Sport for all: a systematic review using the PRISMA tool

Deporte para todos: una revisión sistemática utilizando la herramienta PRISMA

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Responsibilities. (A Study design; B Data collection; C Manuscript drafting; D Statistical analysis; E Financial support; F Original idea and overall research coordination)

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ABSTRACT

The concept of inclusion in sports transcends mere integration, aiming to value human diversity and embrace differences to create genuine opportunities for everyone. To analyze this, a systematic review guided by the PRISMA statement was conducted, incorporating 31 articles published in English or Spanish between 2024 and 2025, sourced from databases like Scopus, ScienceDirect, and EBSCO. The results indicated that most studies were qualitative, focusing primarily on gender/sex inclusion (15 articles), followed by disability (6) and social inclusion (5), with a prevalence of general sports articles and football-specific content. The conclusions reveal that genuine inclusion in sports faces significant structural barriers, including racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, negative attitudes, lack of resources, and inaccessibility. These issues perpetuate inequalities for groups such as women, racialized individuals, migrants (especially vulnerable ones), and people with disabilities. The review highlights the necessity of moving beyond physical or symbolic access, advocating for a true sense of belonging and transforming sports structures through proactive strategies and inclusive policies, as research in many areas remains limited and superficial.

KEY WORDS: sport, inclusion, athletes, integration

RESUMEN

La inclusión en el deporte es un concepto fundamental que va más allá de la simple integración, buscando valorar la diversidad humana y aceptar las diferencias para generar oportunidades genuinas. Para analizar esto, se realizó una revisión sistemática siguiendo la guía PRISMA, que incluyó 31 artículos publicados en inglés o español entre 2024 y 2025, obtenidos de bases de datos como Scopus, ScienceDirect y EBSCO. Los resultados mostraron que la mayoría

de los estudios eran cualitativos y se enfocaban en la inclusión de género/sexo (15 artículos), seguido por discapacidad (6) e inclusión social (5), con una predominancia de artículos sobre deporte en general y fútbol. Las conclusiones revelan que la inclusión en el deporte enfrenta barreras estructurales (racismo, sexismo, homofobia, transfobia, actitudes negativas, falta de recursos y accesibilidad) que perpetúan desigualdades para grupos como mujeres, personas racializadas, migrantes (especialmente los vulnerables) y personas con discapacidad. Se destaca la necesidad de ir más allá del acceso físico o simbólico, promoviendo un verdadero sentido de pertenencia y transformando las estructuras deportivas mediante estrategias proactivas y políticas inclusivas, ya que la investigación aún es limitada y superficial en muchas áreas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: deporte, inclusión, deportistas, integración

INTRODUCTION

The word "include," which comes from the Latin "includere," means to encompass, contain, involve, or insert something or someone among other things or people. It is important to note that being included does not imply being identical or similar to others. When we speak of an inclusive society, we refer to one that values human diversity and fosters acceptance of individual differences. In such an environment, we learn to coexist, contribute, and build together a world with genuine opportunities for everyone, even if these opportunities are not always the same. This means that in an inclusive society, each person takes responsibility for the well-being of others, even if those others are very different from oneself (1).

The concept of "inclusion" is gaining ground in the public, scientific, and political spheres, gradually replacing terms such as "integration" or "insertion." This shift is no coincidence; inclusion has been established as a key objective in international documents such as the Salamanca Declaration and the UN's equal opportunity standards, the European Union's Luxembourg Charter, and has been incorporated as a crucial indicator in the Lisbon Agenda for evaluating public policies.

On the other hand, the word "sport" has its etymological roots in Latin. Consulting the dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE), we see that it is defined as "recreation, pastime, pleasure, amusement, or physical exercise, generally outdoors." If we delve deeper into its root, we arrive at the third meaning of the verb "deportar," which in the past meant "to have fun, to enjoy oneself." Upon further investigation in a Latin dictionary, we find that "deportare" (from the verb "Deporto, are, avi, atum") was also associated with 'pleasure' and "entertainment" in the legal sphere (García, 1994).

The evolution of sport has made it essential to distinguish its various manifestations to avoid confusion. Fundamentally, there are three main ways of understanding and practicing sport.

Educational sport refers to its use in schools as a tool of physical education, contributing to the student's holistic development. Sport for all encompasses physical and sporting activities aimed primarily at adults, promoting values of health, socialization, and leisure. Finally, competitive sport is subdivided according to the level of practice, including, for example, "high-level competition."

