



Systematic review of the literature about moral in the sport context

Revisão sistemática da literatura acerca da moral no contexto esportivo

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate sports orientation as a factor of influence in the moral development in athletes associated with their quest for autonomy and emancipation. This is a Systematic Review of the literature on morality in the sports context, including studies from 1982 to 2015. A total of 113 studies were evaluated and presented following indications of three sections: a) methodological characteristics of the studies; b) variables associated with morality; and c) main theoretical supports. This research presents new findings on the variables that are related to the moral in the sport context and the search for autonomy and emancipation throughout its athletic formation. With these results, it is hoped to contribute to the training process of athletes in the Brazilian context, being a source of information for professionals in psychology and other areas on how to make sport a factor contributing to human development from the beginning of their practice, whether in childhood, adolescence or in professional athletes.

Keywords: Autonomy. Human development. Identity. Moral.

RESUMO

Este estudo tem como objetivo investigar a orientação esportiva como fator de influência no desenvolvimento moral em atletas associado à sua busca de autonomia e emancipação. Trata-se de uma Revisão Sistemática da literatura sobre a moral no contexto esportivo, incluindo estudos de 1982 a 2015. Um total de 113 estudos foram avaliados e apresentados seguindo indicações de três seções: a) características metodológicas dos estudos; b) variáveis associadas à moral; e c) principais suportes teóricos. Esta pesquisa apresenta novos achados sobre as variáveis que se relacionam com a moral no contexto esportivo e a busca pela autonomia e emancipação ao longo de sua formação atlética. Com estes resultados, espera-se contribuir para o processo de formação de atletas no contexto brasileiro, sendo uma fonte de informação para profissionais da psicologia e demais áreas sobre como proceder para que o esporte seja um dos fatores que contribuem para o desenvolvimento humano desde o início de sua prática, seja na infância, adolescência ou em atletas profissionais.

Palavras-chave: Autonomia. Desenvolvimento Humano. Identidade. Moral.

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INTRODUCTION

An athlete's career is permeated by several situations which become striking points, whether positive or negative. Of course, it is necessary to understand who this athlete is, a performance athlete, a practitioner of physical activity focused on its health and well-being, everyone will have its story and deal with this story in a particular way. With each life change, new elements are added to the repertoire and these causes the same subject to experience different representative situations on its historical path¹.

Considering athletes who spend a good part of their life on competitive sport context, they enter into an aspect of learning about the social competitive process influenced by the environment that surrounds them, as well as the people with whom they relate. As a result, the athlete's own behavior is in favor of the rules in the sports environment, which is often considered inappropriate for life in society.

Contradictions regarding the behavior of the human being in different environments call attention, because, in order to understand this being, it is not enough to just study its body or its origin, it is necessary to understand how it is constituted in a socio-cultural context. The explanation for this is due to the fact that, during its development, innate behaviors (which are linked to its biological structure) are shaped by the cultural activity of others with whom it relates². Authors refer that³ the individual is born and becomes a member of society, that is, he is a social being, who lives in a group, which is not a simple task, however, living with groups that have different rules and moral aspects are more problematic^{3,4}.

Some authors use the term prosocial behavior to discuss the issue of the ability to act in accordance with moral precepts. This behavior is characterized by being one that represents a positive influence on other people, in this context, altruism, sharing, cooperation, among others are considered as prosocial behaviors⁵. Thus, an individual's prosocial moral development concerns the process of acquiring and changing the judgments and behaviors that would help or benefit other individuals or groups⁶.

From these initial discussions, the objective of this research aims to fill some gaps in the sports literature, systematically reviewing the research carried out on morals in the sports context to understand how researchers are treating the topic over a previously established period and to verify the state of these studies on the used methodologies, associated variables and theoretical references used.

METHODOLOGY

As an initial study step, the description was carried out according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) Statement⁷ guidelines, and it is registered in the Prospero database (International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews) (PROSPERO).

