

TRANSITION PROCESS TOWARDS SPORTS RETREAT:A SYSTEMATIC REVISION USING THE TOOL PRISMA

PROCESOS DE TRANSICIÓN HACIA EL RETIRO DEPORTIVO: UNA REVISIÓN SISTEMÁTICA USANDO LA HERRAMIENTA PRISMA

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of sport retirement is a relatively new topic in the field of sport sciences, therefore current ideas about the process towards sport retirement, as the last stage in their professional careers and competitive longevity in high performance athletes are addressed. The objective of this systematic review is to identify research on the way in which the process of transition to sports retirement and detraining is assumed in athletes. For this purpose, a search was carried out in the following databases. Scopus, Ebsco and Sciencedirect during the month of August 2022. The query was performed by combining the terms: Detraining, Retirement and Sport using the inclusion criteria. Review articles, published in the last ten years, in English or Spanish and with access to the full text. During the search 16,642 articles were found. After applying the different filters taking into account the title and the objectives of the research, 165 of them were taken into account, to which the items included in the check list of the PRISMA tool were applied again, resulting in 17 articles to be included in this research. Of these, two are systematic reviews, one of them with PRISMA methodology, in addition to four quantitative and eleven qualitative.

KEY WORDS: sport, retirement, detraining, Olympic Games, Paralympic Games.

RESUMEN

El fenómeno del retiro deportivo es una temática relativamente nueva en el campo de las ciencias del deporte, por ello se abordan ideas actuales acerca del proceso hacia el retiro deportivo, como la última etapa dentro de sus carreras profesionales y longevidad competitiva en deportistas de alto rendimiento. El objetivo de esta revisión sistemática es identificar las investigaciones que hablan sobre la manera como se asume el proceso de transición hacia el retiro deportivo y desentrenamiento en los deportistas. Para ello se realizó una búsqueda en las bases de datos. Scopus, Ebsco y Sciencedirect durante el mes de agosto del año 2022. La consulta se realizó combinando los términos: Detraining, Retirement y Sport utilizando los criterios de inclusión. Artículos de revisión, publicados en los últimos diez años, en idiomas inglés o español y que se tuviera acceso al texto completo. Durante la búsqueda se encontraron 16.642 artículos. Luego de aplicar los diferentes filtros teniendo en cuenta el título y los objetivos de la investigación se tuvieron en cuenta 165 de ellos, a los cuales se les aplicaron de nuevo los ítems incluidos en el check list de la herramienta PRISMA teniendo como resultado 17 artículos para ser contemplados en esta investigación. De estos, dos son de revisión sistemática, 1 de ellos con metodología PRISMA, además cuatro cuantitativas y once de carácter cualitativo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: deporte, retiro, desentrenamiento, Juegos Olímpicos, Juegos Paralímpicos.

INTRODUCTION

Sport can be developed at different levels of competition, it must be specified in which of them are the athletes, in this case the high performance that refers to the optimization of physical and technical resources of athletes. According to Law 181 of 1995 in Title IV, Chapter 1, defines high performance as the practice of sports of superior organization and level (1), it includes integral processes oriented towards the improvement of the qualities and physical-technical conditions of athletes, through the use of technological and scientific advances.

On the other hand, elite or high performance athletes participate in the highest competition of the Olympic cycle, including the Olympic Games, which for Fernandez (2) "The Olympic Games are the most important and complete international competition in the world, the most important global event of today" and the Paralympic Games, which for Solves, quoted in Rivarola (3) "Are the great world showcase in which athletes with disabilities in general show every four years the greatness of the human being, the possibilities that people have to develop our capabilities to the maximum".

The process of transition to sports retirement is a topic that, in recent years, has been talked about in the different spaces provided by the Ministry of Sport, but only as a discourse and not so much in practical facts, where psychological, educational and labor support is generated before and after retirement, which is ultimately what athletes demand when they are close to it. According to Lavallee (6) "pre-retirement intervention programs offer professional and educational support to professionals during their sports career to help them plan their inevitable transition out of sport".