Although all three categories involve physical and athletic activities, their differences far outweigh their similarities. For example, high-performance sport, at its most demanding level, contradicts the purpose of educational sport by prioritizing performance over personal development, even going so far as to push the individual's psychophysical and biological limits.

While this general description of the reality of sport is widely accepted by most authors and professionals in the field, who agree on its current state, controversy arises when attempting to define its origin (2).

Given that society is inherently diverse, there are multiple ways of practicing sport that go beyond simple entertainment. Since the 17th century, thinkers and scientists such as Rousseau and Cagigal have argued that sport has the capacity to fulfill many other functions, including that of fostering social inclusion.

This perspective is not new; it has been part of institutional discourse for decades. The European Charter of Sport for All already argued that sport, as a driver of human development, should be supported with public funds so that all citizens, regardless of age, gender, or profession, could participate in it throughout their lives.

This idea has gradually gained traction, finding clearer expression in documents such as the White Paper on Sport. It highlights that sport contributes significantly to economic and social cohesion, fostering more integrated societies. It maintains that everyone should have access to sport, addressing the specific needs of minority groups, young people, people with disabilities, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition to this, sport can facilitate the integration of immigrants and people of foreign origin and support intercultural dialogue. Thus, sport is recognized as a tool for social inclusion whose potential should be better harnessed in policies and programs; it can even contribute to job creation, economic growth, and the revitalization of disadvantaged areas, with non-profit sports activities that promote cohesion and the inclusion of vulnerable groups being considered social services of general interest.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A systematic review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA statement for systematic reviews and meta-analyses. This was done to ensure that the selected articles met the inclusion criteria, using the 27 items proposed by PRISMA for the proper preparation and presentation of the report.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria: The search was limited to articles in English or Spanish that had published the full text and included the study's keywords between 2024 and 2025. Theses, opinion pieces, letters to the editor, guidelines, and commentaries were excluded.

Search strategy: A search was conducted in the electronic databases ScienceDirect, Scopus, and EBSCO on May 22, 2025, using the MeSH terms "Inclusion and sport" along with the DeCS terms "inclusion and sport." Articles available in these databases, published in 2024 and 2025, that were related to the field of sports were collected, excluding those focused on physical therapy or the use of sports as a treatment for preexisting conditions. Subsequently, a second filter was applied to exclude studies addressing topics not relevant to the research.

To determine the eligibility of the articles, the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the identified studies were initially reviewed. In cases where the abstract did not provide sufficient information to assess its relevance, the full text of the article was reviewed. Finally, after selecting the relevant articles, the PRISMA 2020 checklist was applied.

Data extraction strategy: An Excel spreadsheet was used to record the following elements: title, authors, year of publication, objective, methodological design, sport, inclusion criteria, participants, and results.
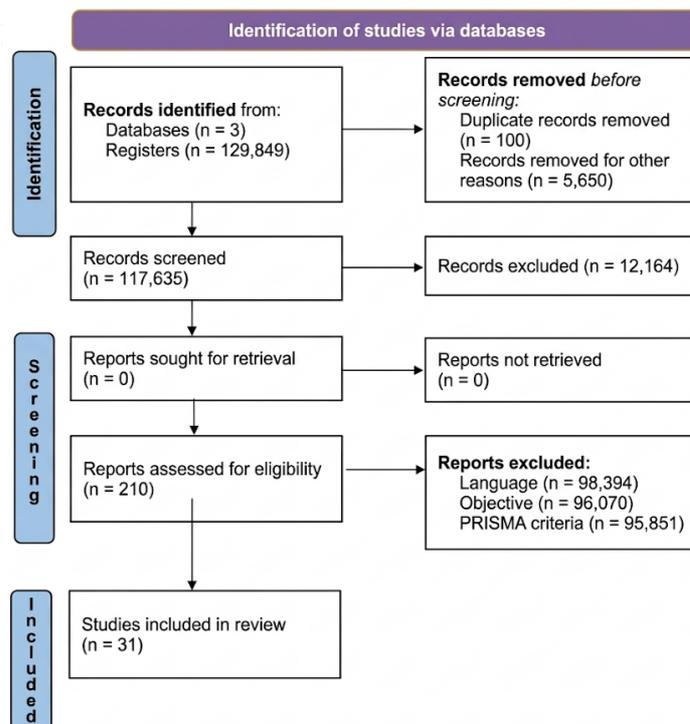
From: Page MJ, McKenzie JE, Bossuyt PM, Boutron I, Hoffmann TC, Mulrow CD, et al. The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. BMJ 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71.

