

What to do after fame? Career aspirations and expectations of high-performance female athletes

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HEADING BACKGROUND: The end of a sports career requires a readjustment of habits and demands the need to plan for the medium-term future on the part of female athletes.

Hypothesis: H1: Elite athletes with greater social support tend to have higher career aspirations and expectations for retirement. H2: Elite athletes with higher self-esteem tend to have higher aspirations and career expectations for their retirement.

STUDY DESIGN: A cross-sectional observational design was used with a purposive sampling of 243 Spanish elite athletes.

METHODS: The present study aims to fill a gap in the scientific literature by identifying the career aspirations and expectations of high-performance female athletes. A total of 243 elite female athletes agreed to participate in this study.

RESULTS: More than half of the female athletes combine their sporting activity with another work or training activity and do not consider it easy to find a job once they have finished their sporting career, nor do they consider that it would be useful or help them as an experience to find a job.

CONCLUSIONS: We conclude with recommendations for future policy and practice and for sports psychologists to better support their athletes.

KEY WORDS: Female athletes, Retirement, Career transitions, self-esteem, social support.

Introduction

The analysis of the transition from the sporting sphere to the working sphere has been scarcely addressed in sport sciences (Selva et al., 2013) and,

much less so in women's sport. In this line, it has also not been the subject of concern for coaches, managers or the athletes themselves and their families (Gilmore, 2008; Gordon & Lavallee, 2011; Park, et al., 2013). However, and even if great sporting success is enjoyed during the career, at the end of this period, elite athletes must reintegrate at the labor level and, as a consequence, readjust their habits and future plans (Ramos, 2019) who in their trajectories face dual careers (DC).

Elite sportswomen who have reached a high level of professionalism dedicate, on average, more than forty hours per week to training, which vary depending on the type of sport (Amara et al., 2004; David, 2005). In addition, the transition from being a public figure and even a social icon to resuming an anonymous life involves a mental and physical transformation. It is a matter of starting a new life from a family, social and economic point of view for which, in most cases, there is no psychological preparation or economic planning. In this context it has to be taken into account that gender meanings permeate the professional decision-making and retirement patterns of athletes (Ronkainen et al., 2016).

The occupational aspirations and expectations that each person constructs constitute one of the most important predictors of future occupational outcomes (Jones & Schneider, 2009). It should be kept in mind that these individual aspirations and expectations respond to perceptions shared by members of a group or social class and guide our choices. Expectations are related to the judgments we make taking into account a given real situation, while aspirations are judgments based on what we desire, on what we have heard from others and, therefore, is a behavioral orientation framework: what we are willing to do to make it happen (Appadurai, 2004).

The aim of this study is to determine the career aspirations and expectations of elite female athletes who have participated in an-elite sport and their relationship with the perception of social support and the level of self-perceived self-esteem in order to plan intervention programs that facilitate a successful transition.

Theoretical Framework

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND JOB EXPECTATIONS

Withdrawal is the final stage of an athlete, and depending on the previous planning for this moment, it may entail health risks, as he or she will need sound psychological skills and adequate social support to cope with new work and personal demands (Kenttä et al., 2016; Wylleman et al., 2004)

during the past decade, become a well-delineated topic of study among the sport psychology community. This introductory article provides an overview of the major developments within this thematic field of research, as well as a description of interventions used with athletes in transition. Avenues for further research and developments are proposed. Methods. Literature review and integration. Results and conclusions. Analysis reveals that the concept of transition is currently viewed in a holistic, life-span perspective which spans the athletic and post-athletic career and which includes transitions occurring in the athletic career as well as those occurring in other domains of athletes' lives. This 'beginning-to-end' approach is illustrated with a developmental model on transitions faced by athletes at athletic, individual, psychosocial, and academic/vocational level. At the level of interventions, analysis suggests that the focus on interventions has shifted from the use of traditional therapeutic approaches to cope with the possible traumatic experience of the termination of the athletic career, to that of career transitions and athlete life skill programs aimed at providing support and education to athletes making athletic and non-athletic transitions. Finally, suggestions for future conceptual developments include the need to extend the available knowledge on the characteristics of specific transitions (e.g. non-normative transitions, in-career transitions).

Withdrawal in sport occurs for different reasons. Among university athletes are the difficulty in combining their sports practice with studies and other activities or a progressive decrease in motivation (Carlin et al., 2009). The ADECCO Foundation maintains that retirement in high-level athletes occurs mainly for two reasons, due to the decline of physical faculties or injury, among other less common ones. Retirement requires the search for a new identity, new relationships and a new social role. According to the Fundación ADECCO (2011), the retired athlete usually enters the labor market with little academic training, without experience and at a mature age, and in the Spanish case up to 30% are unemployed after retirement.