Due to the different situations, problems and others to which athletes are exposed at the time of starting the process towards sports retirement; this is closely linked to the development of high performance sport as such, for that reason it is an aspect that should begin to work from ages close to this, with processes or detraining programs and therefore give an appropriate approach, allowing acceptance towards the culmination of sporting life, minimizing the impact it generates in personal, social, family, professional life, in the

psychological part and in the health of the athlete. The different variables or situations such as: "Voluntariness of the decision to retire, injuries/health problems, professional/personal development, achievements in the sports career, educational situation, financial situation, self-perception among others" (4), which are associated with the transition, are the starting point for knowing how to intervene or help the athlete in the psychological, sporting (detraining), educational or financial aspects.

During the preparation for the different competitions, athletes present several biological changes to maintain an excellent sports level, which indicates that at the end of their processes it is pertinent to carry out a timely detraining process. This is understood "as the stage that begins after the retirement as an active athlete, which consists of the medical-pedagogical process through which the organism will eliminate all the overload that has been acquired during his life as a high performance elite athlete" (5). Regarding the sports retirement of athletes with disabilities, in recent years the sports sector in general and especially psychologists have been interested in what happens to athletes with disabilities when they retire from high performance sport, so in 2018 a study is conducted where it is indicated that the transition experiences for these athletes are particularly difficult, due to declassification, uncertainty about employment and educational opportunities after sport (7).

The detraining process in athletes shows that a good process and commitment at the time of planning prior to retirement, is positively related to the permanence in the sport and career, either as an athlete or assuming a different role, but framed and related to the sport for which he/she retired or another (6). Therefore, it is appropriate to say that having good results in these programs has a significant effect on sports performance, better quality of life personally, socially and professionally after high performance sport.

In line with all that is being exposed, several authors (8, 9,10) indicate that family members, coaches, leagues or sports entities and people who manage to have strong ties with athletes should support and encourage the retirement process and participation in the planning of detraining from an early

age, to avoid counterproductive effects that may affect the emotional or physical part directly of the athlete or athlete as a being that is part of a society.

According to the above, the objective of this systematic review is to identify the researches that talk about the way in which the process of transition to sports retirement and detraining is assumed in athletes.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In the following systematic review, the PRISMA tool for systematic reviews was applied to ensure that the articles included met the desired information criteria, using a checklist of 27 fields to simplify the preparation and presentation of the report.

Search strategies used: in August 2022, three databases were consulted: Ebsco, Scopus and ScienceDirect, in the languages of English or Spanish; for this the terms were used in Spanish language: desentrenamiento, retiro y deporte, and in English: detraining, retirement and sport, extracting only information from articles published between 2012 to 2022. However, despite these filters, it was necessary to exclude articles that did not apply because they contained information that was not related to what was being investigated, such as, for example, politics, economics and engineering.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria: research reports and review articles, published in the last ten years, in English or Spanish and to which the full text could be accessed, were included. Letters from the editor, theses, opinion articles and commentaries were excluded.

To determine whether an article applied, we first reviewed the titles, objectives, abstracts and key words of all the established articles, and if the eligibility of the article was not clear, we proceeded to examine the full text.

For the extraction of data we used an excel table in drive where we applied the PRISMA tool and then with the chosen ones we made another one where we included: authors, objective, methodology, instruments, duration of the

research, total number of articles/persons, sport, duration of the detraining period and results.

Figure 1 describes the process.