RESULTS

A total of 31 articles were identified after applying all search terms and inclusion criteria: 18 in Scopus, 6 in ScienceDirect, and 7 in EBSCO. Based on the methodological design of the studies, 15 were qualitative, 10 were quantitative, and 6 were systematic reviews. Regarding types of inclusion, we have 15 on gender and/or sex inclusion, 6 on inclusion of people with disabilities, 5 on social inclusion, 1 on inclusion of migrant populations, 1 on ethnic inclusion, 1 on racial inclusion, 1 on racial and gender inclusion, 1 on age inclusion, and 1 that addresses all types of inclusion. Regarding sports, 22 articles discuss sports in general, 7 focus on soccer, there is 1 article for each of the conventional sports of martial arts, auto racing, cycling, and rugby, and 1 each for goalball and track and field.

The table below describes each of the articles found.

Table 1. Articles identified in the review.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Mashigo, P., van Sterkenburg, J., De la Hera, T., & Ferreira Goncalves, J. F. (2025). (3)		Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews	Soccer	Racial inclusion	Exploring the meanings that European soccer leaders ascribe to race and racism in the context of soccer governance. Racism in soccer persists because it is treated as isolated incidents rather than a structural problem. Corporate governance and (male, white) leadership prioritize legal compliance over real change, perpetuating inequalities. The economic interests of corporatized soccer clash with equality, preventing meaningful progress.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Hayfield, N., & Sansbury, R. (2025). (4)	Exploring the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) individuals in motorsports.	Qualitative	Qualitative online survey with open-ended questions.	Motorsports	Gender and/or sex inclusion	Motorsports is rife with discrimination (sexism, heterosexism, and LGBTIphobia), even though some feel welcome. The lack of inclusion stems from the dominance of white, heterosexual men and traditional masculinities, who belittle women and attribute their failures to gender.
Johansson, M., & Svender, J. (2025). (5)	Exploring the role of gender as a central organizing principle in inclusion efforts within martial arts clubs in Sweden	Qualitative	Focus group interviews	Martial arts	Gender and/or sex inclusion	Masculine norms and machismo in martial arts limit female participation. Although strategies to "minimize" or "explain away" gender are proposed for inclusion, these present challenges that call for new approaches.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Persson, M. F., & Eriksen, I. M. (2025). (6)	To investigate how young people's participation in organized sports relates to social inclusion and overall social well-being	Qualitative	Longitudinal—Semi-structured interviews	General	Social inclusion	Based on a longitudinal analysis of 70 young people with varying levels of social inclusion and different relationships with sports, we argue that their forms of sports participation reflect their social inclusion and overall social well-being, rather than necessarily promoting them.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Stride, A., Norman, L., Fitzgerald, H., Clarke, N. J., Bates, D., Drury, S., ... & McGoldrick, M. (2025). (7)	Describe the importance of belonging for inclusion	Qualitative	They use examples from the CSJ's resea	General	Social inclusion	A new approach to sports inclusion is proposed, one that goes beyond the superficial and focuses on belonging (feeling seen, heard, known, and valued). It calls for a continuous, collective effort that permeates the entire organization, seeking a truly inclusive sports culture through greater collaboration.
Wirzén, M., & Ekholm, D. (2024). (8)	Exploring the development of a sense of community in an all-female sports program focused on social inclusion in a socially disadvantaged area of Sweden	Qualitative	Ethnographic—Observations and interviews with participants	General	Social inclusion	Our findings reveal that girls, through a reflective engagement with norms and moral values, co-create a community that promotes social inclusion

