



## PROPOSAL FOR AN ANALYTICAL MODEL FOR SPORTS MIGRATION

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### ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to present a proposal for an analytical model for sports migration studies is presented. The model was developed by sports Researchers located in Brazil and seeks to broaden the perspective of the migratory phenomenon in the social field of sports. The model is based on the understanding that the migration process in the sports sector is influenced and shaped by a set of four dimensions, namely, political, cultural, economic, and personal. It is believed that the proposal is legitimized by the needs identified from the literature, adding different perspectives to analyse the phenomenon, thus reducing any dichotomies and limitations of view. In addition to being a point of view that starts from the perspective of the global south.

**Contribution/Originality:** The contributions provided by this manuscript refer to new ways of looking at and analysing the phenomenon of sports migration. The originality of the model presented is found in its search for a broader understanding of the phenomenon of migration, based on different dimensions of analysis.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Recent research has found that sports migration has seen an increase and consolidation in terms of the volume of research on this theme (Rojo, Simiyu, & Starepravo, 2020). However, such investigation still encourages a discussion towards qualification and the emergence of new theoretical and methodological proposals.

Various proposals have appeared over the years, such as analysing the migrant typology (Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire., 1996) migratory policies (Binder & Findlay, 2012) the push-pull theory (Dorigo & Tobler, 1983) and patterns of migratory flows (Bale, 2003). However, Carter (2013) points out that studies on the subject still indicate the need for further qualifying research. Similarly, Magee and Sugden (2002) point to the need to improve investigative resources for studies.

Furthermore, it is observed that O'Reilly (2013) noted that the theories on migration have little connection between them. Among the researchers, Professor Maguire was the one who advanced the thematic research agenda. However, his proposal needs to be revisited, requiring further consideration and investigation of interrelationships between the factors, which are explored by the proposal presented here. Therefore, this brief report presents a proposal for an analytical model of sports migration, developed during the PhD of one of the members of a sports research group located in Brazil. This model is intended to be used as a lens capable of observing the migratory process comprehensively.

Concerning migration, Giddens (2008) asserts that, although it is not a recent phenomenon, it may be contributing to the process of global interaction. International migration patterns can be seen as a reflection of the rapid change in economic, political, and cultural ties between countries.

However, Giddens (2008) also highlights criticism of the existing analysis models for offering very simplistic explanations to sports migration, which the author considers to be a complex and multifaceted process. According to the author, scholars of migration are analysing global migration patterns from the understanding that they are systems generated by the interactions of macro and micro-level processes. Hence, the idea is to provide an analytical model based on a perspective which considers different factors that seek to reduce or avoid the dualism/dichotomy between structure and agency, as well as between analytical levels, that is, micro-correlations or macro-correlations.

Another relevant point for the basis of the present paper is that research on sports migration usually explores the impact of experience about migration after the process takes place (Gavira, Ries, Huete García, & García Fernández, 2013; Nascimento, Vasconcellos Ribeiro, Palma, & Pereira, 2020; Rojo et al., 2020). However, as maintained by Bourdieu and Wacquant (2000) it is necessary to start discussions by understanding how the migration process of these individuals took place, as well as understanding the choice of the country involved as a destination.

Based on the above, the manuscript proposes to fill the gap in these aspects: whether concerning an initial analysis of the existing factors that lead a person to migrate, or even about an analysis model capable of aggregating different disciplines to understand the phenomenon of sports migration.

## 2. MIGRATION AND SPORT

To present a proposal for an analysis model, a first step must be followed, that is, understand what the phenomenon in the lens is about and also apprehend how studies on the subject have been carried out up to the present day. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, in the last decades, studies in the area have grown considerably (Gavira et al., 2013; Nascimento et al., 2020; Rojo et al., 2020) and it is important to analyze the academic production already published.

Migration can be characterized a priori as the change of permanent or temporary residence (Nolasco, 2016). This phenomenon is observed in different sectors of society - such as the sports field - as well as it occurs for different reasons (Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire, 1996). Some studies in the area study the relationship between migration and student-athletes (Carter-Thuillier, Lopez Pastor, & Gallardo Fuentes, 2017; Palumbo, Fusco, Cortis, & Capranica, 2021) and sport and physical activity practiced by migrants (O'Driscoll, Banting, Borkoles, Eime, & Polman, 2014; Smith, Spaaij, & McDonald, 2019) forced and refugee migration (Spaij et al., 2019) and diaspora in sports (McSweeney & Nakamura, 2020).