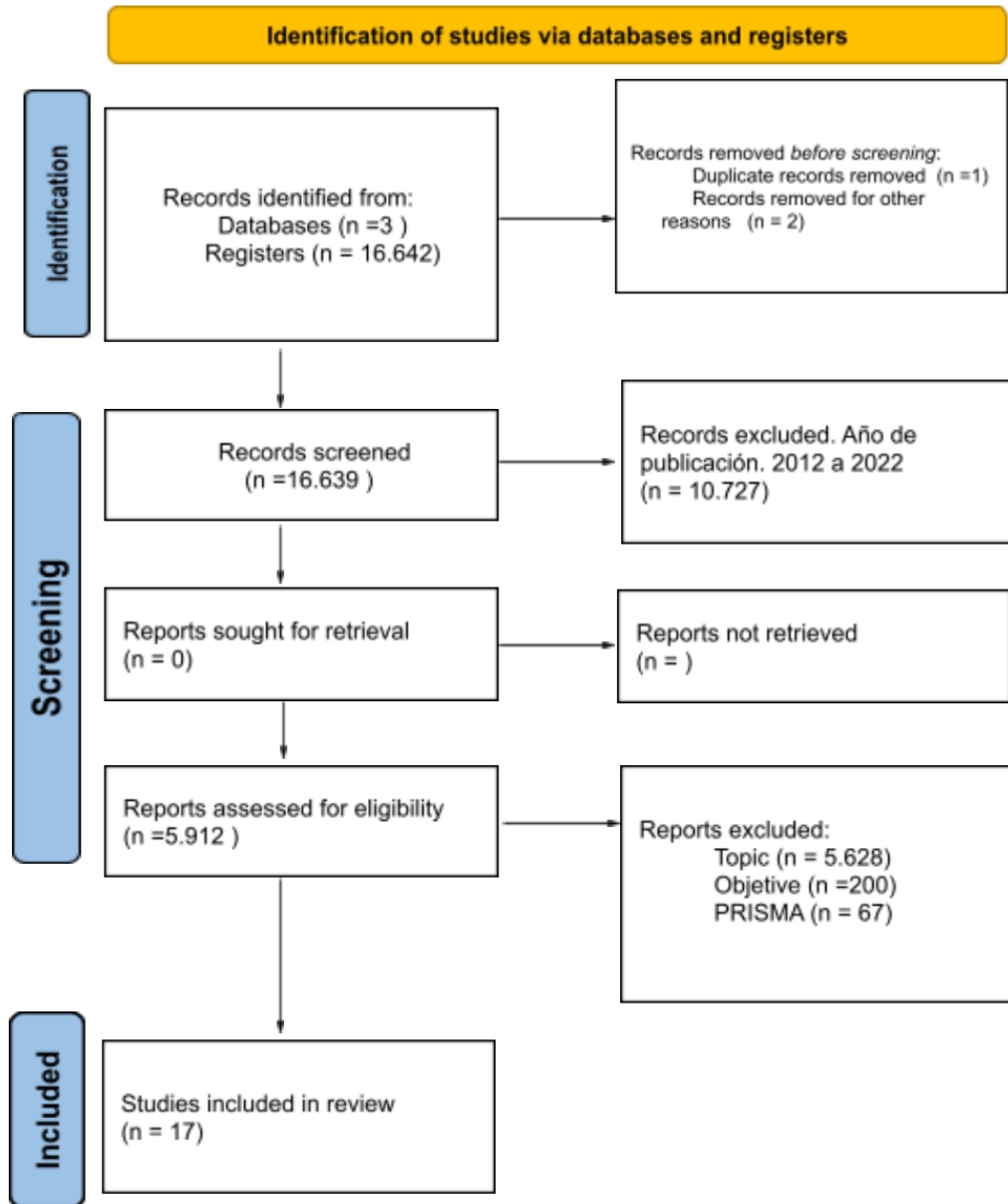


Figure 1. Sequence of article selection according to PRISMA.(23).

RESULTS

The statistical program IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27 was used for data analysis. The results of the sociodemographic data of the 18 participants show

that the sports in which they participated in Olympic and Paralympic events were Boxing (22.2%), cycling (16.7%), Olympic wrestling (16.7%), artistic gymnastics (11.1%) and 5.6% of the interviewees participated in sports such as swimming, diving, judo, artistic swimming, road cycling, athletics and Paralympic marathon as shown in Figure 2.

