of expatriation for ski coaches training in Norway	N = 5 coaches M = 4; F = 1 Age: N/S ($M_{age} = N/S$; $SD = N/S$)	O: North America D: Norway
[8]	Koopers & de Haan (2020)	Chapter		Exploratory study	Explore how transnational coaches challenge or reinforce dominant ideologies of race/ethnicity and gender	N/S	N/S
[9]	Samuel et al. (2020)	Article	Inmigrant	Qualitative study Semi-structured interview Thematic analysis	Analyze the mobility and migration experiences of transnational coaches working in the context of Israeli Handball	N = 8 coaches M = 8; F = 0 Age: 36-59 ($M_{age} = 44.50$; $SD = 7.96$)	O: Balkan countries and other European countries D: Israel
[10]	Tao et al. (2019)	Article	Inmigrant	Qualitative study Case study Direct observation for 12 months Thematic analysis (MindNote)	Examine the learning experiences of Chinese coaches immigrating to Australia	N = 11 n = 3 coaches M = 2; F = 1 Age: 25-55 ($M_{age} = N/S$; $SD = N/S$)	O: China D: Australia
[11]	Kerr & Obel (2018)	Article	Emigrant	Qualitative study Semi-structured interview Thematic analysis	Study the factors influencing gymnastics coaches from former Soviet Union countries to migrate to New Zealand	N = 10 coaches M = 4; F = 6 Age: N/S ($M_{age} = N/S$; $SD = N/S$)	O: Countries of the former Soviet Union (Russia, Belarus, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan) D: New Zealand
[12]	Orlowski et al. (2018)	Article	Emigrant	Qualitative study Semi-structured interview Thematic analysis	Analyzing migration factors for coaches in less commercialized sports	N = 9 coaches M = 8; F = 1 Age: N/S ($M_{age} = N/S$; $SD = N/S$)	O: Germany D: N/S

[13]	Wicker et al. (2017)	Article	Mixed	Quantitative study Online questionnaire Regression analysis	Examining the factors affecting the emigration and immigration of elite coaches	$N = 210$ coaches $M = N/S; F = N/S$ Age: N/S ($M_{age} = 41; SD = N/S$)	O: N/S D: Germany
[14]	Orlowski et al. (2016)	Article	Emigrant	Quantitative study Online questionnaire Regression analysis	Analyzing the factors influencing the migration likelihood of elite coaches in Germany	$N = 186$ coaches $M = N/S; F = N/S$ Age: N/S ($M_{age} = 43; SD = N/S$)	O: Germany D: N/S
[15]	Kerr & Moore (2015)	Article	Emigrant	Qualitative study Semi-structured life interview Thematic analysis	Examining the factors influencing Russian gymnastics coaches when immigrating to New Zealand	$N = 6$ coaches $M = 3; F = 3$ Age: 30 – 60 ($M_{age} = N/S; SD = N/S$)	O: Countries of the former Soviet Union D: New Zealand
[16]	Borges et al. (2014)	Article	Mixta	Qualitative study Semi-structured interview Thematic analysis (MAXQDA)	Explore perceptions about the experiences of migrant coaches, their selection processes, motivations for migration, and their migratory experiences	$N = 5$ coaches $M = 5; F = 0$ Age: N/S ($M_{age} = 41; SD = 8$)	O: Portugal, Slovenia, Denmark, Spain D: Angola, Israel, Poland, Brazil
[17]	Cummings (2014)	Doctoral Thesis	Immigrant	Qualitative study Demographic questionnaire Semi-structured interview Thematic analysis	Analyze the experiences and challenges of a group of immigrant coaches relocated in Canada	$N = 10$ coaches $M = 9; F = 1$ Age: 36-78 ($M_{age} = N/S; SD = N/S$)	O: N/S D: Canadá
[18]	Schinke et al. (2014)	Article	Immigrant	Qualitative study Semi-structured interview Thematic analysis	Analyze the acculturation process of immigrant coaches in Canada	$N = 10$ coaches $M = N/S; F = N/S$ Age: N/S ($M_{age} = N/S; SD = N/S$)	O: Russia, Romania, China, Uzbekistan, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Germany, Jamaica, and Mexico D: Canada
[19]	Smith (2014)	Article	N/S	Descriptive study	Explore how mobility can revitalize, enhance, or sustain coaches' careers	N/S	Multiple countries
[20]	Harris (2010)	Chapter	N/S	Descriptive study	Explore the migration of Rugby coaches	N/S	N/S
[21]	Taylor (2010)	Article	Emigrant	Descriptive study	Explore the migration patterns and networks of British football coaches	N/S	O: United Kingdom D: Multiple countries (e.g., Germany, Austria, France, Hungary, Netherlands)