In addition to occurring for different reasons, analyzes of sports migration have been taking place in different sports (Rojo et al., 2020). Among them, it is possible to mention basketball (Rojo, Malagutti, Canan, Hirata, & Starepravo, 2021) football (Filho, 2021; Lally, Smith, & Parry, 2021) indoor soccer (Marques & Júnior, 2021) handball (Samuel, Eldadi, Galily, & Tenenbaum, 2021) among others.

## 3. ANALYTICAL MODEL OF SPORTS MIGRATION: A PRESENTATION

The analytical model of sports migration presented here has, as its starting point, an analysis in three moments, which:

- (1) Considers the knowledge which has already been produced about the subject.
- (2) Delimits the social context in which the individual migrant is situated.
- (3) Investigates of the elements that influence and shape the migration process.

The first point of the proposal is to utilise the scientific knowledge historically produced on the subject. This appropriation is based on the assumption that, knowing the antecedents of the production of specialized knowledge

could lead to a better understanding, from different perspectives, of the issues associated with the social phenomenon. This relates to the understanding that academic production is somewhat legitimized by its bodies of experts, through a complex system of production and dissemination of scientific knowledge (Souza & Júnior, 2010; Souza & Marchi, 2011).

The second moment is related to the delimitation of the social context in which the migrant person is situated. This is due to the understanding that sports studies must also be studies of societies; only in this way will they be able to offer a sufficiently rigorous understanding of the meanings, functions, and roles of the social phenomenon (Souza, Starepravo, & Marchi, 2014). Here, an attempt is made to understand the profile of the migrant, to locate him within the scenario of the modality in which he is inserted, and also to observe the conditions proposed for the permanence of these athletes in their place of origin, among other aspects of their daily life that are acceptable to represent a social reality experienced by these individuals.

Finally, the central part of the analytical model of sports migration is the idea of analysing the factors that influence and shape migratory flows. For this, an analysis model was developed based on four dimensions, which were called dimensions of sports migration.

For the formulation of the referred construct, the dynamics pointed out by Giddens (1991) in his propositions of reading from the dimensions (for example institutional dimensions of modernity, dimensions of globalization) were considered appropriate. In addition, some issues pointed out by Maguire (1994); Maguire (1996); Maguire (2008) were taken as support points for the elaboration of this construction. In them, the author presents that the questions that can direct a research project on sport migration involve political, geographic, migration flow or patterns issues, four factors or dimensions that influence the decision to migrate, collaboration networks, migrant motives or behavior, among others. In this sense, the dimensions of sports migration have some assumptions to be noted. First, it is understood that in some way the migrations that occurred in the sports sector are or have been affected by all four proposed dimensions above. Secondly, dimensions are not closed categories, that is, to some extent, there are interrelationships between the dimensions of sports migration. Finally, it is understood that the combination of dimensions is a factor responsible for the existence and expansion of sports migration. Besides, they are moulders of the migratory process, establishing specific patterns of migratory movement in each modality.

Figure 1 shows the four dimensions of sports migration herein proposed, namely the political dimension, economic dimension, cultural dimension, and the personal dimension. Strictly speaking, it is understood that they can be used to conduct a qualified analysis of the phenomenon of migration within sport, observing and interrelating issues at macro- and microstructural levels, as well as allowing the analysis of the structural forces that govern the functioning of the migration process, as well as the actions of individuals in the choices and constitution of this phenomenon in sport.

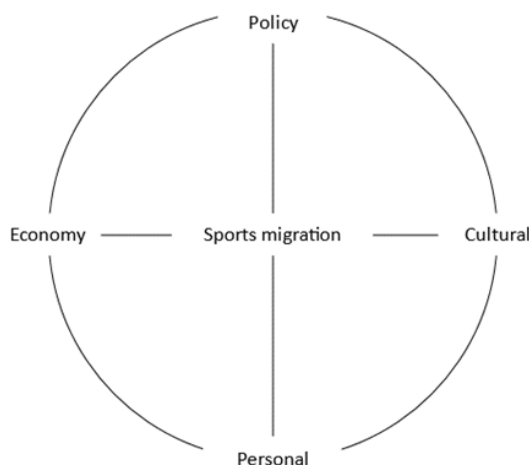


Figure-1. Dimensions of sports migration.