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Ristevski, E., McCook, F., Thompson, S., Duncan, Z., Lawler, B., & Broxham, C. (2024). (9)	Examining initiatives that facilitate the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in community sports and recreational activities.	Systematic review	Articles with tables	General	Inclusion of people with disabilities	Research on social inclusion in physical activity for people with intellectual disabilities is limited. Longitudinal studies are needed, and a distinction must be made between physical access and inclusion. Awareness alone is not enough; equity policies and partnerships can foster positive attitudes and a more accurate representation of disability, without focusing on disability.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Dowling, F. (2024).	To analyze, from a Foucauldian perspective, the language used in three decades of Norwegian sports policies aimed at integration/inclusion, as well as in non-sports policies that seek to use sports as a political tool.	Systematic review	Research questions.	General	Ethnic Inclusion	Discourse analysis shows that the integration of ethnic minorities in sports is limited by a perception of "true" sporting activity. Current notions of inclusion promote simplistic assimilation, view groups as homogeneous, distribute power unequally, and conceive of sports as a monolithic practice.
Fernandes, C., Vescovi, J. D., Norman, R., Bradish, C. L., Taback, N., & Chan, T. C. (2024). (11)	Examine personal and workplace demographics, as well as individual perceptions and experiences regarding EDI in the workplace.	Quantitative	Survey of personal and workplace demographics, as well as individual perceptions and experiences regarding EDI in the workplace.	General	Gender and/or sex inclusion	The findings reveal a dominant group in sports (young, white, heterosexual men) and significant wage gaps. Women face much more discrimination, earn less, and feel they must work harder to be valued.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Hardwicke, J., Roberts, C. J., Anderson, E., & Magrath, R. (2024). (12)	To examine the attitudes of sexual and gender minorities toward other sexual and gender minorities, as well as the experiences of these minorities in relation to one another, within the cycling community.	Quantitative	Anonymous self-reported online survey	Cycling	Gender and/or sex inclusion	Cycling shows acceptance of LGB individuals but greater antipathy toward transgender athletes, although less than expected given the media attention. This suggests that the trans social movement is driving LGB inclusion in the sport.
Morgan, T., Henne, K., Blacklock, J., & Starre, K. (2024). (13)	Understanding how sports organizations articulate their priorities and goals for gender inclusion.	Systematic review	Document review and interviews.	General	Gender and/or sex inclusion	Studies show that Australian sports organizations use the number of women as the primary measure of gender inclusion in leadership. Although this approach appears objective, it is simplistic, distorts reality, and hinders real progress toward inclusion.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Pankowiak, A., Casey, M., Eime, R., & Westerbeek, H. (2024). (14)	Understanding the experiences of women and girls who participate in male-dominated sports from a gender perspective within the socio-ecological model.	Qualitative	Social constructionist epistemology – Semi-structured interviews	General	Gender and/or sex inclusion	Gender factors negatively impact women and girls in sports, with unequal resources that favor men. This drives women to seek change, highlighting the need for a systemic socio-ecological approach to gender equity.
Larsson, H., & Auran, I. (2024). (15)	Exploring trans performativity in relation to gender equality efforts in sports and exercise.	Qualitative	Interviews	General	Gender and/or sex inclusion	A study involving ten trans individuals uses diffractive analysis to show how trans identity is constructed in sports. It highlights the challenges to achieving gender equality and trans inclusion given current conceptions of sport, equality, and the trans community.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Blachnicka-Ciacek, D., & Trąbka, A. (2024). (16)	To analyze the role of sports initiatives in fostering migrants' participation and sense of belonging in two Polish towns, taking into account their varying levels of formalization	Qualitative	Ethnographies	Soccer	Migrant inclusion	In less diverse urban settings, informal sports initiatives help migrants with resources. To include migrants and refugees with lower self-confidence, active "facilitation" is crucial to enable them to benefit from these activities.
Forsdike, K., & Giles, F. (2024). (17)	To synthesize the experiences of adult women regarding gender-based interpersonal violence in sports.	Systematic review	Systematic review of qualitative studies.	General	Gender and/or sex inclusion	The study identifies abuse against women in sports linked to the normalization of behaviors, sports family violence, organizational powerlessness, and patriarchy. Powerlessness and the "sports family" perpetuate the abuse. Multilevel interventions are needed to address gender-based violence.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Turelli, F., & Joseph, J. (2025, May). (18)	Creating meaningful narratives about personal stories and sports,	Qualitative	Autoethnography	General	Ethnic and gender inclusion	We conclude the article with a call to embrace queer sensibilities and to highlight embodiment in sports and social justice, with the ultimate goal of achieving decolonial disruption.
Sambol, S., Dadswell, K., & Hanlon, C. (2024). (19)	To examine whether young athletes exposed to female coaches experienced changes in their explicit and implicit biases compared to their unexposed peers.	Quantitative	Attitude measures. Demographic and satisfaction questionnaire, Face Selection Task, and Implicit Association Task	General	Gender and/or sex inclusion	Exposure to female coaches improves athletes' satisfaction and reduces the association of men with sports, but does not eliminate implicit biases. More comprehensive strategies are needed to address gender inequalities in coaching.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Yang, Z., Liu, L., & Ge, L. (2025, May). (20)	To explore how public attitudes toward Chinese female athletes coming out are represented through social media discourse.	Qualitative	Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)	General	Gender and/or sex inclusion	The "coming out" of athletes in China poses a dual threat to national honor and patriarchal norms, exacerbated by online misogyny and homophobia. This creates a triple marginalization (profession, gender, sexuality) for queer athletes, where subtle expressions of homosexuality serve as both a survival strategy and a challenge to heteronormativity.