Career planning and subsequent retirement seem to be influenced by individual factors such as educational level, athletic identity or confidence in personal abilities (Kuettel et al., 2017; Marin-Urquiza et al., 2018). The study by Barriopedro et al. (2018) concludes that athletes who combine their sports career with studies or work obtain higher wage income and perceive the transition out of sport more positively than those who focused solely on sport. On the other hand, in examining the retirement experiences of elite professional ballet dancers, Willard & Lavallee (2016) emphasize the influence of self-identity and social support on the quality of retirement adjustment, as they observed that continued social support positively influenced the overall quality of career transition experienced.

There are very few studies on the work expectations of female athletes, but according to Gilmore (2008), athletes with higher athletic identity have significantly higher levels of difficulty with emotional and social adjustment, more likely to experience difficulties when they retire. Whereas those who identify less with their athletic role experience mild negative emotions and make a relatively smooth transition to their life after sport.

Female athletes also seem to have greater difficulties during the last years of their careers, including health problems, loneliness, social pressure and lack of social support (Ronkainen et al., 2016). In this line, Barriopedro et al. (2019) points out that retirement planning is associated with difficulties in studies, family support or leisure. On the other hand, in Kavoura & Ryba (2019) study with Finnish elite female judo athletes found differences across age groups in the ways in which female athletes construct their athletic, civic and gender futures as they may experience identity tensions and reduce their athletic aspirations when trying to meet their social and occupational expectations. Therefore, athletes' self-perceived social support, as well as feeling cared for and understood allows them to experience the transition in a less distressing way (Brown et al., 2018).

H1: Elite athletes with greater social support tend to have higher career aspirations and expectations for retirement.

SELF-ESTEEM AND JOB EXPECTATIONS

Most studies on self-esteem and sport have focused on analyzing the close relationship between self-esteem and sport performance (Jawaher et al., 2015; Molina et al., 2014; Slutzky & Simpkins, 2009). However, to date there have been no studies that analyze the influence of self-esteem on job expectations in elite athletes. This situation is perhaps due to the need to consider the retirement process of elite athletes from a holistic and multidimensional perspective (Wylleman, 2019).

In adolescents, self-esteem is significantly associated with the level of physical activity (Koszałka-Silska et al., 2021) and sport practice plays a central role in the emerging personal development of girls (Harter, 2012). Indeed, in female athletes the quality of friendship may predict self-esteem (Gatzke et al., 2015). However, it seems necessary to analyze whether this relationship holds in elite athletes. And if there is a relationship with career aspirations and expectations.

There does seem to be a direct relationship between self-esteem and the type of sport. The study by Šagát et al. (2021) with female athletes indicates that the levels of self-esteem are higher in the group of athletes who practice individual sports. In contrast, there seems to be no differences in the self-es-

team of retired and still active athletes; although, within the first group of retired athletes self-esteem is significantly lower in than those who retired involuntarily (Marin-Urquiza et al., 2018). Moreover, self-esteem is also correlated with female gender, early onset of physical activity and hypertensive temperament (Jawaher et al., 2015).

H2. Elite athletes with higher self-esteem tend to have higher aspirations and career expectations for their retirement.

Method

A cross-sectional observational design was used with a purposive sampling of 243 Spanish elite athletes who completed the questionnaire with a mean age of 23.89 years (min.: 15; max.: 52) in different sports modalities. Most of the athletes practiced indoor soccer (27.16%) and rowing (25.92%). They were followed by rugby (11.52%), handball (9.05%), volleyball (7.41%) and figure skating (5.76%). And to a lesser extent soccer (3.29%), rhythmic gymnastics (3.29%) and basketball (3.29%). Lastly, e-spots (1.65%) and aesthetic gymnastics (1.65%). Athletes were considered elite if they competed in the first national league or had participated in the national championship. The participants were informed of the objectives, benefits and risks of participating in this study, and informed consent was obtained from each.

PARTICIPANT

Ethical research protocols were respected with special emphasis on confidentiality and following the ethical rules described in the Declaration of Helsinki.

Instrument

An ad hoc questionnaire was designed with three parts. In the first part, 9 closed questions were included to find out the athletes' opinion about their aspirations and job expectations. Two of them were quantitative with a scale between 1 and 10 and the rest were categorical.

