



UNIVERSITAT DE
BARCELONA

Análisis de las variables psicosociales asociadas con la participación deportiva competitiva en atletas senior

Valentina Cannella

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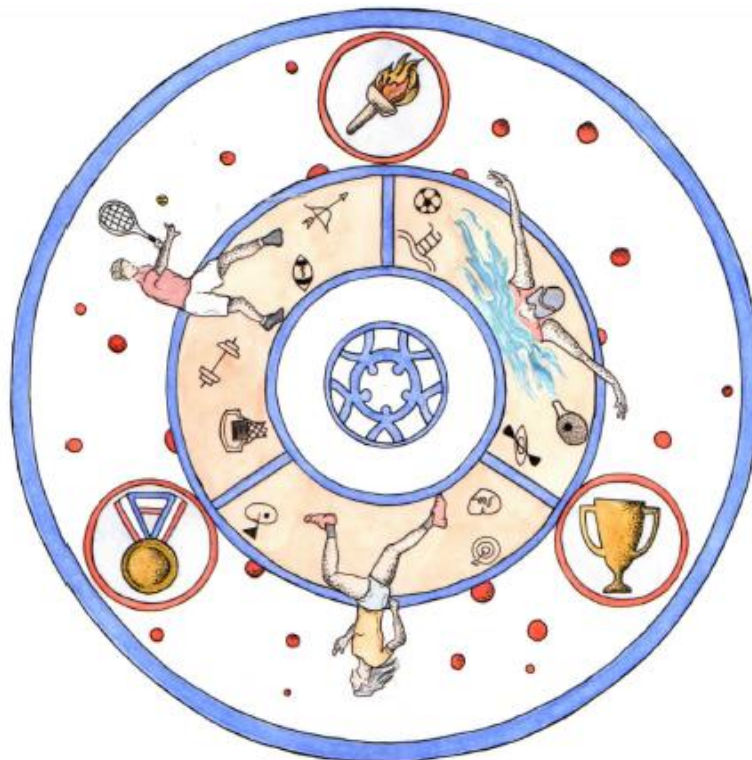
UNIVERSITAT DE
BARCELONA

Tesis doctoral

ANÁLISIS DE LAS VARIABLES PSICOSOCIALES ASOCIADAS CON LA PARTICIPACIÓN DEPORTIVA COMPETITIVA EN ATLETAS SENIOR

Valentina Cannella

Director: Dr. Feliciano Villar Posada
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Valentina Cannella

Director: Dr. Feliciano Villar Posada
Codirector: Dr. Rodrigo Serrat Fernández

Programa de Doctorado en Psicología Social y de las Organizaciones

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PREFACIO

La presente tesis doctoral, dirigida por el Dr. Feliciano Villar Posada y codirigida por el Dr. Rodrigo Serrat Fernández, es el resultado de un trabajo de investigación desarrollado durante el período 2018-2023 en el marco del Grupo de Investigación en Gerontología (GIG) de la Universidad de Barcelona. Se presenta como un compendio de cuatro estudios empíricos relacionados con el tema de la participación en deportes competitivos en personas mayores de 55 años.

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La presente tesis doctoral está estructurada en seis capítulos. En los **Capítulos I, II y III** se ofrece una revisión del estado del arte del fenómeno objeto de estudio; en el **Capítulo IV** se especifican los objetivos de la tesis y su relación con los cuatro estudios empíricos que la componen; en el **Capítulo V** se presentan los cuatro estudios que conforman el compendio; en el **Capítulo VI** se discuten y relacionan los hallazgos más importantes así como las limitaciones e implicaciones prácticas y, finalmente, en el **Capítulo VII**, se ofrece una síntesis de las principales conclusiones de la tesis.

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Con el objetivo de obtener la Mención internacional del título de Doctor, la doctoranda realizó una estancia de investigación de tres meses en el *Department of Nutrition, Exercise and Sports (University of Copenhagen – Denmark)*, financiada mediante la ayuda para contratos predoctorales para la formación de doctores/as (convocatoria 2017). Referencia de la Ayuda: BES-2017-080321.

ÍNDICE

LISTADO DE FIGURAS.....	1
LISTADO DE TABLAS.....	2
RESUMEN.....	3
ABSTRACT	6
CAPÍTULO I: EL PROCESO DE ENVEJECIMIENTO	9
1.1 Demografía del envejecimiento	9
1.2 Teorías tradicionales sobre el proceso de envejecimiento.....	11
1.3 El cambio de paradigma en el abordaje del proceso de envejecimiento	13
1.3.1 El envejecimiento activo	15
1.3.2 Las críticas al concepto de envejecimiento activo	18
1.3.3 El envejecimiento saludable.....	21
CAPÍTULO II: EL PAPEL DEL DEPORTE EN EL PROCESO DE ENVEJECIMIENTO	24
2.1 Algunas precisiones conceptuales	24
2.2 Participación deportiva y envejecimiento.....	27
2.2.1 Perspectivas tradicionales de participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida	27
2.2.2 Nuevas perspectivas de participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida	28
2.2.3 Tendencias actuales de participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida	30
2.3 Competición deportiva y envejecimiento	35
2.3.1 Masters sport	36
2.3.2 El fenómeno de los atletas senior	37