Nachman, J. R. (2025, (21)	Analyzing Sport and Movement in Palestine Using Decolonial Queer Theory.	Systematic Review	Literature Review	General	Gender and/or Sex Inclusion	Palestinians use sport for resistance and to connect with their land. It remains to be seen whether sport can achieve decolonial goals such as land restitution and personal liberation.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Crossman, S., Drummond, M., Elliott, S., Kay, J., Montero, A., & Petersen, J. M. (2024). (22)	Identifying the facilitators, barriers, and negotiated constraints to sports participation among adults (ages 25–64)	Quantitative	Systematic literature review. PRISMA	General	Inclusion by age	This review highlights the multilevel factors influencing adult sports participation and the lack of studies on non-athletes. To encourage participation, strategies should focus on enjoyment, sport modifications, and behavior change theory.
Clemente, L. C., González, M. M., García, P. C., Font, M. N., Gandarillas, É. A., Balaguer, M. G., & de Antuñano, N. P. G. (2025). (23)	To understand the impact of gender-affirming hormone therapy (GAHT) on various athletic performance variables and to compare the results with those obtained in cisgender populations	Quantitative	Review of cross-sectional and longitudinal studies that included transgender women (preferably athletes) undergoing GAHT	General	Gender and/or sex inclusion	After 12 months of GAHT, transgender women (TW) experienced decreases in hematocrit, testosterone, and muscle mass/strength, along with an increase in body fat. Nevertheless, they demonstrated greater grip strength and better performance in upper-body sports than cisgender women.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
O'Connell, C. S., & Bottino, A. (2024). (24)	Conduct a systematic review of research related to the experiences of LGBTQ+ sports leaders.	Quantitative	Systematic review using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA).	General	Inclusion of gender and/or sex	The 34 studies analyzed cover the personal experiences of LGBTQ+ sports leaders and the attitudes of parents, athletes, and managers toward them and LGBTQ+ issues.
Hernández-Beltrán, V., Espada, M. C., de Campos, L. F. C. C., Ferreria, C. C., Narváez, L. M. C., & Gamonales, J. M. (2024). (25)	Conduct a search and compilation of manuscripts related to inclusive sports in the field of physical education.	Quantitative	Systematic review	General	All	Developing inclusive sports yields many benefits by fostering positive attitudes and removing barriers for people with disabilities. To be inclusive, a sport must allow for their participation while maintaining its original objective, which requires adaptations.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Felipe-Lorenzo, P., Díez-Fernández, P., Ruibal-Lista, B., & López-García, S. (2025). (26)	To identify and critically analyze the main barriers hindering the equitable participation of people with disabilities in mainstream sports, and to propose evidence-based strategies to overcome these challenges.	Quantitative	Systematic review. PRISMA	General	Inclusion of people with disabilities	The findings reveal significant barriers to sports participation for people with disabilities: inadequate staff training, negative attitudes, ableist mindsets, limited access to information, and a lack of accessible facilities.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Shevchuk, O., Kohut, I., & Marynych, V. (2024). (27)	To identify, using the COM-B model, Ukrainian coaches' perceptions regarding their capabilities, opportunities, and motivation to train athletes with special educational needs.	Quantitative	Questionnaire	General	Inclusion of people with disabilities	Despite their high motivation, coaches have limited capabilities and few opportunities to work with athletes with special educational needs, due to a lack of training, equipment, and resources. Although 20% wish to and feel capable of coaching these athletes, challenges to effective inclusion persist.
Núñez, P. D. P., & Portela-Pino, I. (2024). (28)	To describe the perspectives of managers at two youth organizations that use sports as a vehicle for community development and social inclusion in Colombia.	Qualitative	Ethnographic—Semi-structured interviews	Soccer	Social inclusion	Soccer promotes social integration by enhancing teamwork and a sense of community belonging. Future research should assess its impact on children, youth, and parents in community programs.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Rueda, M. M., & Cerero, J. F. (2024). (29)	Explore the findings of recent research on the impact of sports as an educational approach to promoting student inclusion	Quantitative	Systematic review	General	Social inclusion	Despite limited research, sports have been confirmed as an inclusive educational tool, improving performance and accessibility through respect. It is crucial to improve teacher training in physical education and educational policies to foster greater inclusion.
Gallardo de León, R., Ponciano Nuñez, P., & Calderón Santos, R. (2024). (30)	To describe the factors limiting the practice of para-sports among para-athletes in the department of Quetzaltenango.	Qualitative	Case study—Semi-structured interviews, observation, and field notes.	Goalball and para-athletics	Inclusion of people with disabilities	The study reveals that a lack of coaches, financial resources, and accessibility limit the development of the Paralympic movement in Quetzaltenango, preventing equal access for athletes with disabilities.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Rodríguez, J. D. B. (2024). (31)	Examining how female soccer players are portrayed in audiovisual advertising content promoting the UEFA Women's Euro 2022 soccer championship	Qualitative	Content analysis and multimodal discourse analysis	Soccer	Gender and/or sex inclusion	The results reveal that UEFA and its sponsors contribute to, establish, and promote an inclusive view of women through the visual staging of digital content
Zamarro, I. F., Rodríguez, M. P., Fernández, Á. R., Prat, C. A., & Tejero, J. P. (2025). (32)	To assess the situation of people with intellectual disabilities in Spanish rugby clubs that offer activities for this group, based on the opinions of representatives from these clubs.	Quantitative	Survey	Rugby	Inclusion of people with disabilities	Following the analysis, the main themes that emerged were the importance of visibility and the promotion of inclusive rugby.