In the second part, perceived social support was assessed through the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support – MSPSS – (Zimet et al., 1988, 1990) adapted to Spanish by Trejos-Herrera et al. (2018). It is a 12-item Likert-type scale with 7 response alternatives that measures three factors: family members (items 3, 4, 8 and 11), friends (items 6, 7, 9 and 12) and significant others (items 1, 2, 5 and 10). The scale shows a reliability by Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.84.

The third part measures self-esteem with the Rosenberg scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Five of the items of the scale are formulated positively and the other five negatively to control for the effect of acquiescence (Martín-Albo et al., 2007). The scale shows a reliability by Cronbach's α coefficient of

0.871. For the interpretation of the results, the following classification was followed: less than 25: low self-esteem; between 26-29 medium self-esteem and > 30-40 high self-esteem.

PROCEDURE

The questionnaire was distributed to elite sportswomen through a form sent by e-mail by the respective sports federations, which allowed anonymous, voluntary, and confidential participation. The response rate was 88.3%.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis procedure began by calculating descriptive statistics (mean standard deviation). Next, the Kolmogorov Smirnov test was used to rigorously decide whether or not the available samples are from a normal distribution. Since both the Self-esteem (Sig= ,201) and MSPSS (Sig= ,405) results are > .05 it is concluded that the dependent variables are normally distributed. Subsequently, the association between the dichotomous variables and the two dependent variables was calculated using Student’s t-test and the ANOVA test for the polytomous variables and Bonferroni to determine between which groups these differences exist. A significance level of .05 was assumed for all contrasts performed. Data analysis was performed using the SPSS statistical package (version 25).

Results

TABLE I
Descriptive Of Quantitative variables. N=243

	Easy to find a job	Useful sports career	Social support	MSPSS family	MSPS friends	MSPSS people	Self-Esteem
Mean	5,45	5,42	70,02	22,37	24,22	24,17	28,87
Median	5,00	5,00	73,00	24,00	25,00	28,00	28,00
Mode	5,00	5,00	84,00	28,00	28,00	28,00	27,00
SD	2,11	2,58	12,23	5,86	4,14	6,23	5,48
Skewness	0,12	-,14	-,894	-1,19	-1,80	-2,02	-,04
Kurtosis	-,26	-,89	0,085	0,909	4,43	3,38	-,31
Min.	1,0	1,0	32,00	4,00	5,00	4,00	12,00
Max.	10,0	10,0	84,00	28,00	28,00	28,00	40,00

Legend: MSPSS = Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support; SD = Standard deviation; Min = Minimum; Max = Maximum

Female athletes do not find it easy to find a job once their sports career is over ($\bar{x}=5,45$), nor that his or her career is useful as experience in finding a job ($\bar{x}=5,42$). However, if they consider that they have social support ($\bar{x}=70,02$), especially from the group of friends and other people around them, but their self-esteem is average ($\bar{x}=28,87$).

TABLE II
Descriptive Data On The Athletes' Career Aspirations And Expectations

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
What current employment situation would you like to have once your sports career is over?	Managers, Technicians and intellectual professions	149	61,3
	Qualified service professions	22	9,1
	Support and administrative technicians	71	29,2
	Unskilled workers	1	0,4
What field of work would you like to work in?	Primary	5	2,1
	Secondary	46	18,9
	Tertiary	192	79,0
What are your career expectations once you have finished your sports career?	I will have enough savings	2	0,8
	I will start looking for a job	98	40,3
	Compatibilizing work	143	58,8
Do you think being a top athlete will help you find a job?	No	153	63,0
	Yes	90	37,0
Do you consider retiring if you are offered a non-sports related job?	No	62	25,5
	Yes	181	74,5
What job stability do you think you can have when you enter the workforce?	Indefinite full-time contract	119	49,0
	Permanent part-time contract	44	18,1

Female athletes have high career aspirations as 61.3% would like to work as managers, technicians and intellectual professions (company and public administration directors, technicians and professionals, scientists and intellectuals, etc.), 29.2% as support and administrative technicians (support technicians and professionals, administrative type employees, unskilled workers (housekeepers, cleaning staff, etc.) and 9.1% qualified service professions (agriculture, fishing, industry, mining, construction, armed forces).

These results are consistent with the field of work in which they would like to work, since 79% would like to work in the tertiary sector (services, which help to meet people's needs, but are not tangible), 18.9% in the secondary sector (professions linked to the transformation of natural resources or raw materials into products that will be used to meet consumption needs. And 2.1% in the

primary sector (agriculture, livestock, fishing, resource exploitation, forestry, and mining).