CAPÍTULO III: REVISIÓN DE LOS ANTECEDENTES DE LAS VARIABLES PSICOSOCIALES ASOCIADAS A LA PARTICIPACIÓN DEPORTIVA COMPETITIVA EN LA SEGUNDA MITAD DE LA VIDA.....	41
3.1 El modelo socioecológico	41
3.2 Antecedentes de las motivaciones para la participación deportiva competitiva	46
3.3 Antecedentes de las barreras para la participación deportiva competitiva	50
3.4 Antecedentes de las opiniones sobre las barreras para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva	53
CAPÍTULO IV: OBJETIVOS	56
4.1 Objetivo general	56
4.2 Objetivos específicos	56
CAPÍTULO V: ESTUDIOS	58
5.1 Estudio 1	59
5.2 Estudio 2	91
5.3 Estudio 3	123
5.4 Estudio 4	146
CAPÍTULO VI: DISCUSIÓN.....	176
6.1 Discusión general	176
6.1.1 Variables psicosociales de la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida: aportaciones de la revisión de alcance	177
6.1.2 Motivaciones para la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior.....	181
6.1.3 Barreras para la retención de la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior..	185
6.1.4 Opiniones de atletas senior sobre las barreras para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva.....	188

6.2 Implicaciones teóricas, políticas y prácticas	192
6.3 Limitaciones y líneas futuras de investigación	195
CAPÍTULO VII: CONCLUSIONES.....	198
7.1 Principales conclusiones.....	198
7.2 Main conclusions.....	202
REFERENCIAS.....	206
ANEXO I: CUESTIONARIO DE RECOGIDA DE DATOS	230

LISTADO DE FIGURAS

1.1	Modelo de envejecimiento activo	16
1.2	Modelo de envejecimiento saludable	22
2.1	Actividad física, ejercicio físico y deporte	23
3.1	Modelo socioecológico de los niveles de influencia	42
5.1	Relación entre objetivos y estudios de la presente tesis doctoral	58
5.1.1	Study selection flow diagram	68
5.1.2	Number of publications on older people's participation in competitive sport. Period 1994–2020	69
5.2.1	Scree plot of eigenvalues for the principal component analysis	103
5.3.1	A socioecological framework for sport participation barriers	127

LISTADO DE TABLAS

2.1	Porcentaje de encuestados que nunca practican ejercicio o deportes, por variables sociodemográficas	31
2.2	Porcentaje de encuestados que nunca practican ejercicio o deportes, por los 28 países miembros de la EU	34
5.1.1	Empirical papers' key methodological, sample and sport participation characteristics (in frequencies and percentages)	71
5.2.1	Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample	99
5.2.2	Means, component loadings of items for total sample (N = 445) and percentage of variance explained	105
5.2.3	Means and standard deviation for each component by participants' sex	106
5.3.1	Sociodemographic characteristic of participants	130
5.3.2	Frequency and percentages of the categories regarding the content analysis of the responses (N = 435) to 'If at some point in the future you decided to stop doing your current sport, what could be the reason/s for this?'	133
5.4.1	Sociodemographic characteristic of the sample	153
5.4.2	First-order and second-order categories created from the content analysis of the incomplete sentence: "Many older people do not do sport because..."	157
5.4.3	Percentages, means, standard deviations, and associations between the first-order categories and the sociodemographic and participatory characteristics	164

RESUMEN

El deporte es un fenómeno social y cultural importante para el desarrollo de los individuos a lo largo del ciclo vital. Pese a la disminución de la participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida, en las últimas décadas se ha asistido a un aumento de atletas senior, personas mayores de 55 años que se entrenan sistemáticamente y que compiten de forma organizada en eventos deportivos nacionales o internacionales. Sin embargo, la mayoría de los estudios sobre este fenómeno se han centrado en los factores de rendimiento físico.

El objetivo general de esta tesis fue explorar las variables psicosociales asociadas con la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior, utilizando el modelo socioecológico como marco de referencia. Este objetivo general se concretó en cuatro objetivos específicos: (1) explorar y organizar el conocimiento existente sobre las variables psicosociales de la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida; (2) explorar las motivaciones para la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior y la influencia de las variables intrapersonales, interpersonales y contextuales; (3) explorar las barreras para su propia retención en la participación deportiva competitiva y la influencia de las variables intrapersonales, interpersonales y contextuales; (4) explorar sus opiniones sobre las barreras para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva y la influencia de las variables intrapersonales, interpersonales y contextuales. Para alcanzar estos objetivos, se llevaron a cabo cuatro estudios empíricos.

El primer objetivo dio lugar al Estudio 1, en el que se realizó una revisión de alcance para analizar el estado general de conocimiento sobre la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida. Los hallazgos evidenciaron un creciente interés académico hacia el fenómeno, con una atención predominante en los aspectos intrapersonales e interpersonales. Se identificaron varias lagunas en la literatura, clasificadas en conceptuales (menor atención a los aspectos de personalidad, emocionales y cognitivos), metodológicas (estudios longitudinales casi ausentes) y relacionadas con la diversidad (enfoque en un rango de edad indiscriminado; pocas

comparaciones en función de sexo, países de residencia y tipo de deportes; subrepresentación de algunos países en las muestras).