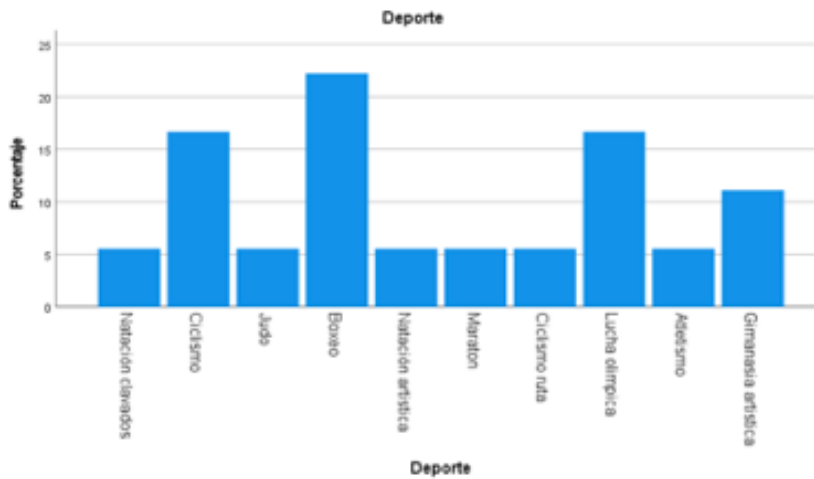


Figure 2. Distribution by sport

Figure 3 shows the statistics on age, starting age, time in sports and age of retirement, showing that the average age is 44.5 years at present and the average age of retirement was 33.9 years; the youngest athlete who retired was 26 years old and the one who retired at the latest age was 48 years old. This information also shows that 16.7% started their sports practice at the age of eight; 22.2% had a minimum permanence in their sport of 18 years; the athlete who had been in their sport the longest practiced it for 30 years. Similarly, in relation to the age of retirement, it was identified that those who retired at a younger age were 26 years old, 16.7% of the athletes retired at the age of 35 years old and those who retired at an older age were 48 years old. In addition, most of the former athletes who participated in the study (66.7%) participated once in an Olympic event and one athlete (5.6%) participated in 4 Olympic events. The reasons for retirement identified were completion of a cycle 44.4%, injury 22.2%, economic 11.1% and other reasons 22.2%.

Estadísticos

		Edad	Edad_Inicio	Tiempo_Pract ica	Edad_Retiro	Evento_Olimp ico
N	Válido	18	18	18	18	18
	Perdidos	0	0	0	0	0
Media		44,50	11,83	22,11	33,89	1,67
Mediana		39,50	11,50	22,00	35,00	1,00
Moda		38	8	18	35 ^a	1
Desv. Desviación		13,422	3,382	3,660	5,144	1,029
Varianza		180,147	11,441	13,399	26,458	1,059
Mínimo		28	6	18	26	1
Máximo		82	17	30	48	4

a. Existen múltiples modos. Se muestra el valor más pequeño.

Figure 3. Statistics on current age, starting age, time of practice and retirement age.

With regard to social and personal aspects of the retired athletes, it was found that 50% of them are married, 33.3% are single, 11.1% are cohabitating and 5.6% are divorced. A total of 55.6% have two or more children, while 22.2% have no children.

Most of the retired athletes reside in Medellín (55.6%), and 16.7% are living in the United States. In terms of education, as shown in Figure 4, 44.4% of the retired athletes have only a high school education and in some cases incomplete; however, it is also observed that 27.8% have completed postgraduate studies.