Note: N = total sample; n = sample; M = male; F = female; M_{age} = average age; SD = standard deviation; N/S = not specified; O. = origin country; D. = destination country

The studies that addressed the study of migratory processes from the perspective of the emigrant focused on exploring the reasons and factors that lead coaches to migrate from countries such as Finland (Bespomoshchnov, 2023), Portugal (Borges et al., 2020), Germany (Orlowski et al., 2018), the United Kingdom (Taylor, 2010), or Russia, Belarus, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan (Keer & More, 2015; Kerr & Obel, 2018). The studies conducted from the perspective of immigrant coaches explored the migratory experiences of coaches in the host country, addressing differences in sports organizational cultures, the challenges they must face, adaptation strategies, and acculturation processes (e.g., Samuel et al., 2020; Schinke et al., 2014) in countries such as the United Kingdom (Sain et al., 2022), Israel (Samuel et al., 2020), Australia (Tao et al., 2019), or Canada (Cummings, 2014; Schinke, 2014). The studies that used a mixed perspective in the study of migratory processes analyzed factors affecting both emigration and immigration (Wicker et al., 2017) and explored the reasons and migratory experiences of coaches in different migratory flows (e.g., from North America to Norway, from Portugal, Slovenia, Denmark, Spain to Angola, Israel, Poland, Brazil) (Charbonneau et al., 2020).

Most of the studies explored migratory processes towards a single destination from various countries of origin (e.g., Charbonneau et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2023; Sain et al., 2022; Samuel et al., 2020; Schinke et al., 2014). Others analyzed these migratory processes from one country of origin to multiple destinations (i.e., Bespomoshchnov, 2023; Borges et al., 2020; Taylor, 2010) or from multiple countries of origin to multiple destinations (i.e., Borges et al., 2014; Hall et al., 2021; Mckenna, 2022). Only the study of Tao et al. (2019) analyzed a specific migratory pattern between two countries (China and Australia).

Objectives and Design of the Studies

Based on the objectives outlined in the studies included in this review, they can be classified into: (a) those aiming to identify and analyze specific migration patterns (e.g., Borges et al., 2020; Tao et al., 2019), (b) those seeking to analyze and understand the motives and reasons for migration and the factors influencing the decision (e.g., Kerr & Moore, 2015; Kerr & Obel, 2018), and (c) those focusing on exploring the migratory experiences of coaches and their acculturation process (e.g., Hall et al., 2021; Samuel et al., 2020). Some of these studies explored multiple objectives (e.g., Borges et al., 2014; Charbonneau et al., 2020). Regarding the design of the studies, 13 used a qualitative design (e.g., Bespomoshchnov, 2023; Guo et al., 2023; Sain et al., 2022), three used a quantitative design (i.e., Borges et al., 2020; Orlowski et al., 2016; Wicker et al., 2017). Three other studies were descriptive (i.e., Harris, 2010; Smith, 2014; Taylor, 2010), one was exploratory (Koopers & de Haan, 2020), and one was non-empirical (Mckenna, 2020). Semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis of these interviews were the most common methodology used by studies with a qualitative design, while the use of questionnaires and descriptive statistical analysis was common for articles with a quantitative design.