The first dimension of analysis is the cultural dimension. This is not only aimed at understanding the reason for the migratory process but why the migratory process is consolidated in such a way. In this sense, by applying it to sport, it is understood that the culture of a certain territory can influence the contours/patterns in which migration is consolidated. For this analysis, the ideas presented by Crossan (2013) are adopted the sense that it is necessary to identify the countries that receive and send athletes, their position within the globalized world, as well as whether the sport is considered as primary or secondary in the culture of the countries. From this, it is believed that the notions presented can contribute to the understanding of established migration patterns. Thus, the identification of popularity, or predominance of the modality within the local culture, and the classification of these as primary or secondary can contribute to the understanding of the migratory process (Crossan, 2017).

Methodologically, the model presented suggests the use of some types of research sources for cultural dimension data such as documental and bibliographic research and interviews. By report it is understood here the athlete registration reports, the athlete and the country rankings, the literature that deals with national sports predominance, and finally, the interviews with individual migrant.

The second dimension of analysis is politics, in its the macro-level (Giddens, 2008). In the case of the social space of sport, there are also impositions of rules, which limit or open the borders of states/nations for the displacement of specialized labour. For Maguire (2011) sports migration is linked to a complex political economy, located within a series of power struggles that characterize the global sports system. In this sense, the aspects raised by Maguire and Stead (1996) are considered, which point to the need to analyse the regulations, qualification rules, entry and registration processes of the global sports system.

For analysis of the political dimension, it is suggested then to investigate the regulations and laws in force concerning the work of the migrant sportsman - both at the level of the nation-state and of institutions responsible for sports modalities. In this sense, the use of documentary research and interviews is considered a coherent way of seeking data and information for analysis.

The economic dimension is also situated at the level of macro-correlations. Giddens (2008) shows that it can be established in two ways. The first, as a need for labour on the part of the place of origin, and the second, as the economic impossibility of the place of origin to provide better wages to individuals who choose to migrate. In the economic dimension, the existence of imbalances between locations is analysed, as this is an influencing factor for the athlete in deciding whether to migrate. The factors that push migrants away from their places of origin are those life situations which give them a reason to be dissatisfied with their locality, whilst those that attract migrants elsewhere are those attributes of distant places that make them appealing (Dorigo & Tobler, 1983).

Therefore, it is suggested to analyze the difference between the current salary potential gains in the place of origin and destination of the migrant athlete, as well as the macroeconomic reality of the places involved in the migratory flows. That is international data from the analysis of the socio-economic conditions to which athletes are submitted. For this purpose, the analysis is supported by documentary research, in which comparisons will be made between social indicators of both countries involved in the migration process.

The last dimension, the personal one, is understood as the micro-social relationships of the individual migrant. In this scenario, the analytical model of sports migration is based on two moments of analysis. First, the focus is on recruiting athletes and the social relationships that individual migrant establish in this process. The second focus is on the analysis of the sportsman's motivations and rationalities regarding their decision to migrate.

Taking into account the first focus, it is shown that the networks used for the decision-making process, both in recruitment and in the decision to migrate, can be formal and informal (Elliott & Maguire, 2008; Elliott & Gusterud, 2018). Concerning the second focus, it starts from the understanding that the individual has power to make his own decisions. In other words, no matter how much the systemic forces work push or pull the individual to move away from his geographical inertia, the ability to calculate the risks, gains and losses with the migration process is something that starts with the individual as a social being. Besides, migrant athletes also establish

ambitions and prerogatives linked to their athletic careers, starting with a personal motivation to migrate, and these can be varied.

Methodologically, besides the appropriate theoretical support, in the personal dimension, it is essential to use a type of direct information research on the individual migrant. Therefore, the use of interviews is suggested as the most suitable research tool.

Finally, it is important to consider that the proposed model of analysis of sports migration presented here starts from the idea of dialogue between dimensions, in which the hypothesis raised that the complementation between dimensions helps to explain in a deeper way the factors that influence the decision to migrate made by the individual involved with sports.

#### 4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This brief report presents a proposal for an analytical model to study sports migration, which brings advances to qualify discussions on the theme, since it proposes to aggregate within the analyses an information set compiled from multiple sources and types of research. Primarily, the proposal seeks to meet the needs identified by the literature to add different perspectives to the analysis of the phenomenon, thus reducing dichotomies and limitations of view. Finally, the success of the analytical model in achieving its objectives can be seen in a research study which analysed the migration of African runners to Brazil.

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