Most women athletes are combining some work activity with sports competition (58.8%), while 40.3% will start looking for a job once their sports career is over and only ,8% consider that they have enough savings and will not work.

The 63.0% believe that being a high-level athlete will not help them find a job and 74.5% would consider retiring if they were offered a non-sport related job with optimal conditions. The 74.5 % would consider retiring from competition if they were offered a job unrelated to sport with optimal conditions.

With respect to job stability, 49.0% consider that they can have permanent full-time contracts, 18.1% have permanent part-time contracts and 27.2% have temporary contracts. Only 5.8% believe they can be self-employed. 56.4% believe they can achieve, depending on their training, a medium income (income below 20,000 euros gross per year), 32.5% a medium-high annual income (income above 40,000 euros gross per year), 8.6% a low income (minimum income) and 2.5% a high income (income above 60,000 euros gross per year).

Table III
Differences Between The Means Of Social Support And Self-Esteem According to the Work Environment Where they Would Like to Work.

Desired field of work		N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	Bonferroni
Social support	Managers and intellectuals	149	70,20	4,04	,02	,98	There are no differences
	Support technicians	71	70,12	4,11			
	Qualified Prof.	23	70,30	3,66			
MSPSS family	Managers and intellectuals	149	22,23	5,52	,60	,54	There are no differences
	Support technicians	71	22,92	6,65			
	Qualified Prof.	23	21,52	5,50			
MSPS friends	Managers and intellectuals	149	23,96	4,30	,78	,45	There are no differences
	Support technicians	71	24,70	4,24			
	Qualified Prof.	23	24,39	2,34			
MSPSSOTRAS people	Managers and intellectuals	149	23,59	6,69	2,09	,12	There are no differences
	Support technicians	71	25,42	5,01			
	Qualified Prof.	23	24,13	6,21			
Self-Esteem	Managers and intellectuals	149	29,72	5,71	4,81	,01	Managers-Support technicians=.020 Managers-Qualified Prof. =.017
	Support technicians	71	27,59	4,52			
	Qualified Prof.	23	27,30	5,84			

Legend: MSPSS= Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support; Qualified Prof.= Qualified Professional

There are no differences with respect to social support depending on the field of work in which they would like to work, but there are differences with respect to self-esteem. Female athletes with higher self-esteem would like to work as company and public administration directors, technicians and professionals, scientists and intellectuals, among other high-level professions.

Table IV
Differences Between the Means of Social Support and Self-Esteem as a Function of Job Expectations.

Job expectations		N	Mean	t	sig	TE
Social support	Compatibilizing	143	69,62	-2,71	,01	-1,41
	Future work	98	71,04			
MSPSS family	Compatibilizing	143	21,60	-2,38	,02	-1,82
	Future work	98	23,42			
MSPS friends	Compatibilizing	143	23,71	-2,32	,01	-1,25
	Future work	98	24,96			
MSPSS people	Compatibilizing	143	23,48	-2,00	,04	-1,62
	Future work	98	25,11			
Self-esteem	Compatibilizing	143	29,56	2,22	,03	1,58
	Future work	98	27,97			

Legend: MSPSS= Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

We found significant differences in both social support and self-esteem according to their job expectations once their sports career is over. Female athletes who expect to have a job in the future and, therefore, are not combining work and sport, have greater social support, but lower self-esteem.

No differences have been identified with respect to whether they believe that being a high-level athlete will help you find a job.

TABLE V
Differences Between Means of Social Support and self-Esteem as a Function of Withdrawal Approach.

Withdrawal from competition for work		N	Mean	t	sig	TE
Social support	YES	181	69,77	-2,79	,01	-1,62
	NO	62	71,40			
MSPSS family	YES	181	22,01	-1,63	,10	-3,10
	NO	62	23,41			
MSPS friends	YES	181	24,02	-1,25	,21	-1,96
	NO	62	24,79			
MSPSS people	YES	181	23,96	-,89	,37	-2,63
	NO	62	24,79			
Self-esteem	YES	181	28,38	-2,40	,02	-3,50
	NO	62	30,30			

Legend: MSPSS= Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

But there are differences depending on whether they consider retiring from competition if they are offered a job unrelated to sport with optimal conditions, so that those who have greater social support and greater self-esteem do not consider retiring.

Table VI
Differences Between the Means of Social Support and self-Esteem as a Function of Desired Job Stability.