Reference	Objective	Methodological design	Instrument	Sport	Inclusion criteria	Results
Pearce, S., & Sanderson, J. (2024). (33)	Arguing that sport should be conceived and analyzed through the lens of a different human right: the right to non-discrimination	Systematic review	Literature review	General	Inclusion of people with disabilities	Applying the principle of non-discrimination in sport means that children with disabilities should have the same experience as everyone else. It is not just about access, but about inclusion in mainstream sport with accommodations that ensure fair and meaningful competition.

DISCUSION

Before beginning the discussion, it is necessary to clarify the difference between integration and inclusion, since many articles present them as if they were the same. Integration is defined as the process in which individuals must adapt to existing structures and environments; the burden of adaptation falls on the individual; if they fail to adapt, they are held responsible. (34), on the other hand, (35) define inclusion in sports as the effort to create environments that ensure all people, with their diversity of abilities, backgrounds, and characteristics, feel respected, valued, and have equal opportunities for participation and growth. This allows us to identify that the latter is a more holistic and comprehensive concept, seeking not only presence but also meaningful participation and a sense of belonging for all, by eliminating the barriers that prevent equal opportunities.

Among the documents reviewed, several types of inclusion in sport can be described:

-Racial and/or ethnic inclusion: The term "race" is currently used by societies to differentiate and, often, rank human groups, with significant implications for power, discrimination, and social relations (36). On the other hand, ethnicity is defined by cultural and linguistic characteristics and a shared origin, fostering a collective identity. In the articles on sports, the authors critically examine how racism and the inclusion of ethnic minorities are managed and perceived within the sporting sphere, specifically in soccer. They agree that current approaches are insufficient, whether due to a lack of structural vision or an oversimplification of inclusion. Taken together, both texts suggest that the current approach to racism and inclusion in sports is superficial and limited; it requires a paradigm shift that recognizes the structural nature of racism and promotes genuine inclusion that goes beyond assimilation, addressing power inequalities and transforming sports practices to be truly diverse (3), (10), (18).