Para alcanzar los objetivos 2, 3 y 4, se aplicó un cuestionario diseñado *ad hoc* a una muestra de 463 atletas senior ($M = 61,4$; $SD = 5,5$) procedentes de cuatro países europeos (Francia, Italia, España y Reino Unido). Del segundo objetivo surgió el Estudio 2 en el que se exploraron las motivaciones para la participación deportiva competitiva de estos atletas a través de una escala tipo Likert. El análisis factorial exploratorio reveló cinco componentes: competitividad, motivaciones interpersonales, cognitivas, físicas y emocionales. Las principales motivaciones se relacionaron con aspectos físicos (“sentirse más saludable”) y aspectos emocionales (“mejorar el estado de ánimo” y “reducir la tensión y el estrés”). Además, se encontraron diferencias significativas en función de algunas variables sociodemográficas (sexo, edad, estado de salud comparativo) y participativas (tipo de deporte, número de eventos competitivos por año).

Del tercer objetivo surgió el Estudio 3, en el que se exploraron las barreras para la retención en la participación deportiva competitiva de los atletas senior. Los participantes respondieron a una pregunta abierta y sus respuestas se sometieron a un análisis de contenido. Las barreras más mencionadas fueron relativas a aspectos físicos, con particular énfasis en la aparición de posibles enfermedades en el futuro o lesiones derivadas de la misma participación deportiva. No se encontraron resultados significativos en cuanto a las posibles asociaciones de estas barreras con las características sociodemográficas y participativas de la muestra.

Finalmente, del cuarto objetivo derivó el Estudio 4 en el que se exploraron las opiniones de los atletas senior acerca de las barreras para la iniciación en la participación deportiva de otras personas mayores. Se llevó a cabo un análisis de contenido de las respuestas a una frase incompleta. Las principales barreras se relacionaron con oportunidades pasadas (falta de hábitos, educación y cultura deportiva) y presentes (falta de tiempo, compañeros y recursos económicos). Además, los resultados evidenciaron variaciones significativas en función de algunas variables (edad, país de residencia y años de participación deportiva).

Estos hallazgos en su conjunto aportan un mayor conocimiento académico sobre el fenómeno que podría beneficiar las políticas sociales de envejecimiento y deportivas. Estas podrían guiar el desarrollo de programas diferenciadores no solo para mantener la participación deportiva entre los atletas senior sino también para fomentar el deporte entre las personas menos activas, promoviendo así formas saludables de envejecer.

ABSTRACT

Sport is a social and cultural phenomenon that is important for human development throughout the life cycle. Despite the decrease in sport participation in the second half of life, in recent decades there has been an increase in senior athletes—people over 55 years of age who train systematically and who compete in an organized manner in national and/or international sporting events. However, most studies on this phenomenon have focused on physical performance factors.

The general objective of this thesis was to explore the psychosocial variables associated with senior athletes' competitive sport participation, using the socioecological model as a framework. This general objective materialized into four specific objectives: (1) explore and organize existing knowledge on the psychosocial variables of competitive sport participation in the second half of life; (2) explore the motivations for competitive sport participation of senior athletes and the influence of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual variables; (3) explore the barriers to their own retention in competitive sport participation and the influence of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual variables; (4) explore their opinions on the barriers for the initiation of other older people in sports participation and the influence of intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual variables. To achieve these objectives, four empirical studies were carried out.

The first objective gave rise to Study 1, in which a scoping review was conducted to analyze the general state of knowledge about competitive sport participation in the second half of life. The findings evidenced a growing academic interest in the phenomenon, with a predominant focus on intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects. Several gaps were identified in the existing literature, classified into conceptual (less attention to personality, emotional and cognitive aspects), methodological (longitudinal studies almost absent), and diversity-related aspects (focus on an indiscriminate age range; few comparisons between sex, countries, and type of sports; underrepresentation of some countries in the samples).

To achieve objectives 2, 3, and 4, an ad hoc questionnaire was given to a sample of 463 senior athletes ($M = 61.4$; $SD = 5.5$) from four European countries (France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom). Study 2 arose from the second objective, in which the motivations for competitive sports participation of these athletes were explored through a Likert scale. The exploratory factor analysis revealed five components: competitiveness, interpersonal, cognitive, physical, and emotional motivations. The main motivations were related to physical aspects (“to feel healthier”) and emotional aspects (“to improve mood” and “to reduce tension and stress”). In addition, significant differences were found based on some sociodemographic (sex, age, comparative health status) and participatory (type of sport, number of competitive events per year) variables.

Study 3 stemmed from the third objective, in which the barriers to retention of senior athletes in competitive sport participation were explored. Participants responded to an open question and their responses were subjected to content analysis. The most mentioned barriers were related to physical aspects, with particular emphasis on the potential occurrence of illnesses in the future or injuries derived from sport participation itself. No significant results were found regarding a possible link between these barriers and the sociodemographic and participatory characteristics of the sample.