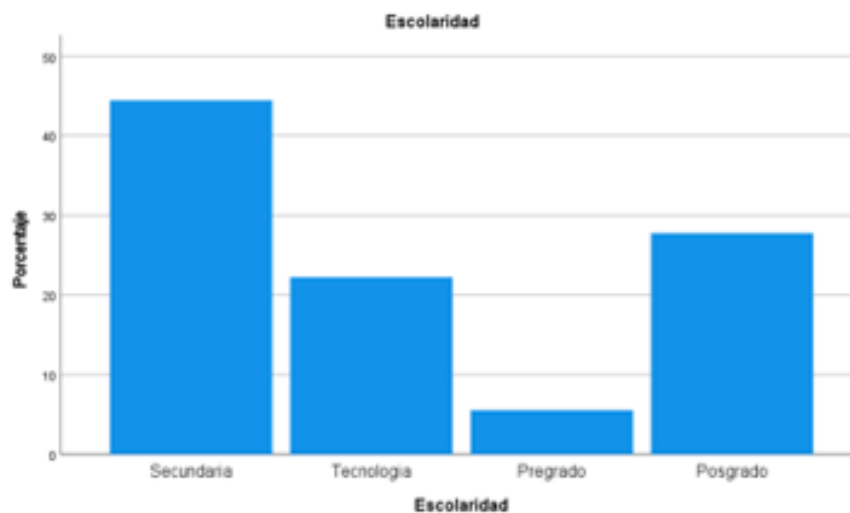


Figure 4. Schooling of retired athletes

In terms of employment, 61.1% have a formal contract or permanent job, 27.8% work as freelancers and 11.1% do not work. It also stands out in this aspect that the work performed is related to the sports they practice in most cases, being coaches or holding administrative positions related to sports (16.7%).

Now, at a quantitative level, the results of the GHQ-28 questionnaire, which evaluates the mental health of the athlete at present, were also examined; the results showed that mental health is at an adequate level without the presence of significant alterations (score below 2 points) as shown in Table 1, with the mean 1.33 on the anxiety-insomnia scale having the highest score and depression having the lowest score.

Table 1. Measurement of data dispersion. Made by the authors

	Mean	Standard deviation	N
Somatic symptoms	1,00	1,283	
Anxiety - insomnia	1,33	1,782	
Social dysfunction	0,61	1,092	
Depression	0,06	0,236	

As can be seen, the test has 4 subscales: somatic symptoms, anxiety-insomnia, social dysfunction and severe depression, each of them was analyzed independently identifying the answers given in each of the items so that recurrences could be established in some answers in isolation, however, only in the anxiety-insomnia subscale was variety identified in the answers, in all the others the answers were concentrated in options 0 and 1. Likewise, a correlation was made between the responses in each subscale as shown in Table 2, finding that the only scales that are related are somatic symptoms and anxiety-insomnia; however, it should be kept in mind that all scales obtained very low scores, so a significant relationship between the items would not be found.

Table 2. Correlations. Performed by the authors

		somatic symptoms	anxiety-insomnia	social dysfunction	major depression
somatic symptoms	Pearson correlation N	--			
anxiety-insomnia	Pearson correlation Sig. (bilateral) N	,617** 0,006	--		
social dysfunction	Pearson correlation Sig. (bilateral) N	0,336 0,173	0,040 0,874	--	
major depression	Pearson correlation Sig. (bilateral) N	0,000 1,000	-0,047 0,854	-0,140 0,581	--
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral)					

As mentioned, at the methodological level, the research analyzed qualitative data with the objective of having greater access to and understanding of the information, especially because the retirement process and its possible consequences were experienced at the moment in which it occurred, so the former athlete had to resort to subjectivity. That is why the interview was the appropriate method to access the desired information. These interviews were analyzed in the software Atlas. Ti software and gather 4 dimensions that cover the general aspects of the experience that these athletes had in the process of transition to retirement.

For the respective analysis, each dimension was subdivided into specific categories which were nourished with quotes extracted from each of the interviews which were recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

Table 3 shows the dimensions and categories used for the organization and analysis of the information in the software.

Table 3. Qualitative categorization. Made by the authors

Dimensions	Categories
Sports retreat	Reason for withdrawal 2. Retirement Plan Type of withdrawal
Mental Health	1. Positive emotions in retirement 2. Negative emotions in retirement
Attention/ support Psychology	1. Psychological help
Support networks	Occupation after retirement. 2. Retirement decision support

The first analysis consisted of a word cloud from the information collected in the 18 interviews, summarizing the frequency of the words used by the interviewees. For this, a filter was used that eliminates all conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns and individual letters, generating word clouds that provide a graphic interpretation of the frequency of the words in the transcripts; from there 4 word clouds are generated: one referring to sports retirement, the second directed to mental health, the third to psychological accompaniment and the last to the support networks perceived by the retired athletes.