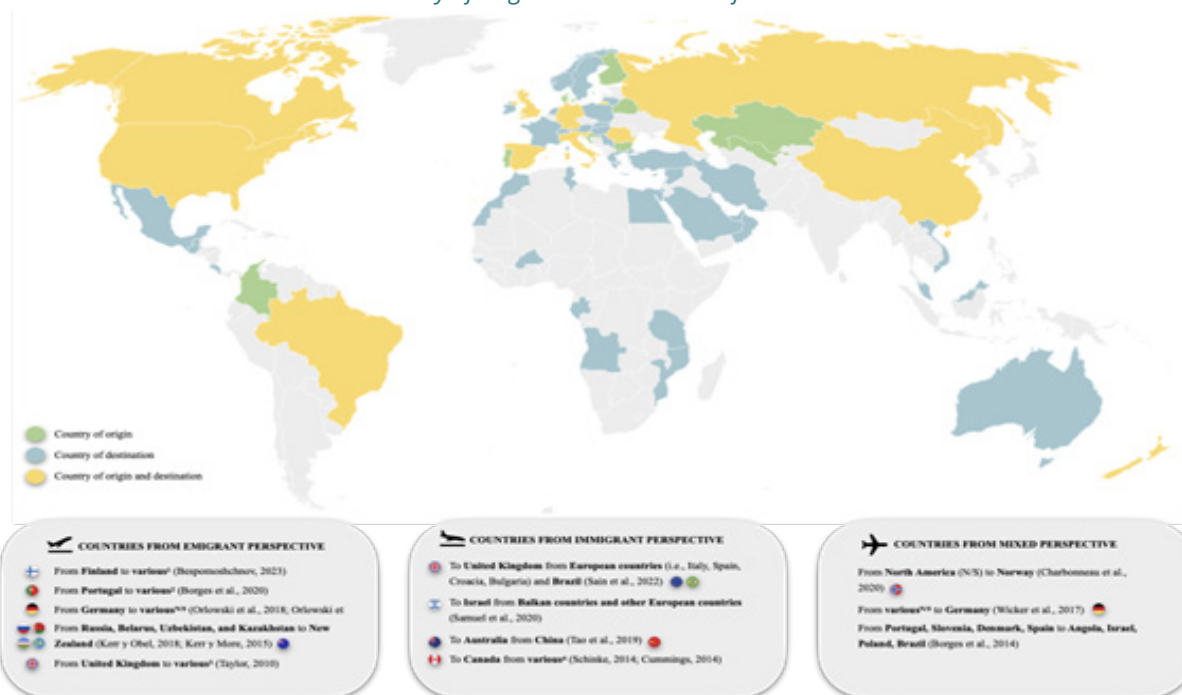
Sample Characteristics

The average number of participants in the included studies follows the expected logic, with larger samples in quantitative studies ($M = 198$; $SD = 16.97$) than in qualitative studies ($M = 8.92$; $SD = 3.25$). When considering the gender of the participants, it is observed that, in those studies specifying it, there is a tendency for a higher presence of male coaches ($M = 5.82$; $SD = 2.44$) than female coaches ($M = 1.82$; $SD = 2.48$). The study of Kerr and Obel (2018) had a higher presence of female coaches than male coaches, and other studies showed equal or similar proportions (e.g., Sain et al., 2022; Kerr & Moore, 2015). However, there are more studies that present a higher proportion of male coaches than female coaches (e.g., Charbonneau et al., 2020; Orlowski et al., 2018) or a sample consisting only of males (e.g., Hall et al., 2021; Mckenna, 2022; Samuel et al., 2020). Some studies reported on the total number of participants without specifying their gender (e.g., Bespomoshchnov, 2023; Guo et al., 2023), and others did not report the total number of participants or their gender (e.g., Borges et al., 2020; Smith, 2014). Regarding the age of the participants, no clear trend has been observed, with age ranges of more than 20 years difference in some studies (e.g., Sain et al., 2022; Samuel et al., 2020) and other studies that do not provide any information regarding the age of their participants (e.g., Charbonneau et al., 2020; Kerr & Obel, 2018).

Figure 2 depicts the migratory phenomenon of the coaches participating in the evidence included in this review based on three categories: (a) country of origin, (b) destination country, and (c) country of origin and destination. In this regard, the European continent has been both an origin (e.g., Croatia, Denmark, Portugal) and destination (e.g., Austria, Cyprus, France), and several of its countries were both origin and destination (e.g., Germany, Italy, Serbia). Similarly, although with a smaller number of participants, the same occurs in the American continent, where countries are observed as origin (i.e., Colombia), destination (i.e., Mexico), and origin and destination (i.e., Brazil, USA, Canada). Asia and Oceania follow a similar dynamic to that observed in Europe and America, with the presence of countries as origin (e.g., Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan), destination (e.g., Vietnam, Malaysia, Australia), and origin and destination (e.g., China, New Zealand). In Africa, however, all the countries that appeared in the different studies did so as destinations (e.g., Angola, Morocco, Tunisia), as did the countries in the Middle East (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iran). Additionally, Figure 2 includes the classification of the included studies based on the migratory perspective from which they studied the phenomenon and showing the studied migratory flows.