Finally, Study 4 derived from the fourth objective, in which the opinions of senior athletes about the barriers to the initiation in sport participation of other older people were explored. A content analysis of the responses to an incomplete sentence was carried out. The main barriers were related to past opportunities (lack of sports habits, education, and culture) and present ones (lack of time, partners, and affordability). In addition, the results showed significant variations depending on some variables (age, country of residence, and years of sports participation).

These findings provide greater academic knowledge about the phenomenon that could benefit aging and sports social policies. These policies could guide the development of differentiating

programs not only to maintain sports participation among senior athletes but also to encourage sport participation among less active people and thus promoting healthy ways of aging.

CAPÍTULO I: EL PROCESO DE ENVEJECIMIENTO

1.1 Demografía del envejecimiento

El envejecimiento, entendido como proceso universal que acontece a lo largo del ciclo vital, es un complejo fenómeno fisiológico, psicológico y sociológico (Bond et al., 2007). Desde mediados del siglo XX se está asistiendo a una revolución demográfica del envejecimiento, fruto de un conjunto de cambios como la disminución en las tasas de mortalidad, el incremento de la esperanza de vida y una tendencia de la natalidad descendiente (Foster & Walker, 2015). En el último informe de Naciones Unidas (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022), se muestran las principales tendencias y perspectivas demográficas mundiales. En términos globales, se destaca un crecimiento de la población mundial y en particular, del grupo de población mayor de 65 años, que está aumentando tanto en número como en porcentaje del total. Se prevé que la proporción de la población mundial de 65 años o más se incremente desde un 12 % en 2022 hasta un 16 % en 2050. De hecho, para 2050, se prevé que la cantidad de personas de 65 años o más en todo el mundo sea más del doble de la cantidad de niños menores de cinco años y aproximadamente igual a la cantidad de niños menores de 12 años.

En cuanto a la distribución geográfica, aunque el incremento es generalizado en todos los continentes, Europa y América del Norte son los continentes con mayor proporción de población mayor en 2022, con casi el 19 % de personas con 65 años o más. Las proyecciones indican que para 2050 una de cada cuatro personas en estas regiones podría tener 65 años o más (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022).

Si se analiza el escenario europeo en más detalle, teniendo en cuenta las proyecciones de población elaboradas por la Oficina Estadística de la Unión Europea (Eurostat, 2020), se confirma que la proporción de europeos con más de 65 años aumentará en las próximas décadas. Concretamente, para 2050 en la Unión Europea el número de personas con edades comprendidas entre 65 y 74 años aumentará un 16,6 %, aquellas con edades entre 75 y 84 años aumentará un 56,1 %, y entre las personas con más de 85 años se registrará un aumento de hasta un 113,9 %.

Como revelan estos datos, es una realidad evidente que las sociedades, sobre todo en los países con altos ingresos, están envejeciendo a un ritmo rápido y aparentemente imparable. Esta sólida tendencia puede considerarse fruto del desarrollo socioeconómico de la sociedad y un éxito de las políticas de salud pública. Sin embargo, paradójicamente, estos datos no se interpretan siempre en términos de celebración, sino más bien de preocupación ante los desafíos económicos y sociales que plantean. Así, el envejecimiento de la población se considera uno de los retos de mayor calado y envergadura social al que las sociedades del futuro deberán responder (Foster & Walker, 2015). Con el fin de mantener y aumentar la sostenibilidad del proceso de envejecimiento, se ha hecho patente la necesidad de un compromiso urgente y adecuado a nivel político, socioeconómico, sanitario y de investigación (Lucantoni et al., 2022). Así pues, estos cambios demográficos han dado lugar a que las organizaciones internacionales, los gobiernos, los científicos y los grupos comunitarios hayan empezado a centrar más su atención en las necesidades de la población que envejece (Kalache & Keller, 2000).

1.2 Teorías tradicionales sobre el proceso de envejecimiento

Hasta los años 1970, la investigación gerontológica estaba dominada por un paradigma centrado casi exclusivamente en los aspectos negativos del envejecimiento, tal y como se refleja en la producción científica de la época, principalmente enfocada en describir trastornos y pérdidas asociados a este proceso (Depp & Jeste, 2006). El envejecimiento era analizado básicamente desde la perspectiva de un modelo médico tradicional o deficitario (Blaikie, 1999). Como señala Birren (1996), la atención se enfocaba en los sistemas biológicos que dejan de funcionar y se deterioran con el paso de los años. En otras palabras, se concebía el envejecimiento a partir de las condiciones fisiológicas patológicas que se producen en el individuo en términos de déficit e involución. En esta línea, la persistente medicalización del cuerpo envejecido conllevó a que “el proceso de senescencia se pensase como un peligroso estado de existencia que requería atención médica constante” (Vertinsky, 1995, p.229). Esta visión influyó en la concepción de la vejez como una fase homogénea de la vida caracterizada por la dependencia, las pérdidas y un inexorable e imparable declive de las capacidades funcionales de la persona (Hurd, 1999; Thornton, 2002). Además, esta visión medicalizada contribuyó a generar la formación de ideas negativas respecto al cuerpo envejecido (Lupien & Wan, 2004), reforzando la percepción de que las personas mayores son naturalmente frágiles e inferiores a los jóvenes (Wearing, 1995). Estas ideas fueron internalizadas por las propias personas mayores (Levy, 2003), desempoderándoles y haciéndoles creer que no podían, o no debían, realizar ciertas conductas (por ejemplo, practicar actividad física de moderada intensidad) (O’Brien Cousins, 2000; Roper et al., 2003).