The first word cloud (Figure 4), which refers to the sport retirement dimension, shows the reasons for retirement and the type of retirement of the interviewees, noting that the most prevalent reason is pressure, and also identifies that, according to this word cloud, the retirement was a decision of the athlete, which was planned or at least processed by the athlete at the time of being executed.



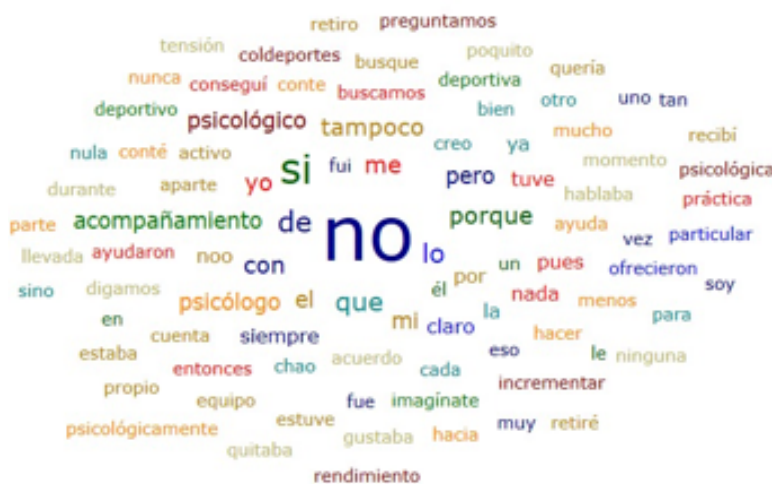
Figure 4. Word cloud. Made by the authors in Atlas.ti

Figure 5 shows the word cloud corresponding to the mental health of the athletes at the time of retirement, showing positive and negative emotions and feelings, highlighting sadness as the most common emotion; anxiety, stress, depression and anger are also identified as negative emotions and tranquility as a recurrent positive emotion.



Figure 5. Word cloud. Made by the authors in Atlas.ti

With regard to psychological care and support, the word cloud (Figure 6) shows that very few of those interviewed received psychological support at the time of retirement, with the preponderance of no answers.



been done". *"I think that one thinks at the time is, when one begins to lose competitively, one begins to think that other generations are coming"*, D5 mentions the time in the sport *"already the years, long time losing weight, this far from the family"* *"I already wanted to be chubbier"*, just like D7: *"my progress was not going to be more and because the time was getting too difficult for what I wanted to be"*, D8 makes it clear that it was external factors that led him to withdraw *"Seeing that my achievements were not recognized"*, while D4 mentions elements of pressure *"I could not stand it, I could not stand it, I could not stand it, I thought it was unfair and I decided to take the pressure off"*. *"The blows are not vitamins or candies that are thrown at you"* and finally D17 on this dimension emphasizes that she did not prepare for this moment: *"It was never planned"*.

Mental health:

In this dimension, as mentioned in the word cloud, the retired athletes report positive and negative emotions or sensations, highlighting that those conceived as negative are the ones that occurred most frequently at the time of retirement. Feelings of frustration, hopelessness, frustration, devaluation, demotivation and emotions such as anxiety, stress, sadness and anger stand out. All of these are mostly the result of having an uncertain future that they never contemplated or planned for and that is associated, for the most part, with time and economic management, since both were conditioned by their sporting activity.

Positive emotions are described by athletes who were able to plan their future and who visualize self-improvement as part of their way of being.

In the negative emotions can be identified in fragments of the interviews, D1 mentioned: *"Crying with anger and sadness"*. *"if they had given me a revolver I would shoot myself"*, D3: for his part said *"No I think emotions, no, it is a feeling of sadness for me"*, D5 mentions: *"Nostalgia, you no longer have the same abilities"*, D6: *"I felt depression. Thinking about the future of my family and myself"*, D7: *"A lot of fear, how to lose my shape"*, D8: *"A lot of sadness, a lot of stress, boredom, I was disappointed, I didn't sleep and I started to think about*

things", D11: *"Quite sad, it was very hard for me. Going crazy. I fell into eating, drinking and I didn't want to go out and I was locked up"* and D12: *"I felt like a mushroom in the world, I no longer fit in anything, I went back to my parents and I didn't want to, I have always had a good relationship but I felt I was going backwards, I didn't have any money, I had savings but they wouldn't last and I don't know how to do anything... I was no good for anything else... I locked myself up for a week, I didn't want to eat, I didn't want to go out or see anyone"*.