Desired job stability		N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	Bonferroni
Social Support	Indef. full time C.	119	70,32	4,07	1,50	,21	There are no differences
	Part time indefinite contracts	44	70,81	3,85			
	Temporary contracts	66	69,36	3,86			
	Self-employment	14	70,92	4,42			
MSPSS family	Indef. full time C.	119	22,46	6,20	2,09	,10	There are no differences
	Part time indefinite contracts	44	23,84	4,24			
	Temporary contracts	66	21,07	5,78			
	Self-employment	14	23,07	6,93			
MSPS friends	Indef. full time C.	119	24,64	3,63	1,13	,33	There are no differences
	Part time indefinite contracts	44	23,54	5,73			
	Temporary contracts	66	23,78	3,91			
	Self-employment	14	24,78	3,19			
MSPSS people	Indef. full time C.	119	23,83	6,88	,50	,68	There are no differences
	Part time indefinite contracts	44	24,18	5,94			
	Temporary contracts	66	24,93	4,68			
	Self-employment	14	23,50	7,86			
Self-esteem	Indef. full time C.	119	29,30	5,79	2,87	,03	Temporary contracts- Self-employment =.045
	Part time indefinite contracts	44	28,25	4,69			
	Temporary contracts	66	27,83	5,50			
	Self-employment	14	32,07	3,51			

Legend: MSPSS= Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support; Indef. full time C.= Indefinite full-time contract

There are no differences between social support and expected job stability, but there are differences in terms of self-esteem, since those who expect to be self-employed have a higher level of self-esteem than those who only expect a temporary contract.

TABLE VII
Differences Between The Means Of Social Support And Self-Esteem As A Function Of Expected Annual Income.

Expected annual revenues		N	Mean	SD	F	sig	Bonferroni
Social Support	High	21	68,61	4,90	1,97	,12	There are no differences
	Low	137	70,37	3,81			
	Medium	79	70,08	4,06			
	Medium High	6	72,66	3,66			
MSPSS family	High	21	20,52	7,12	1,17	,32	There are no differences
	Low	137	22,36	5,69			
	Medium	79	22,67	5,92			
	Medium High	6	25,00	2,68			
MSPSS friends	High	21	23,80	4,09	,42	,73	There are no differences
	Low	137	24,42	3,61			
	Medium	79	24,08	4,58			
	Medium High	6	22,83	8,77			
MSPSS people	High	21	26,76	3,60	4,39	,01	High-Me- dium=,01 Medium-Me- dium High=,02
	Low	137	24,61	5,69			
	Medium	79	22,44	7,37			
	Medium High	6	28,00	,00			
Self-Esteem	High	21	28,34	5,39	3,32	,02	Low- Medium High =,04 High-Medium High =,05
	Low	137	27,90	5,55			
	Medium	79	29,62	5,54			
	Medium High	6	34,50	2,07			

Legend: MSPSS= Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support.

There are no differences with respect to social support, unless the source was significant others such as coaches, agents, among others. Athletes who have greater social support from other people consider that they can achieve a higher annual income than those who aspire to average incomes.

And those with higher self-esteem also expect to earn high incomes above €60,000 gross per year.

Discussion And Conclusions

The professionalization of sports careers means that elite athletes devote a lot of time to training and does not allow them to focus on their training, which hinders their future employment, or else they are forced to make a great personal sacrifice (Ryan, 2015).

In relation to their employment aspirations and expectations, more than half of the female athletes are combining their sporting activity with some

work activity as they do not consider it easy to find a job once they have finished their sporting career or that it will be useful or help them as an experience to find one.

However, about half of them consider that they can get a full-time permanent contract and most of them would like to work as managers, technicians and intellectual professions focused on the tertiary sector, they consider that they can get an average income and that they have different sources of social support, especially from the group of friends and other people in their environment and their self-esteem is average.

Regardless of the career path, women tend to experience more difficulties in their integration into the labor market and there is a wage penalty for highly qualified women (Barriopedro et al., 2018).

The analysis on the labor expectations of elite female athletes and the variables that influence them is still very incipient, so the male sphere has been taken as a reference to allow comparison of the results found.

In the male sphere, athletes who play sports and training or work activities compatible achieve better labor and social insertion (Tekavc et al., 2015; Vilanova & Puig, 2014). In fact, the parallel synchronization of sport and training activity seems to protect the athlete from serious difficulties in the transition out of sport (Barriopedro et al., 2019).