The search for articles was carried out in the following electronic databases: Embase, PsycINFO, Pubmed, ScienceDirect, SportDiscus, Web of Science, Lilacs and Scielo. The selected articles related all those presented in the searches, from the beginning of the database until August 2015, however, date or language limits were not used at the time of the searches. The descriptors used in the initial search were: Moral, Morality, Moral Development, Moral Judgment, Moral Theory, Moral Treatment, Moral Obligations, Sport, Athlete, Athletic, Athletic Performance, Exercise and associated synonyms. Without filters for language and time, the Boolean operators AND, OR and NOT were used in the construction of search strategies in the different databases already mentioned.

For data analysis⁸⁻¹⁰, content analysis was chosen, with the objective of identifying common themes for each item of data extraction. A meta-sampling was carried out which consists of an oriented approach towards quantitative aggregation of the synthesis of qualitative research and opinion surveys. At the analysis beginning, each study received a bibliographic numerical code that refers to the number of independent samples present in each study. Thus, studies with independent samples had more than one coding, respecting the individual characteristics of

each population group. On the other hand, when the same sample was published in different articles, they received the same codification.

For variables associated with morals or related concepts, summary tables were created based on the methodological characteristics of the included studies and for the variables associated in the tables below. For the preparation of the summary tables: (a) we selected and classified the associated variables in each study ¹¹. (b) the direction was summarized from the results of each included study. Each result was analyzed individually, generating positive (+), negative (-), non-significant (0) or indeterminate (?) Association indicators. (c) In the final phase analysis, we calculate the effect size of each associated variable

from the proportion of the samples supporting a given direction of association. The nomenclature used indicated no association (non-significant) from 0 to 33%, 34 to 59% indeterminate or inconsistent and 60 to 100% positive or negative.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the search strategies, a total of 8122 references were identified as possible to be included in the study. According to Figure 1, after reviewing these references with the pre-defined eligibility criteria, 113 articles were included for complete analysis and data extraction.