In relation to positive emotions, D2 said: *"No emotions, decision"* referring to the security with which he retired from the sport, while D14 expressed: *"Happiness, here I do not get what I want, what makes me happy, I felt good"* and D18 felt: *"Tranquility, I closed that chapter very well"*, so it can be seen that it will also depend on the person and the reasons for his retirement.

Psychological care/accompaniment

The answers given in this dimension show that very few retired athletes received psychological support at the time of their transition, for various reasons, some because at the time of their retirement this did not exist, others because the sports entities did not provide it and others because they did not see it as necessary. Those who did receive it did so from the national sports entity and others on their own. It is also noted that most of them express that in the high performance or competitive process they did have psychological support as part of the support received from the different institutions.

Those who received psychological support expressed: *"Yes, we had support from Coldeportes, the psychologist makes many changes"* (D1), D15: *"My mental health was good, good, I had psychological support"* and D16: *"Yes, a psychologist from Coldeportes, every time I talked to him he took a little bit of stress away"*.

There were those who sought external support such as D8: *"I got another individual"* and D17: *"Yes, but on my own"*. Others who did not find support from the entities: *"In recent years very little, because in my time, there was no sports*

psychology" (D3), D11: *"No, never, at that time they did not give you anything"* and D13: *"Psychological help was null, I am my own psychologist"*.

And those who expressed that they did not require psychological support or accompaniment: *"I did not receive psychological accompaniment, because I was always psychologically well"* (D2) and D14: *"No, I was always very driven by what I wanted to do"* (D2) and D14: *"No, I was always very driven by what I wanted to do"* (D3).

Support networks

Family, partners and friends play a key role as a support network for athletes, especially in the transition and retirement from sports, as they are the ones who ensure the economic and emotional well-being of the athlete. This is evidenced in the answers given by the retired athletes, most of whom responded that the support they had received when making the decision was mainly from their primary network: their family, rather than from coaches and representatives of the sports entities, who sometimes did not support the decision.

It should be noted that many of the athletes are still in contact with their coaches and teammates for work reasons, but did not receive support from them at the time of retirement. It should also be noted that the affiliation with the sport, in most cases, has not been definitively severed because some continue to be linked to their sport of origin in a different role: in this case as coaches, judges, administrators, or they practice it recreationally.

Some interview responses that reflect the support networks are those given by D5, who states that the main support received has been *"My family, my wife's"*, D6 says that he received *"Only emotional support, from family and friends"*. D1: *"My mom and dad, listening to me and structuring the life process, what are you going to do now, this alternative or take this one and so on, a bad relationship with parents makes you go crazy"* and D3 *"With my coach, we greet each other from time to time, sometimes I ask him for help in training issues for the children"*.

In relation to the current link with the sport, D4 mentions: *"I did it as a coach and now I am match maker"*, D2: *"If I continue, for example accompanied the paisa pride in the competitions that perform as laps to Colombia"*, D10 currently works *"With the Colombian Olympic Committee"*, D6: *"I continued practicing cycling for health and because I liked it and as a coach"*, D1 *"I am , coach of the Inder of Medellin"*, D3: *"Linked in the administrative part, as president of the league, president of clubs, organization of sporting events"* and D13 is *"National and international referee"*.

DISCUSSION

The ascent to high performance in sports occurs due to multiple factors among which are the physical abilities, technique and tactics of the specific sport, psychological elements such as motivation, stress and anxiety and others outside the athletes such as sports entities, judges and rivals (1), these statements are shared by the Antioquian athletes interviewed who emphasize that these elements are also determinants at the time of retirement from their sport.