- Gender and/or sex inclusion: While sex refers to innate biological and physiological characteristics (37), gender is a social construct that defines roles and expectations (37). In sports, these two terms have sparked significant controversy; the texts reviewed provide a comprehensive overview of the persistent barriers and multifaceted challenges faced by various minority groups in this field. They reveal that exclusion is not a matter of isolated incidents, but rather symptoms of structural problems rooted in culture, norms, and power hierarchies.

Sexism, heterosexism, and homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic language are described as common in various sports, such as auto racing and cycling. Although some individuals may feel welcome, their experiences are framed within a context of recurring discriminatory incidents. The lack of inclusion is attributed to the persistence of traditional masculinities and the dominance of heterosexual white men in positions of power. This results in the devaluation of women, where their underperformance is attributed to gender and their successes are downplayed. Masculinity norms and macho culture emerge as significant barriers, especially in martial arts. Although strategies such as "Minimizing Gender" or "Explaining Gender" are sought to encourage female participation, these approaches are often insufficient and generate new challenges, suggesting the need for more robust strategies to ensure effective inclusion. Furthermore, gender-based violence in sports is normalized in certain contexts, linked to women's lack of power and a patriarchal system that operates even within the "sports family," thereby silencing abuse.

The data confirms the presence of a dominant group in sports analysis (young, white, heterosexual men), which reinforces wage inequalities in leadership positions, with men earning significantly more than women, and a concerning wage gap between white and racialized leadership staff. Women are also far more likely to experience discrimination and to consider leaving their jobs due to isolation and a lack of recognition, forcing them to work harder to be acknowledged. The observation that Australian sports organizations measure gender inclusion primarily by the "count of women" in leadership, without addressing the underlying complexities, reveals an incomplete view that hinders real progress.

While there is a culture of acceptance toward LGB athletes, there remains a greater degree of hostility toward transgender cyclists, although this is not as

pronounced as one might expect. It is suggested that the transgender social movement is influencing LGB inclusion. However, an in-depth analysis of the experiences of transgender people in sports reveals challenges in reconciling gender equality with transgender inclusion, given current conceptualizations of sports and the transgender community. Queer female athletes, in contexts such as China, face a triple intersectional marginalization based on their profession, gender, and sexuality, with expressions of homosexuality serving as a strategy for survival and subtle resistance. The results also show that, while gender-affirming hormone therapy (GAHT) reduces the physical advantages of transgender women in certain aspects, some differences in strength persist compared to cisgender women (4,5,11-15,17-20, 23,24,31).

- Inclusion of migrants: According to the International Organization for Migration (38), a migrant is any person who moves or has moved across an international border or within a country, away from their usual place of residence.

The findings of this research indicate that in cities with less diversity, informal sports activities are effective in integrating migrants who already possess certain cultural and social resources. These resources allow them to adapt more easily to a predominantly homogeneous environment. However, the study argues that, to achieve true inclusion of migrants and refugees from more vulnerable backgrounds who are less confident in interacting, a level of active facilitation of participation is essential. They refer to this process as "curation." This facilitation is crucial to ensuring that a broader and more diverse range of groups can benefit from sports initiatives.

- Inclusion of people with disabilities: According to the World Health Organization (39), disability is an umbrella term that encompasses impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions, emphasizing the interaction between an individual's health condition and contextual factors.

Current research on this topic is limited, underscoring the need for longitudinal studies that demonstrate the success of social inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities in physical activity. It is crucial to distinguish between mere physical access and true social inclusion, as disability awareness alone is not enough to eradicate prejudice. One of the most significant barriers is the insufficient training of coaches and administrators, along with negative and discriminatory attitudes rooted in a training mindset that focuses on limitations rather than abilities.

Another point to consider regarding this inclusion is the lack of financial resources, and accessibility barriers to sports facilities are significant limitations. This results in unequal access for athletes with disabilities compared to able-bodied athletes, which limits the development of the Paralympic movement worldwide.

Despite these challenges, the visibility and promotion of inclusive sports, such as rugby, are emerging as key issues. Furthermore, the right to non-discrimination implies that children with disabilities must have the opportunity to be included in mainstream sports, with adjustments that ensure fair and meaningful competition. This shifts the focus from mere access to physical activity to the quality of the child's experience within the sport (9,26,27,30,32,33).

- Age-based inclusion: Traditionally, age is understood most simply as chronological age, which is the time elapsed since an individual's birth (40). It is a universally accepted measure that is easy to quantify. The text highlights the complexity of adult participation in sports, noting that it is influenced by multiple factors at various levels. The review identifies a lack of research on people who do not participate in sports and underscores the difficulty of creating appropriate sports programs for this group.