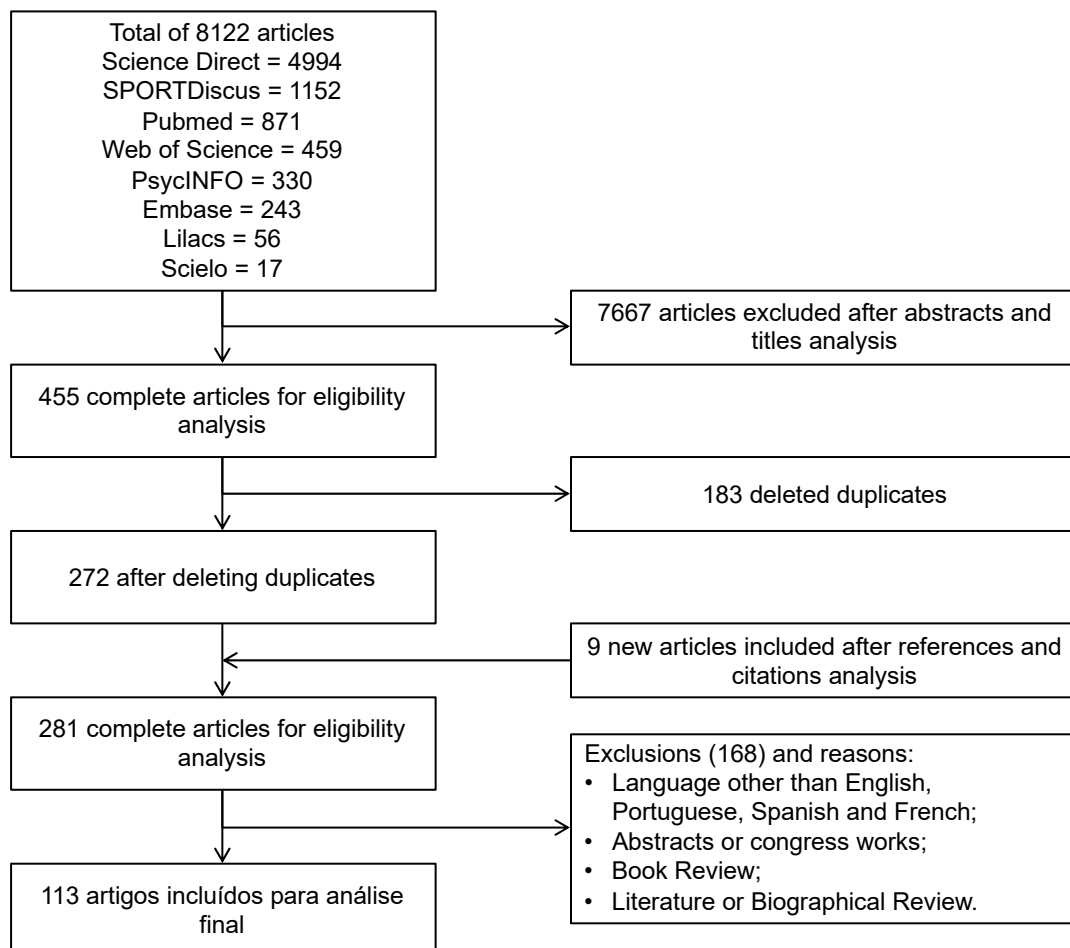


Figure 1. Diagram study flow

RESEARCH METHODS

According to these results (Table 1), the studies were conducted using qualitative (9.7%), quantitative (83.2%), mixed (6.2%) and experimental (0.9%) methods for investigate the moral characteristics present in athletes. Regarding data collection, the authors of qualitative research used predominantly semi-structured interviews (83.4%), composed of questions or moral dilemmas, in addition to questionnaires (8.3%) and self-ethnography (8.3%). In quantitative research, the authors used interviews containing moral dilemmas (4.3%), questionnaires (survey) (10.6%) and mainly standardized psychometric scales (85.1%). Research with mixed methodological characteristics, on the other hand, used a combination of interviews, questionnaires and psychometric scales.

Regarding the most used psychometric scale, the one that stood out was the Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior in Sport Scale-PABSS¹², being used in its full version or just a few items, according to each objective established in the studies. Two other instruments also stood out, such as Moral Disengagement in Sport Scale-Short¹³ and Perception of Success Questionnaire-POSQ¹⁴, mainly in its updated version¹⁵.

Sample Characteristics

According to the data collected from the surveys, the total number of participants was 46,429, as well as the number of subjects in the samples ranged from 1 to 3387 (Table 1). Regarding the more specific subjects characteristics, the researchers opted for several categories, such as: athletes who competed in university and school competitions, amateur and professional athletes, a research that presented different groups, in order to compare them; in addition, the subjects were male and female. The number of subjects in the research showed variability; studies with less than 50 subjects added up to a total of 13, and they are mostly (61.5%) qualitative studies; studies with a number of subjects ranging from 51 to 200 add up to 27; on the other hand, 49 studies had a number of subjects between 201 and 500, and 24 studies had samples that exceeded the number of 500 subjects, and all are characterized as quantitative or mixed surveys. Regarding the participants gender, only 5 studies

had only female subjects, 26 studies had only male subjects, 79 studies with subjects of both genders, and 3 studies did not clearly present this sample characteristic.

The subjects competitive level is important to highlight, 48 studies presented their research results with athletes who characterized themselves as university or high school students, 33 studies were carried out with amateur athletes, who were part of clubs or who competed in regional championships, another 13 studies had subjects as athletes of varied categories; still, it was possible to observe that 8 studies were carried out with elite athletes, 6 studies with professional athletes, 3 studies with professionals (judges, coaches and entrepreneurs) who dealt directly with the athletes, 1 study with subjects in psychiatric treatment and 1 study in that it was not possible to conclude which category the subjects were part of.