Estos discursos negativos sobre el proceso de envejecimiento dominaron también los estudios en el ámbito de las ciencias sociales. Así, envejecer se concibió como un proceso de desconexión progresiva del mundo exterior, siendo la desvinculación (Cumming & Henry, 1961), la interioridad (Neugarten, 1976), o la gerotranscendencia (Tornstam, 1997) algunos de los conceptos que se propusieron para entender diferentes dimensiones psicosociales del proceso de envejecimiento.

En particular, el concepto de desvinculación (Cumming & Henry, 1961) constituyó la base de una de las teorías más representativa del enfoque negativo del envejecimiento. La desvinculación hacía referencia al deseo y a la capacidad de alejarse gradualmente de una vida activa y reducir la participación en diversos tipos de actividades a medida que aumentaba la edad. Así, la reducción de la actividad social se asumía como un proceso inevitable, adaptativo y deseable provocado por la confluencia de intereses tanto del propio individuo como de la sociedad. Por un lado, la persona mayor renunciaba voluntariamente a sus roles sociales productivos con el fin de prepararse para la dependencia o la muerte, y por el otro, las personas con las que se vinculaba se alejaban del individuo liberándolo de sus responsabilidades sociales. Esta desvinculación constituía la base de la renovación de la sociedad, ya que, si las personas mayores ejercían durante demasiado tiempo su papel, podía crearse una crisis en la estabilidad de las organizaciones sociales.

En general, a raíz de estas teorías que dominaron durante la mayor parte del siglo XX, la opinión aceptada de que el descanso y la desconexión de la esfera productiva de la sociedad fuesen virtudes propias del proceso de envejecimiento contribuyó a encasillar a las personas mayores como un grupo homogéneo de individuos pasivos, improductivos y sin propósitos (Blaikie, 1999; Grant, 2001; Spirduso, 1995). De aquí que el discurso gerontológico haya sido criticado por contribuir a reproducir estereotipos negativos del proceso de envejecimiento (Wearing, 1995).

1.3 El cambio de paradigma en el abordaje del proceso de envejecimiento

Frente a esta perspectiva centrada fundamentalmente en el declive y la desvinculación (Featherstone & Wernik, 1995), empezaron a aparecer críticas que señalaban la falta de consideración de las diferencias individuales entre las personas mayores, así como la falta de valoración del compromiso social participativo que pueden mostrar muchas de ellas, o de ciertas ganancias que pueden aparecer en momentos tardíos de la vida. Así, durante las últimas décadas del siglo XX, se vino forjando un nuevo paradigma, caracterizado por el desarrollo de modelos que describían procesos que pueden conducir a un envejecimiento positivo (Martinson & Berridge, 2015). De esta manera, se pasó a explorar el potencial de desarrollo que las personas poseen en las últimas décadas de la vida, redefiniendo la vejez como una etapa diferente y llena de posibilidades para crecer y ganar diferentes competencias. Todo ello implicó un nuevo foco en los procesos de adaptación, es decir, en los mecanismos que permiten a las personas mayores compensar o superar las eventuales pérdidas e incluso acumular competencias y ganancias hasta edades muy avanzadas (Villar, 2012). En el ámbito de las ciencias sociales, entre las diferentes teorías que abrazaron este nuevo paradigma positivo del envejecimiento cabe mencionar la teoría de la actividad (Havighurst et al., 1968) y la teoría de la continuidad (Atchley, 1989).

Con respecto a la primera y en contraste con la teoría de la desvinculación (Cumming & Henry, 1961), mencionada en el apartado anterior, el elemento crucial giraba en torno al concepto de adhesión continua a las actividades. La idea clave era que las personas mayores se sentirían más satisfechas siendo más activas y manteniendo tantos roles y responsabilidades sociales como les fuese posible (Havighurst et al., 1968). En otras palabras, la teoría asumía que para que una persona pudiese envejecer con éxito, debía continuar llevando a cabo las actividades realizadas en la mediana edad o, en el caso de impedimentos o pérdidas inevitables, reemplazar aquellas que ya no se podían realizar por la asunción de otras nuevas (Walker, 2002).

De manera similar, la teoría de la continuidad (Atchley, 1993) postulaba que las personas mayores se sentirían más satisfechas siendo capaces de “preservar y mantener los patrones psicológicos

[continuidad interna] y sociales [continuidad externa] existentes” (p. 5). Como afirmaba Kleiber (1999) “la continuidad se vuelve más importante con la edad y es una fuente de seguridad e integridad en la vejez” (p.113).