To encourage greater sports participation among adults, it is suggested that strategies focus on the enjoyment of the activity. It is also important to consider modifications to sports that help reduce the limitations perceived by participants. Finally, the text proposes integrating behavior change theory to cultivate positive and lasting habits in sports participation (24).

- Social Inclusion: The texts reviewed offer a multifaceted perspective on social inclusion in sports, highlighting both its potential benefits and the limitations of current approaches. They emphasize that genuine inclusion requires going beyond mere participation or physical access, focusing instead on a sense of belonging and structural transformation within sports organizations.

A longitudinal analysis suggests that young people's participation in sports often reflects their level of social inclusion and overall well-being, rather than being the primary driver of these outcomes. This indicates that sports can act as a mirror of existing social inequalities. However, soccer, for example, is recognized for promoting social integration by improving teamwork and fostering a sense of community belonging. It is also observed that girls, through their commitment to moral norms and values, co-create communities that actively promote social inclusion.

It is argued that traditional inclusion initiatives have been insufficient, often amounting to little more than symbolic or paternalistic measures. A new vision of inclusion is proposed, one based on belonging, defined by four crucial elements: feeling seen, heard, known, and valued. This sense of belonging must be the result of a continuous, collective effort that permeates the entire structure of sports organizations, transcending the simple integration of marginalized groups. To achieve true transformation, deeper collaboration and a genuinely inclusive sports culture are needed.

Despite the limited recent research, sports are emerging as a valuable educational tool that promotes inclusivity through respect, contributing to improved academic performance and accessibility for all students, regardless of their abilities. However, there is a pressing need to improve teacher training in physical education and to establish robust educational policies that promote student inclusion in Sports (6-8,28,29).

CONCLUSIONS

Inclusion is a key objective in policy and research, going beyond integration by seeking to value human diversity and eliminate structural barriers. Sport, despite its inherent potential for development and social cohesion, often reflects social inequalities rather than mitigating them, requiring an approach that goes beyond mere physical or symbolic access.

Current research shows that racism, sexism, heterosexism, transphobia, lack of resources, inaccessibility, and inadequate staff training are persistent obstacles. These barriers are not isolated incidents, but symptoms of power structures dominated by hegemonic groups (young, white, heterosexual men), which perpetuate wage and opportunity inequalities, forcing minority groups to exert disproportionate effort to be valued.

The findings underscore the need for more comprehensive strategies that address gender inequalities at multiple levels (individual, relational, organizational, and cultural). Exposure to female leaders can reduce negative attitudes but does not eliminate implicit biases. We are invited to embrace "queer sensibilities" and embodiment in sports as pathways toward social justice and decolonial disruption, enabling repatriation and freedom. Ultimately, although some organizations and entities like UEFA promote a vision inclusive of women, true progress requires going beyond superficial metrics and challenging deeply entrenched power structures and cultural norms.

On the other hand, achieving effective inclusion in sports for people with disabilities demands more than just goodwill. It requires rigorous research, comprehensive staff training, adequate resource allocation, the removal of physical and attitudinal barriers, and a shift in mindset that promotes positive representation of disability and guarantees the right to full and meaningful participation.

Current initiatives are often insufficient due to their superficial or paternalistic approach. To achieve genuine inclusion, it is crucial to foster a sense of belonging (feeling seen, heard, known, and valued) through continuous and collaborative efforts that transform the entire sports organization. This involves going beyond "assimilation" and requires "healing" or active facilitation, especially for vulnerable groups such as migrants or people with disabilities.

Despite growing attention, the systematic review reveals a shortage of longitudinal studies and a limited understanding of the complexity of inclusion. More research is needed to distinguish between access and social inclusion, and to develop strategies based on enjoyment and behavioral change that address negative attitudes,

improve teacher training, and promote policies ensuring a meaningful and equitable sports experience for all, regardless of age, gender, background, or ability.

Sport has great potential for integration and the promotion of values; true inclusion goes beyond superficial participation. It requires an approach centered on deep belonging, the structural transformation of sports organizations, and a significant improvement in training and policies that support a truly equitable environment for all.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

No limitations were identified in the conduct of this study; further research is suggested for each of the sports or adapted sports.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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