Considering the sport of the coaches, football is the one with the most presence in the evidence (e.g., Guo et al., 2023; Mckenna, 2022). Other sports such as rugby (e.g., Hall et al., 2021), handball (e.g., Samuel et al., 2020), or gymnastics (Kerr & Moore, 2015) also had prominence. Quantitative studies (e.g., Orłowski et al., 2016; Wicker et al., 2017), with larger participant samples, included a greater variety of sports (e.g., archery, canoeing, track cycling). Some studies also provided information on participants' years of experience (e.g., Hall et al., 2021; Sain et al., 2022), previous migrations made (e.g., Samuel et al., 2020), or the level at which coaches work (e.g., Guo et al., 2023).

Figure 2
Country of origin and destination of coaches



Note: Various¹: Sweden, Slovakia, Austria, England, Switzerland, Poland, Italy, Russia, USA, Germany, and Slovenia; Various²: multiple countries (e.g., Saudi Arabia, China, Cyprus, Spain, Greece, Iran, Mozambique); Various³: multiple countries (e.g., Germany, Austria, France, Hungary, Netherlands); Various⁴: Russia, Romania, China, Uzbekistan, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Germany, Jamaica, and Mexico; Various⁵: Not Specified.

Synthesis of Included Studies

This section synthesizes the main results obtained by the studies included in the review. Based on Ryba et al. (2016) Cultural Transition Model and its three phases, we have organized the results based on three temporal moments in migrants' lives: (a) before migration, (b) upon arrival in the new country, and (c) upon adapting to the new sociocultural context.

Before Migrating

In relation to this moment, research has explored issues such as the job search process and hiring mechanisms for coaches, emphasizing the importance of previous migration experiences (Borges et al., 2020) and networking in the selection processes (e.g., Harris, 2010; Mckenna, 2022; Samuel et al., 2020). Various studies have also investigated the reasons coaches migrate (e.g., Charbonneau et al., 2020; Samuel et al., 2020). Guo et al. (2023) noted that coaches see migration as an opportunity to consolidate their careers by stabilizing or reshaping them according to their desires or needs. This is somewhat similar to what Orłowski et al. (2018) highlighted, categorizing motives into (a) work-related factors (e.g., salary, financial security, pressure, recognition), (b) social factors (e.g., family support, children's education), (c) competitive factors (e.g., greater training resources, competitiveness in the environment), and (d) factors related to seeking new experiences (e.g., living in a new culture, learning a language, experiencing new challenges). Kerr and Obel (2018) found motivation to migrate based on children (e.g., avoiding military service in their home country, providing greater opportunities for their future).

Upon Arrival in the new Country

Upon arrival in a new country, coaches must learn the existing social norms, adapt their training methods to the new context, and adjust their way of communicating with athletes and other club staff (Tao et al., 2019). This moment could be linked to the acute adaptation phase proposed by Ryba et al. (2016).

Research has pointed out facilitative elements for coaches' adaptation upon arriving in a new country, such as receiving assistance from the club upon arrival (Borges et al., 2014), geographical proximity to the home country, or being able to maintain social relationships with family and friends (Sain et al., 2022). Kerr and Obel (2018) also noted the existence of subtle coincidences that can act as facilitators for this adaptation (e.g., the partner finding someone who speaks the same language). Attention has also been paid to the barriers and challenges that coaches face in their cultural transition (e.g., Charbonneau et al., 2020; Kerr & Moore, 2015; Sain et al., 2022; Schinke et al., 2014). Finally, during this arrival phase, challenges related to both the professional realm (e.g., training standards, levels of commitment, sports culture, media impact) and the sociocultural sphere (e.g., language, climate, lifestyle) have been highlighted.