Most of the selected and analyzed studies were carried out with athlete subjects who belonged to team sports (58.5%), but only 5 (4.4%) were performed with individual sports athletes. Some researchers chose athletes that belonged to both categories (25.6%), and 13 (11.5%) studies did not make it clear which type of sport the athletes belonged to. Regarding the location of these studies, there is a predominance of researchers who chose as sample subjects who lived in Europe, at all there were 67 (59.3%) studies carried out in this region, 35 studies were carried out in North America (31%), 6 studies were carried out in Australia or New Zealand (5.3%), and 04 studies were carried out in other countries, Brazil, China, Taiwan and Botswana; only 1 study did not make it clear where the data were collected.

Considering these findings, some gaps in the literature are evident at this demonstrating point, for example, that few studies are conducted on morals in the sports context using individual sports athletes, mainly martial arts, as subjects. Few studies are also carried out in countries of low and medium economic development, such as Brazil, so it is necessary to include studies on these characteristics that show the possibility that these factors may have a different impact on human development, when compared to other studies.

Table 1. Research designs and samples characteristics

		(Continua)
Study Characteristics	Reference Number	Samples
Design		
Quantitative	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 52, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 103, 104, 105, 108, 110, 111, 112	94
Qualitative	2, 22, 25, 50, 53, 67, 77, 102, 106, 107, 113	11
Mixed	11, 14, 24, 45, 51, 79, 109	07
Experimental/Trial	58	01
Data Collect		
Standardized Psychometric Scales	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 46, 52, 54, 56, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 100, 103, 104, 105, 108, 110, 112	74
Semi structured interview	2, 12, 13, 14, 15, 22, 30, 50, 53, 77, 102, 106, 107	13
Questionnaires	25, 26, 35, 36, 48, 49, 57, 67, 92, 99, 101, 111	13
Mixed	11,18, 24, 43, 45, 47, 51, 58, 78, 79, 89, 109	12
Autoetnography	113	01
Sample Size		
1-50	12, 22, 30, 45, 50, 53, 58, 77, 102, 106, 107, 109, 113	13
51-200	2, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, 25, 32, 36, 41, 42, 47, 48, 49, 61, 63, 67, 70, 74, 78, 81, 86, 89, 94, 101, 112	27
201-500	1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 37, 40, 43, 44, 60, 62, 64, 66, 69, 71, 72, 76, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85, 87, 88, 90, 91, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 104, 108	49
> 500	3, 4, 7, 23, 35, 38, 39, 46, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 65, 68, 73, 75, 92, 103, 105, 110, 111	24
Gender		
Female	30, 36, 67, 99, 113	05
Male	2, 5, 8, 10, 19, 29, 37, 43, 53, 58, 66, 77, 78, 81, 82, 83, 90, 95, 96, 97, 100, 101, 106, 107, 109, 112	26
Combined	1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 79, 80, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 91, 92, 93, 94, 98, 102, 103, 104, 105, 108, 110, 111	79
Study Characteristics		Reference Number
Not identified		49, 63, 74
Subjects		
College Athletes/High School Athletes	4, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 46, 48, 54, 55, 62, 63, 64, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 79, 85, 86, 89, 91, 92, 93, 95, 96, 97, 108, 109, 110, 111	48
Amateur Athletes/ Clubs/ Regional Competitions	5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 16, 19, 28, 29, 32, 34, 36, 43, 44, 45, 47, 56, 59, 65, 66, 75,78, 81, 82, 83, 84, 88, 98, 99, 100, 102, 106, 107	33
Various categories athletes	3, 31, 33, 51, 52, 57, 60, 61, 76, 87, 90, 94, 112	13
Elite Athletes	22, 35, 49, 53, 101, 103, 104, 105	08
Professional Athletes	1, 2, 18, 30, 50, 113	06
Non Professional Athletes	74, 77, 80	03
Individuals on Psychiatric Training	58	01
Not Identified	7	01