Sin embargo, estas teorías no estuvieron exentas de críticas. En primer lugar, por su tendencia a la homogeneización del proceso de envejecimiento, ya que la idea subyacente a estas teorías es que todas las personas mayores tienen los mismos deseos de permanecer activas (Marsillas et al., 2017). De hecho, para la mayoría, no siempre es posible mantener los niveles de funcionamiento previos, ya que a veces la capacidad de conservar los patrones físicos y mentales existentes se vuelve difícil a medida que se envejece. Por otra parte, en el planteamiento de estas teorías toda la responsabilidad derivada de la satisfacción vital recae en el propio individuo y no se consideran los factores contextuales y los elementos estructurales que, sin embargo, influyen de manera determinante en el proceso de envejecimiento (Walker, 2002).

A partir de la década de 1990, los conceptos en torno a la visión positiva del envejecimiento se fueron diversificando, adoptando distintas denominaciones y dando lugar a varias líneas de investigación (Foster & Walker, 2021). Así, conceptos como envejecimiento satisfactorio (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Rowe & Kahn, 1987, 1998), productivo (Bass et al., 1993), positivo (Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Hill, 2011), activo (World Health Organization, 2002) o saludable (World Health Organization, 2015) fueron propuestos para abordar científicamente esta perspectiva basada en una forma de envejecer favorablemente. Más allá de las diferencias conceptuales entre estos términos (Villar, 2012), este nuevo enfoque contempla la posibilidad de crecimiento, realización, empoderamiento y desarrollo personal a partir de la segunda mitad de la vida (Chodzko-Zajko et al., 2009; Grant, 2002).

En particular, entre estos diferentes conceptos propuestos para explicar el “buen envejecer”, los de envejecimiento activo y de envejecimiento saludable son los que juegan un papel central en la comprensión académica actual del proceso de envejecimiento (López-López & Sánchez, 2020), además de tener más calado en el discurso político europeo, debido en gran parte a que se han

elaborado y avalado desde instituciones como las Naciones Unidas, la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS) o la Comisión Europea (Foster & Walker, 2015).

Siendo el deporte uno de los elementos frecuentemente aludido en estos modelos, en la presente tesis se adoptarán como marcos conceptuales de referencia. Por ello, en los siguientes párrafos se procederá con una descripción más detallada del concepto de envejecimiento activo, además de abordar unas reflexiones críticas relativas a su aplicación que han animado el debate académico y político, y finalmente se ahondará en la propuesta más reciente denominada envejecimiento saludable.