When Adapting to the new Sociocultural Context

This third phase relates to the sociocultural adaptation of the Cultural Transition Model, where it has been observed that individuals who consider themselves psychologically adjusted to the new culture report higher levels of satisfaction in non-sporting aspects of daily life and that feeling congruence between one's own values and lifestyle and local norms could be a key element in this adjustment (Ryba et al., 2016). However, some authors argue that within the sports context, it is not necessary for an immigrant coach to adapt to the culture of all the norms, values, and beliefs of the new staff or the athletes they work with, as some cultural differences may not cause stress and may even create some opportunities (Cummings, 2014; Schinke, 2014).

This process of psychological and cultural changes resulting from contact between different cultural groups, which we term acculturation (Berry, 2005), is influenced by a wide variety of elements, including, as several authors have noted (e.g., Hall et al., 2021; Schinke et al., 2014), personal factors (e.g., language skills, adaptability, personality, previous experiences), group factors (e.g., social support, communication among team members and club personnel, team cohesion), sociocultural factors (e.g., cultural differences in values, norms, and beliefs), situational factors (e.g., duration of stay in the new country, frequency of contact with the culture of origin), and organizational factors (e.g., structure and culture of the sports organization, availability of resources and services). Other factors have also been identified as mediators of the acculturation process for coaches, such as (a) the role of the family, highlighting both its influence on the decision to migrate and its importance in adaptation and job performance (e.g., Hall et al., 2021; Sain et al., 2022; Samuel et al., 2020); (b) social support provided by family, friends, colleagues, and other members of the coaching staff (e.g., Borges et al., 2015; Sain et al., 2022; Schinke et al., 2014); (c) establishing personal relationships and social networks outside the sports environment as a key element in developing a sense of belonging to the new country (Kerr & Moore, 2015); and (d) the role of the club or federation (Borges et al., 2015), facilitating the acculturation process through the institutional support they can offer to migrant coaches (e.g., legal advice, support in finding housing, providing a home; facilitating language learning).

Discussion

The analysis of evidence published in articles, books, and academic studies indicates that the majority of coaches view their migration positively, considering it a valuable experience for personal development and recommending it to others for the personal (e.g., improved quality of life, personal growth) and professional (e.g., economic improvement, opportunity to coach at a higher level, increased status and recognition as coaches) benefits it entails (e.g., Charbonneau et al., 2020; Samuel et al., 2020). However, these same authors also noted the costs that migration can bring, both personally (e.g., adaptation issues, loss of social and family ties, experiences of isolation and loneliness) and professionally (e.g., greater job instability, difficulties adapting to the new sports system). Although the benefits, challenges, and difficulties associated with coaches' migration experiences have been explored, no evidence has been found directly analyzing the impact that cultural transition may have on coaches' mental health, as has been done with athletes (Schinke et al., 2018). It is advisable for future research to explore this phenomenon.

In general, research on sports careers and transitions suggests that some of the findings regarding migration among athletes (Prato et al., 2020) or career assistance programs (Torregrossa et al., 2020) are directly applicable to coaches' experiences. However, since these are migratory processes occurring at different life stages, differences are expected in aspects such as family implications or the type of social relationships established in the destination country. Prato et al. (2020) observed that language can generally affect athletes in their professional careers abroad, influencing them at the sports level (e.g., coach's decision on competition participation), psychological level (e.g., effects on self-confidence, motivation, and emotional state), and social level (e.g., facilitating social segregation or isolation). However, contrary to what seems to occur with athletes, Borges et al. (2020) noted that cultural relationships between countries and language do not seem to be relevant factors in coaches' migration. In another review on migration and psychological aspects of athletes, Souza et al. (2021) found that, among athletes, it is not common practice to seek information about the country or sports context in which they will be inserted. These data are in line with what was pointed out by Bepomoshchnov (2023), who observed that coaches did research about the club, the league, and the destination country. Future research should specifically explore whether seeking prior information aids in the adaptation process or not, and other possible similarities

and differences between the migration processes of athletes and coaches. It is important to consider, furthermore, that the theoretical models currently used to describe the experiences of athletes and coaches are based on athletes, and future research should assess the need to adapt existing theoretical models to coaches' characteristics or to create new theoretical models that fit their specific characteristics.