Study Characteristics	Reference Number	(Conclusão) Samples
Sports type		
Team Sports	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 28, 29, 32, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 56, 58, 59, 60, 65, 66, 67, 72, 73, 74, 75, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 85, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 106, 107, 109, 112,	66
Individual Sports	2, 30, 49, 89, 113	5
Combined	13, 19, 22, 26, 31, 33, 34, 35, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 57, 61, 63, 64, 68, 69, 70, 71, 76, 80, 83, 84, 102, 103, 104, 108	29
Not Identified	11, 16, 20, 23, 24, 25, 27, 54, 55, 62, 105, 110, 111	13
Age		
Under 19	8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 21, 26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 37, 43, 44, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 61, 63, 65, 66, 67, 70, 81, 82, 83, 84, 86, 87, 88, 91, 92, 96, 97, 99, 100, 102, 105, 107, 109, 110, 111, 112	52
19-25	20, 64, 69, 71, 94, 106	06
Above 25	30, 77, 113	03
Age Variation (8-68)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 18, 22, 29, 34, 36, 38, 40, 41, 42, 45, 46, 50, 56, 62, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78, 85, 90, 93, 98	31
Not Identified	11, 13, 15, 19, 23, 24, 25, 33, 35, 39, 47, 60, 68, 79, 80, 89, 95, 101, 103, 104, 108	21
Location		
Europe	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 29, 31, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 93, 94, 103, 104, 105, 107, 110, 113	67
North America	9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 32, 41, 42, 48, 57, 58, 67, 68, 79, 80, 91, 92, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102, 111, 112	35
Australia and New Zealand	3, 33, 34, 35, 101, 106	06
Other Nations	28, 56, 108, 109	04
Not Identified	7	01

Theoretical Supports

The studies that were classified as quantitative (94), the most used theoretical support was the Social Cognitive Theory of Moral Thought and Action (Social Cognitive Theory of Moral Thought and Action)¹⁶, present in 38.3% of the studies. This theory proposes that anticipated affective reactions, such as guilt, regulate moral conduct^{17,18,19}. Another theoretical support that stood out was the moral development that considers the moral development of the human being based on 6 levels (3 stages) and in each of them the moral reasoning is important to observe how the subject thinks and evaluates certain situations. In qualitative studies, several theories were used to support morals discussion, however, as well as in quantitative research, the Social Cognitive Theory of Thought and Moral Action of Bandura predominated^{20,21,22}.

Variables Associated with Moral in Sport

Table 2 presents a summary of how the variables relate to morality in the various analyzed studies. Eight variables were identified that represent the Moral construct in each of the surveys, which are: a) Moral Disengagement; b) Moral Reasoning; c) Moral functioning; d) Moral-Prosocial Behavior; e) Moral Judgment; f) Moral atmosphere; g) Moral Development and, h) Orientation to Moral Conduct. Each of these variables was understood to be the main theme of the research, and its relationship with other variables were analyzed, that is, it was verified how these variables were used in the research to describe the Moral construct within the sports context, as well as which variables were used to better understand each one.

Table 2. Variables associated with moral in athletes in the various studies included