Taking into account the influence of social support and self-esteem on the independent variables related to aspirations and expectations, it is observed that there are no differences with respect to social support in terms of the employment situation in which they would like to work at the end of their sports career, nor in terms of whether they believe that being a high-level athlete will help them to find work, nor in terms of the expected employment stability measured by type of contract. However, social support does seem to have an influence on job expectations, on considering early retirement during sporting activity or on expected income. Athletes with social support expect to acquire a future job and make both activities compatible, they do not consider retirement, even if they are offered an optimal job, and those who receive support from other people consider that they can achieve a higher annual income.

Therefore, as Brown et al. (2018) point out, the content of support seems to be highly context-dependent. In fact, Ronkainen et al. (2016) conclude that male athletes seem to perceive less social pressure than girls and friendship in sport is one of the main reasons for postponing retirement age.

Male athletes expressed more interest in coaching others, where females perceived themselves as incompetent and/or lacked the time and interest for it.

New social relationships and social roles provide opportunities to sup-

port other retired athletes as it allows participating athletes to experience a sense of growth that facilitates adjustment to life after sport (Brown et al., 2018).

The family context should not be forgotten as an agent of social support, since it plays an important role in the acquisition of values and expectations that shape behaviors and aspirations, including those related to their professional future (Biggart et al., 2004).

Self-esteem has been revealed as a very important variable for the management of labor expectations of elite female athletes. In fact, the higher the level of self-esteem, the higher the aspirations and job expectations, so that sportswomen with a higher level of self-esteem would like to work as managers, technicians or in intellectual professions, they do not combine their work activity with their sports activity because they expect to find work in the future, they do not plan to retire, even if they are offered an excellent job, they expect to work independently on their own account, and they expect to earn a high income.

It has been found that the fact of practicing sports affects self-esteem. People with high self-esteem tend to adopt healthier and more adaptive behaviors, while feeling more self-confident (Molina-García et al., 2009; Nemček & Peráčková, 2017). And now we have also found that self-esteem influences the expectations and aspirations of elite female athletes, although it will be necessary to replicate this study in other cultural contexts to confirm the generalizability of the results.

Therefore, we can conclude that female athletes combine their sporting activity with work, would like to have a full-time permanent contract and obtain a job in the tertiary sector to obtain an average income. And the perceived level of self-esteem affects decision making, but social support only partially.

Obviously, it is necessary to take into account the limitations of the study, since the sample is intentional, and the questionnaire was answered by sportswomen who voluntarily wished to participate in the study. It would be interesting in the future to carry out a qualitative study by means of discussion groups that would allow us to identify their training interests based on these results.

Practical Applications

Depending on the results, it would be necessary to facilitate or promote training activities compatible with the sports career, especially in the female group Pallarés et al. (2011), propose three sports career models: linear career

where the athlete is dedicated exclusively to sport, convergent career where the athlete prioritizes sport, but maintains a second training or work activity, and parallel career where the athlete combines both activities.

In general, athletes who combine sport and study tend to obtain good grades, although they tend to take longer to finish their studies (de Subijana Hernández et al., 2014; de Subijana Hernández et al., 2015).

The findings of this study suggest that future career opportunities and transition to the labor market could be facilitated by combining higher education and elite sport (Dual Career).

Therefore, it would be important to establish mechanisms and regulations that facilitate a flexible study plan adapted to their needs and sporting peculiarities.

In the comparative study between Polish and Swiss athletes Kuettel et al. (2017) propose to avoid generalizations about resources and barriers influencing the transition, and to apply a culturally sensitive approach to analyze sport retirement in different contexts.

Female retirement programs already exist in different countries such as Scotland, England, or Belgium, but resources need to be increased (Gilmore, 2008; Wylleman, Reints, and De Knop, 2013).

Also, to facilitate the transition to retirement, there are programs such as the IOC Athlete Career Programme (aimed at Olympic athletes) and the IPC Athlete Career Programme (aimed at Paralympic athletes) that aim to maximize their training, helping them to discover their potential and plan their life beyond the world of sport and to walk confidently towards a dual or post-sport career through a combination of counseling and training.

Training programs are also being developed that seek to integrate elite athletes into the labor market (Reyes-Hernández et al., 2021).

But employment training should help athletes to identify their interests and skills beyond sport, as well as specific coping strategies adopted to counteract adaptation difficulties during career transition.

In addition, a line of research should be opened to identify ways to help student-athletes maintain their educational commitment so that they can achieve their aspirations and expectations.

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