There is a clear trend towards greater participation of male coaches than female in the studies included in this review. These findings are consistent with those found by Prato et al. (2020) in their review on cultural transition and migration of athletes, and with the findings of Borrueco et al. (2023), who noted that the number of female coaches is lower and they are marginalized. Future research should specifically explore the migratory experiences of female coaches and analyze possible similarities and differences with those of male coaches.

Other characteristics (e.g., nationality, age, previous migratory experiences, whether traveling with family or not) have been described in some studies, although they have not been specifically analyzed for their influence on the migratory process. It is important for future research to specifically address the needs of migrant coaches and the differences among participants. Additionally, exploring the relationship between the sporting cultural tradition and/or the results obtained in the countries of origin and destination of coaches is advisable. As Samuel et al. (2020) pointed out, it is also important to explore the effects of short-term mobility and, as Prato et al. (2020) suggested, to examine the experiences shared by the social networks in the context of origin and analyze their role in the adaptation process of coaches.

Practical Implications

Based on the results obtained in this review and drawing from the proposals of Torregrossa et al. (2016) and Prato et al. (2020) with athletes, we offer a series of practical recommendations at different levels. Firstly, at the level of sports culture, it is important to promote research on the cultural transition of coaches, identifying needs based on certain personal or professional characteristics and specific cultural contexts, raising awareness about the difficulties that a cultural transition may entail, and training club leaders, federations, and organizations on their role in professionals' adaptation to a new sociocultural context. Secondly, at the level of the coach's environment, researching the role it plays in the adaptation of coaches, training them in coping strategies, and offering psychological support and guidance. Thirdly, at the individual level of the coach, providing training during their academic preparation on the challenges of cultural transition so that they can develop coping strategies, and providing psychological support and advice during the different stages of their transition.

Limitations

This study has certain limitations. The only inclusion criterion for this review was that the studies had to focus on transnationalism and the migratory processes of professional coaches. Some of the studies that were excluded for not meeting this inclusion criterion could provide relevant information on the topic. Examples of this include Lenartowicz (2022), which explored cultural differences in sports organizations and the athlete/coach relationship; Carter (2011), which analyzed the routes and strategies of transnational sports migration, the risks and costs of mobility, and migration policies; or Morela (2017), which investigated immigrants' acculturation preferences and the host community's acculturation expectations regarding sports participation and the sports motivation environment. It would be advisable for future research to also explore transnationalism and migratory processes of coaches from these perspectives. Future research should specifically address the sport of coaches. Another limitation of this article is found in Figure 2, which was designed with information obtained from the studies included in the review. Since no color scale was included, Figure 2 assigns the same visual importance to countries with only one participant migrating to or from there as it does to countries with more participants. Additionally, in some of the studies, complete information on the countries of origin and destination of the participants was not found, so Figure 2 may not accurately represent the reality described in the studies. However, we consider it appropriate to include it as a starting point.

Conclusions

This article is, to our knowledge, the first systematic review conducted on transnationalism and the migration processes of professional coaches. The most relevant studies and their main characteristics have been identified, and their results have been synthesized based on three temporal moments of their migration: (a) before migrating, identifying the reasons for migration and how preparation for migration is conducted; (b) upon arrival in the new context, identifying the main barriers, challenges, and facilitators for adaptation; and (c) when adapting to the new sociocultural context, identifying the main mediators of the acculturation process. The need to continue exploring the cultural transition of coaches has been highlighted, addressing some existing gaps such as the influence of migration on the mental health of coaches, the similarities and differences between the migration processes of athletes and coaches, and the scarcity of female coaches participating as shown in the studies conducted to date.

Ethics Committee Statement

Not applicable because the research study does not involve the participation of humans, either directly or through the use of their biological material or medical records.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Authors' Contribution

Conceptualization F.H., A.J. & M.T.; Methodology F.H.; Software F.H.; Validation F.H., A.J. & M.T.; Formal Analysis F.H.; Investigation F.H.; Resources A.J. & M.T.; Data Curation F.H., A.J. & M.T.; Writing – Original Draft F.H.; Writing – Review & Editing A.J., & M.T.; Visualization A.J. & M.T.; Supervision A.J. & M.T.; Project Administration A.J. & M.T. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

Data available upon request from the corresponding author (fran.herruzo@autonoma.cat).

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