Correlation	Reference Numbers	Number of studies	Association				Code Resume
			+	-	0	?	
	Moral-related factors						
Moral Disengagement	<u>Drug use/doping</u> : 2 +; 33 +; 54 +; 55 +; <u>Gender</u> : 4 + (male); 104 =; 108 + (male); <u>Ego Orientation</u> : 5 +; <u>Prosocial Behavior</u> : 6 -; 7 -; <u>Antisocial Behavior</u> : 10 +; 34 +; 39 + (male); 93 +; 107 +; <u>Projecting blame on others</u> : 22 +; <u>Cheating</u> : 103 + (male); <u>Not identified</u> : 23; 94.	19	73,7 (14)	10,5 (2)	5,3 (1)	10,5 (2)	+
Moral Reasoning	<u>Fair Play</u> : 8 +; <u>Assertive thinking</u> : 11 +; <u>Harmful Behavior</u> : 12 -; <u>Dilemmas</u> : 13 (-sport; + everyday); 14 (+ sport; - everyday); <u>Gender</u> : 15 + (female); 24 =; <u>Interested in contact sports</u> : 16 -; <u>Follow Rules</u> : 53 +; <u>Task and Ego orientation</u> : 74 + (Task); 106 (+Task, - Ego); <u>Goal Orientation</u> : 76 ?; <u>Legitimation of aggressive behavior</u> : 112 -; <u>not identified</u> : 30; 81	15	40 (6)	26,7 (4)	6,6 (1)	26,7 (4)	+
Moral functioning	<u>Prosocial Behavior</u> : 1 +; <u>Task and Ego orientation</u> : 18 -, 41 - (Ego); 40 (+Task; - Ego); 90 + (Task); <u>Self-concept</u> : 27 +; <u>Moral Atmosphere</u> : 29 +; 42 +; 44 +; 66 +; <u>Competitive Climate</u> : 59 -; <u>Age</u> : 78 (-judgment; - intention; + reasoning).	12	58,3 (7)	25 (3)	-	16,7 (2)	+
Moral – prosocial behavior (sportspersonship orientation)	3 – (performance concern); <u>Coach Behavior</u> : 9 +; 56 +; <u>Coesion/Environment</u> : 17 +; 82 +; 83 +, 84 +; <u>Motivation</u> : 19 +, 64 +; <u>Authority Abuse Perception</u> : 26 (+ female, - male); <u>Task and Ego orientation</u> : 31, 37, 38, 65, 88, 89 (+ Task, - Ego); 86?; <u>Age</u> : 43 (+ antisocial, - prosocial); <u>Gender</u> : 45 ? (= Prosocial, ≠ antisocial-H); 85 ? (+ Antisocial-H); <u>Not Identified</u> : 46 ?; 58 ?; 109 ?; 111 ?; <u>Acceptance of aggression</u> : 48 ≠ (Male); <u>Social Influences</u> : 92 +; <u>Olympic Values</u> : 105 +; <u>Fair Play</u> : 110 +	28	67,8 (19)	3,6 (1)	-	28,6 (8)	+
	Moral-related factors						
Moral Judgment	<u>Self-judgment</u> : 36 +; <u>Type of sports</u> : 61 + (individual); <u>Positive Emotions</u> : 69 +; <u>Sportspersonship Orientation</u> : 71 +; <u>Not identified</u> : 62; 80	06	66,7 (4)	-	-	33,3 (2)	+
Moral Atmosphere	<u>Aggression / Aggressive behavior</u> : 2 + (pro-aggression rules); 91 + (Male, scholars athletes), (team sports), (winners and reserves are more aggressive); 98 +, 99 +, 100 + (perception of team norms); (<u>Moral functioning</u>): 95 +; 96 +; 97 +	08	100 (8)	-	-	-	+
Moral Development	<u>Cheat</u> : 51? (> Male, older man, team sports); <u>Performance goals</u> : 60 -; <u>Gender</u> : 72 =; <u>Age</u> : 73 +; <u>Not Identified</u> : 49?; 67?; 75?; 77?	08	12,5 (1)	12,5 (1)	12,5 (1)	62,5 (5)	?
Orientation to Moral Conduct	28 ?; 101 ?; 47 + (Emotions); 87 + (Happiness); 70 + (athletic identity); 102 ?; 50?; 52 + (prosocial behavior); 68 + (individual sport)	09	55,6 (5)	-	-	44,4 (4)	+
Not Identified	20; 21; 25; 35; 57; 63; 79; 113	8	-	-	-	100 (8)	?