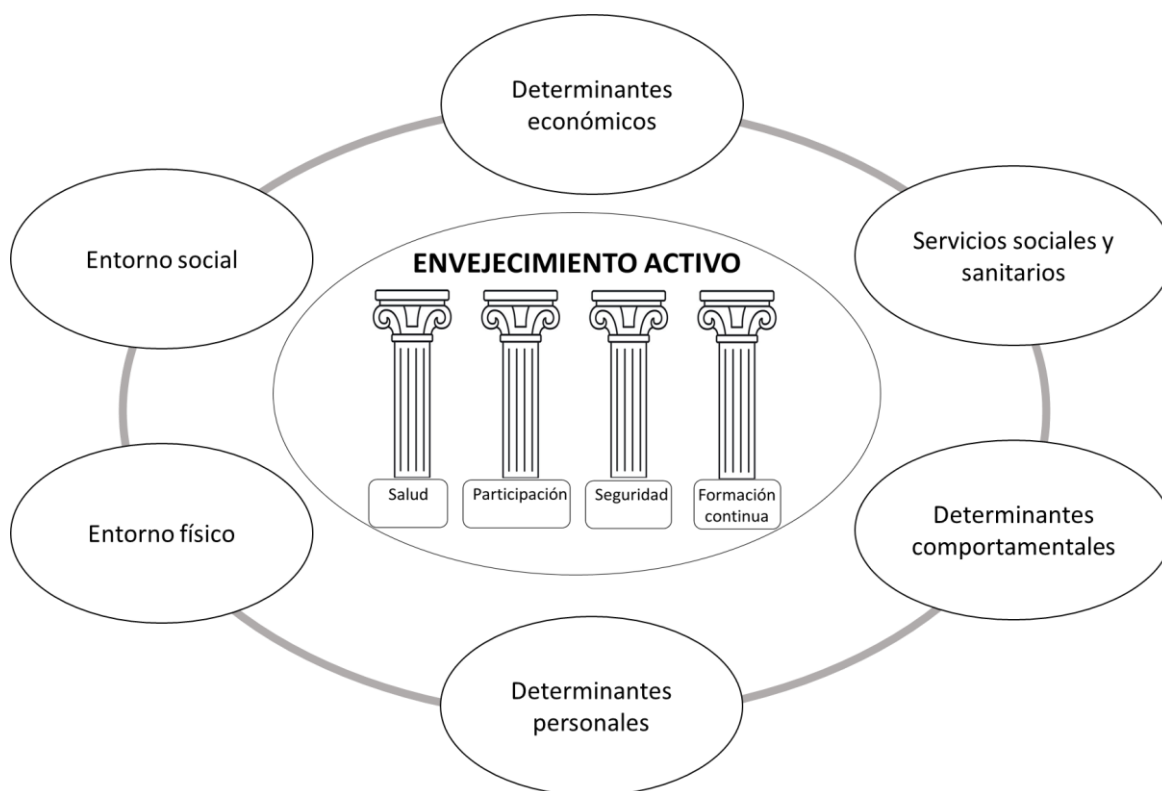
1.3.1 El envejecimiento activo

Frente al incuestionable envejecimiento poblacional y a la necesidad de asegurar la calidad de vida de las personas mayores, en la década de 1990 la Unión Europea estableció un observatorio para estudiar el impacto de las políticas nacionales sobre el envejecimiento (Foster & Walker, 2015). Un punto de inflexión fue cuando en el año 2002 se celebró en Madrid la II Asamblea Mundial sobre Envejecimiento de Naciones Unidas, a la que asistieron los representantes de 159 países. Uno de los documentos clave elaborados durante la reunión fue el Informe de Envejecimiento Activo que, recogiendo la tradición científica que se venía tratando en las últimas décadas del siglo XX, dio oficialmente lugar a la aparición de un nuevo marco político (United Nation, 2002; World Health Organization, 2002). En éste se defendía la necesidad de afrontar el envejecimiento poblacional con la coordinación de los diferentes organismos responsables de formular las políticas y diseñar los programas de envejecimiento que contemplasen intervenciones de promoción de la salud dirigidas a las personas mayores (Segura & Conejero, 2016).

En el documento (ver Figura 1.1), el envejecimiento activo se define como “el proceso de optimizar las oportunidades de salud, participación y seguridad para promover la calidad de vida a medida que se envejece” (World Health Organization, 2002, p.12).

Figura 1.1

Modelo de envejecimiento activo



Nota. Adaptado de *Active ageing: A policy framework in response to the longevity revolution* (p. 9-10), por ICL -Brazil, 2015, International Longevity Centre Brazil.

Se puede por tanto considerar un término integrador e incluyente que enfatiza tanto los elementos individuales relativos a la salud física y el bienestar, como otros comunitarios relacionados con la participación social y el diseño de entornos seguros (Villar et al., 2018a). La palabra "activo" no pretende simplemente referirse a la capacidad de estar bien físicamente o ser productivo a nivel laboral, sino también a la posibilidad de continuar participando en la vida social, económica, cultural, espiritual y cívica a medida que se envejece, de acuerdo con las necesidades, deseos y capacidades de cada persona (Clarke & Warren, 2007). Así, en este modelo, si la actividad es concebida como sinónimo de mejor salud y bienestar, por el contrario, la inactividad se describe como un agravante del declive relacionado con la edad.

Según este modelo (World Health Organization, 2002), los factores clave del envejecimiento activo son:

- la autonomía, que se entiende como la habilidad de controlar, adaptarse y poder tomar decisiones personales sobre la propia vida cotidianamente, de acuerdo con las propias reglas y preferencias;
- la independencia, que se refiere a la capacidad de vivir de forma independiente en la comunidad, sin necesitar la ayuda de otros para desempeñar las actividades básicas e instrumentales de la vida diaria;
- la calidad de vida, que representa una percepción individual de la propia posición en la vida en el contexto del sistema cultural en el que se vive y según los propios objetivos, expectativas y preocupaciones;
- y la esperanza de vida saludable, entendida en términos de ausencia de discapacidad.

Así pues, el envejecimiento activo “permite a las personas mayores alcanzar su potencial de bienestar físico, social y mental a lo largo de sus vidas” (World Health Organization, 2002, p.12) y para lograrlo en las diferentes esferas vitales es necesaria la interacción e influencia de seis grupos de determinantes (ver Figura 1.1), cada uno de los cuales incluye diversos aspectos (ILC-Brazil, 2015):

- Determinantes relacionados con los servicios sociales y sanitarios, como la promoción y prevención de la salud, la prevención de las enfermedades, el acceso a los servicios de salud, así como la asistencia de larga duración;
- Determinantes comportamentales, como la adopción de estilos de vida saludables y la participación activa en el propio autocuidado (ejercicio y actividad física, hábitos de consumo de alcohol y tabaco, alimentación, medicación);
- Determinantes personales, como la biología y genética, y las características psicológicas como la inteligencia y la capacidad de resolver problemas y adaptarse a los cambios y a las pérdidas;

- Determinantes relacionados con el entorno físico, como la seguridad de la vivienda, los niveles bajos de contaminación, los servicios de transportes accesibles y asequibles;
- Determinantes relacionados con el entorno social como el apoyo social, las oportunidades para la educación y el aprendizaje continuo durante toda la vida, la paz y la protección frente a la violencia y el maltrato;
- Determinantes económicos como los ingresos, el trabajo y la protección social.

En base a este modelo, los dos actores encargados de fomentar el envejecimiento activo son, por una parte, los individuos a través de las propias estrategias individuales, y por otra, las instituciones públicas por medio de sus políticas (Walker & Maltby, 2012). Así pues, por un lado, este modelo de envejecimiento presenta una dimensión microsocial relacionada con la situación personal y la auto responsabilidad de cada persona. Por el otro, presenta una perspectiva macrosocial vinculada con la responsabilidad pública de implementar las políticas adecuadas que permitan generar oportunidades de envejecimiento activo (Foster & Walker, 2015).