Sport retirement, in accordance with what has been identified in the theory and in the research consulted, is evidenced in two ways: both voluntary and involuntary (3), however, in the present research, according to what was reported by the retired athletes, the most frequent reason was voluntary due to the decrease of the physical capacities for the sport in which they participate; this facilitated in some cases the elaboration of the emotions of the sports retirement process, assimilating the process and allowing the athlete, despite the negative emotions that were generated, to resignify the process and assume it in a positive way in a short time.

This is the opposite case to those who had to retire due to external factors or external people, thus constituting an involuntary or non-normative retirement (3) in this case, in the interviews, the retired athletes expressed greater frustration, emotions related to stress and depression and greater intensity when faced with them, This is directly related to what is expressed by (11,5,25) who state that the retired athlete will go through a grieving process in which he/she

will have to make use of all the available resources for its elaboration; In this case, the athletes used their support networks, and work and academic strategies and other sources to recover elements related to mental health, which has allowed them to preserve their mental health at present.

The recognition of the reasons for retirement of athletes allows sports science professionals to generate support programs in which the prevention of negative physical and psychological repercussions, the promotion of healthy habits and the generation of possible alternatives for the use of free time and economic management are required taking into account the concerns that afflict athletes when thinking about sports retirement, taking into account that this is an inevitable stage in the sports career.

Similarly, recognizing that sports retirement requires a detraining process because for years the athlete was exposed to high loads that made his body adapt morphologically and functionally to them and the lack of them will generate again a morphofunctional change and the need to adapt to new conditions (11), the generation of structured, systematic programs is required. In the present research, none of the athletes had participated in a detraining process despite the fact that most of their lives they had practiced sport and the morphofunctional adaptation to sport is significant; even some retired athletes expressed having health problems after having retired. According to Reyes et al (26) there are many authors who have talked about detraining but their contributions lack comprehensiveness and have limitations in their conception, taking into account that they do not conceive methodological elements, specificities of sports training or the programs lack a basic theoretical foundation; Likewise, these proposals lack formative elements that imply that the athlete (or athlete in transit) can adhere to and go beyond the sporting or biological aspects, applying the process to his or her extra-sporting life (27) mention that the detraining process is a "pedagogical process" that should not imply the definitive abandonment of physical activity or physical exercise; therefore, post-retirement activities should be planned in such a way that they do not imply the definitive abandonment of physical activity or physical exercise. The post-retirement activities should be planned in such a way that the integral wellbeing of the retired athlete is

considered and in which the sport or physical activity continues to be conceived as an important part of the life of each retired athlete, This can be an impediment for those who, due to the reason for retirement and the emotions generated, decide to distance themselves definitively from everything related to sport.

Another important element that was identified in the research is that the mental health of athletes depends largely on the strategies that they manage to establish in post-retirement life, in this way the family, the link to sport from different alternatives (beyond competitive practice), having an alternative life project and having stable social relationships allows to cope and even more easily elaborate the negative emotions that may appear after the sports retirement no matter what had been the reason for it. In this regard, García Ucha (5) is emphatic in mentioning the importance of accompanying the athlete in the retirement process and a plan that includes psychological and family support that favors adaptation to new conditions.

Hence, a transition program towards sports retirement that contemplates physical detraining, but also the life project including habits, new economic alternatives and emotional management is necessary for athletes, in this case who have practiced a sport discipline most of their lives. Likewise, there is a need to adapt assistance programs towards retirement (28) that start when the athletes reach their sports goal (this may be Olympic or not) or an accumulated 20 years of sports practice; in addition to this (29) rational emotive behavioral therapy is proposed for former athletes who still practice their sport; which shows a change (7%) in beliefs and some myths about their performance.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE PATHS

Not having a database of Colombian and/or Antioquian athletes was the greatest limitation of the research, which meant that a lot of time was invested in its elaboration; after having it, another limitation was contacting retired athletes, making it difficult to obtain data and information.

Therefore, after obtaining contact information and considering the time available for the development of research, it is proposed as a future line to investigate the mental health and detraining processes in Colombian athletes who participated in these events and who are retired, making comparisons between sports and the processes of accompaniment by department.

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