Note: Two themes may have been presented in the same study

a) Moral Disengagement. Moral Disengagement is considered a term to designate a set of mechanisms that lead the subject to perform behaviors that are harmful to himself^{23,24}. Another author¹⁶ identified eight mechanisms that are used as a justification for conducting a certain behavior considered harmful, which are moral justification, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, distortion of consequences, dehumanization, and attribution of fault. Of the 19 studies that investigated moral disengagement, 4 found a positive relationship with the substances use that increase sports performance, better known as doping^{23,24,25}, in this same sense, 5 studies showed results that positively related the use of disengagement mechanisms morals and behaviors considered antisocial^{19,26,27,28,29}, in addition to a positive relationship with specific characteristics such as projecting blame on others³⁰ and cheating on men³¹. In contrast, 2 studies found a negative relationship between the mechanisms of moral disengagement and pro-social behaviors^{13,32}. Specifically considering the subjects gender, 2 studies found results showing that men had more moral disengagement mechanisms than women^{33,34}, and 1 study found no difference in this regard³⁵.

b) Moral Reasoning. Moral reasoning can be closely linked to action trends such as affirmation, aggression and submission in conflict situations³⁶ and refers to the way in which we consider a certain act to be right or wrong. Fifteen studies that were found investigated the relationship between moral reasoning and other variables present in the sports context. Positive relationships were found between moral reasoning and fair play³⁷, assertive thinking³⁶, the ability to follow rules³⁸, task orientation^{39,40}. Some studies have found negative relationships with other variables, such as the legitimization of aggressive behavior⁴¹ and harmful behavior⁴²; in addition to the contact sports interest⁴³. With regard to gender, two studies showed different results, since in one of them, women had a greater capacity for moral reasoning in relation to men⁴⁴, while the other did not present significant differences between genders⁴⁵.

c) Moral functioning. Some researchers have studied the variable moral functioning to refer to three specific components, namely, moral judgment, moral intention and moral behavior⁴⁶, thus, researchers develop studies in two ways, the first of which is to investigate only the functioning moral as a general concept, and the second is to study the variables that make up separately this concept. Of the analyzed articles, 12 used moral functioning as the main study variable, and its relationship with other variables was analyzed. Thus, the positive relationships found by the authors were with some variables concerning the individual, such as the pro-social behavior⁴⁷ and the athletes' self-concept⁴⁸; but also with elements present in the group to which they belong, such as the moral atmosphere^{49,50,51,52}.

In contrast, some variables were negatively related to moral functioning, which were ego orientation^{53,46,54} and the competitive environment in the group in which they belong⁵⁵. One of the studies analyzed the difference in moral functioning at different ages, and found that moral judgment and moral intention were greater in children than in adolescents and adults, whereas moral reasoning was greater in adults compared to the others⁵⁶.

d) Moral-Prosocial Behavior. Moral or pro-social behavior has been used in scientific research as one that represents a positive influence on other people, without this being characterized as a benefit of its own⁵⁷. This variable was chosen to designate studies that used as a central point of discussion the athletes pro-social behavior, as well as the orientation to sportsmanship (sportspersonship), having been chosen 28 studies with this theme. In this perspective, 7 researchers analyzed their relationship with task and ego orientation, resulting in 6 studies with positive relationships between pro-social behaviors and task orientation, and negative relationships with ego orientation^{58,59,12, 60,61,62}, with 1 of the studies not finding significant relationships between variables⁶³.

Other studies have shown results with a positive relationship with pro-social behaviors, these variables are, Social influences⁶⁴, Olympic values⁶⁵, Fair play⁶⁶, Coach behavior^{67, 68}, Cohesion and group

environment^{18,69,70,71} and Motivation^{72,60}. On the other hand, in one of the studies, pro-social behaviors showed a negative relationship with the athletes 'concern with performance' 17, in addition to 2 studies that did not show consistent results regarding the difference in pro-social behaviors in relation to the subjects' gender^{73, 74}.

e) Moral Judgment. Moral judgment is considered one of the components of the moral functioning concept, and 6 studies were identified as considering this variable as the one that best characterizes the morality concept in the research. About these, 2 did not present results that could identify the variables on which the moral judgment was related⁷⁵⁻⁷⁶. However, the others showed results demonstrating positive relationships between moral judgment and positive emotions elucidated by athletes⁷⁷, self-judgment⁷⁸ as well as sportspersonship orientation⁷⁹. In addition, one of the surveys investigated the difference between moral judgment and the sport type, demonstrating that individual sports athletes were more capable of moral judgment than team sports athletes⁸⁰.

f) Moral atmosphere. In addition to individual characteristics, some researchers chose to investigate how the moral atmosphere influences the athletes behavior, which is composed of the relationship that athletes have with other people considered significant, such as coaches, teammates and even family members⁸¹. Five studies showed results in which the moral atmosphere when composed of rules for aggression tend to lead athletes to behave more aggressively⁸¹⁻⁸⁵. In contrast, 3 studies showed results that positively related the moral atmosphere to the moral functioning of athletes⁸⁶⁻⁸⁸.

h) Moral Development. Some theories offer a specific explanation about how morality develops in human beings, especially how it occurs at certain ages, linking it to other person characteristics. Researchers from 8 studies related moral development to other variables, with very varied results in this regard. For example, athletes who set performance goals and who are older and more experienced have less moral competence⁸⁹, and also exhibit cheating behaviors

more often, especially men⁹⁰. However, 1 study found no significant differences between men and women⁹¹, and 1 study showed results that demonstrate a positive relationship between moral development and the subjects' age⁹². In addition, 4 studies did not present results that could be interpreted as specific to the relationship between moral development and other variables⁹³⁻⁹⁶.

f) Orientation to Moral Conduct. Some studies presented variables related to morality that did not fit into the categories described above, so it was decided to fit them into a category that could cover all studies, called orientation to moral conduct. In all, 9 studies were selected for this category, with 5 of them showing results that show a positive relationship between the subject's orientation to moral conduct with the positive emotions it presents⁹⁷, the feeling of happiness⁹⁸, athletic identity⁹⁹, pro-social behavior¹⁰⁰ and participation in individual sports¹⁰¹. However, 4 studies did not show results in which it was possible to observe the relationship with other variables¹⁰²⁻¹⁰⁵.

CONCLUSION

The research carried out argues that, when the subject has a life project and, in parallel to this, develops a political identity with an emancipatory perspective, its participation and performance in the sports context is no longer an aspect of colonization of the life world and becomes a practice that makes possible the search for moral autonomy and emancipation. These elements were considered from the need to understand how an athlete's moral development can be fundamental to his development process as a subject in the world, praising its ability to reason and act with sufficient autonomy to allow him to live in society.

This research led us to interesting results, it was initially possible to explore the main characteristics of the studies carried out on sport morals. The analyzed researches revealed points that deserve to be highlighted. One of them is the perception that morality is studied in different ways, using different me-

thodologies in terms of research design, instruments used and participating subjects.

Despite this variety of characteristics, some of them stood out, being present in most studies. Among these characteristics we can mention the use of quantitative design with the use of standardized psychometric scales that make it possible to increase the number of subjects in the research. With regard to these subjects, the studies were conducted, mostly, with the participation of people of both genders, male and female, university and/or high school athletes and team sports practitioners. Adolescents were the most present in the research, which reveals the researchers' preference for understanding morals at a time in the subject's life when individual and social questions are very specific and considered by psychology scholars as a phase in which the decision making discoveries more complex.

There were several theoretical references used by researchers to support studies, and these theories served as a basis for the authors to also discuss several variables that relate to morality, always taking into account the sports context.

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