1.3.2 Las críticas al concepto de envejecimiento activo

Como se ha argumentado hasta el momento, el modelo de envejecimiento activo tiene una importancia incuestionable tanto en el ámbito académico como en el marco de las políticas (principalmente europeas) destinadas a promover la salud y la participación de las personas mayores. Su reconocimiento como herramienta útil deriva de su enfoque holístico de los problemas sociales, así como de sus beneficios en múltiples niveles (micro, meso y macro) para abordar los desafíos demográficos (Lucantoni et al., 2022). Sin embargo, este concepto no ha estado exento de críticas (de São José et al., 2017; Timonen, 2016).

En relación a su aproximación científica, sigue habiendo una considerable falta de claridad conceptual (Boudiny & Mortelmans, 2013). En pocas ocasiones se ha realizado un análisis sistemático sobre las actividades que definen un envejecimiento activo (Perales et al., 2014). De hecho, una de las principales críticas tiene que ver con los criterios que se utilizan para incluir

ciertas actividades y, por ende, para excluir otras. En concreto, la ambigüedad inherente al término “actividad” ha sido señalada como la principal responsable de una notoria falta de acuerdo en la definición operativa del mismo concepto (Villar et al., 2018b). En numerosas ocasiones, esta definición ha quedado implícita o se ha dado por supuesto que envejecer activamente implica llevar a cabo unas pocas actividades que se consideran de especial importancia, generalmente desde un punto de vista económico y productivo. Así, pese a que la definición propuesta originalmente por la OMS abarcaba un amplio rango de actividades sociales, económicas, culturales, espirituales y cívicas (World Health Organization, 2002), los enfoques basados en una sola dimensión del envejecimiento activo han sido, en gran medida, prevalentes. De hecho, el proyecto más ambicioso para evaluar las actividades que determinan un envejecimiento activo, conocido como el “Índice de Envejecimiento Activo” (AAI: *Active Ageing Index*), destaca las actividades vinculadas a un trabajo remunerado y aquellas relacionadas con el cuidado informal a otros familiares (que también conllevan un importante impacto socioeconómico) (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2013). Otros tipos de contribuciones relativas a otras áreas de participación social que pueden contribuir al bienestar de las personas mayores y de las sociedades en general (por ejemplo, la actividad física, el voluntariado) tienen un menor peso en este índice. Así, un enfoque economicista y productivista centrado en la ampliación de la vida laboral ha ocupado el lugar central en la comprensión de las formas de envejecer de manera activa (Foster & Walker, 2021; Serrat et al., 2015).

Otra cuestión ampliamente señalada en el debate académico y político es que el modelo de envejecimiento activo parece ser prescriptivo y sugerir soluciones rápidas (Stenner et al., 2011), como si existiera una manera apropiada para envejecer “bien”. Sin embargo, el perfil cada vez más cambiante y heterogéneo de las personas mayores ha dado lugar a múltiples y diversas formas de envejecer (Gergen & Gergen, 2003) cuya comprensión resulta ser crucial. Como señalan Principi y colaboradores (2021), la poca atención a la diversidad de preferencias, aspiraciones y motivaciones individuales conlleva el riesgo de imponer una única forma de

envejecer generalmente concebida desde la perspectiva del investigador. Frente a esta adopción de un enfoque de arriba hacia abajo para promover el envejecimiento activo, aparece la necesidad de brindar oportunidades para que las personas decidan por sí mismas, a través de herramientas participativas consultivas o codecisionales (Lucantoni et al., 2022).

Otro aspecto crítico del modelo de envejecimiento activo es su tendencia a fomentar que las personas mayores asuman la responsabilidad de su propia salud y bienestar, ignorando cualquier forma de desigualdad. Esto puede ser problemático para aquellas personas que no tienen recursos físicos, económicos y sociales (Brown & Baker, 2012; Rudman, 2015). En consecuencia, parece que los destinatarios de estas políticas de promoción de la salud son precisamente personas mayores saludables que tienen los recursos para obtener los beneficios de un estilo de vida activo y placentero (Grant, 2002).

Según Boudiny y Mortelmans (2013), si el paradigma del envejecimiento activo quiere ser una herramienta de política efectiva, debe ser concebido como un concepto dinámico, basado en el ciclo vital, que permita a las personas elegir sus propias formas de actividad, en lugar de centrarse en un número predeterminado de dominios. En la misma línea, Foster y Walker (2021) remarcan la importancia de adoptar una perspectiva del ciclo vital centrada no sólo en las experiencias personales de la infancia y mediana edad y sus consecuencias a largo plazo sino también en el contexto histórico, cultural y social. Dado que los valores y objetivos de las personas mayores en relación con las dimensiones del envejecimiento activo pueden variar considerablemente según el contexto, la cultura y las tradiciones (Timonen, 2016), respetar la diversidad nacional y cultural es de suma importancia. Asimismo, de São José y colaboradores (2019) proponen desplazar el foco de la actividad hacia las capacidades y por tanto centrarse más en las oportunidades y preferencias de las personas mayores, aunque la identificación de estas requiera un esfuerzo y un enfoque más flexible.

1.3.3 El envejecimiento saludable

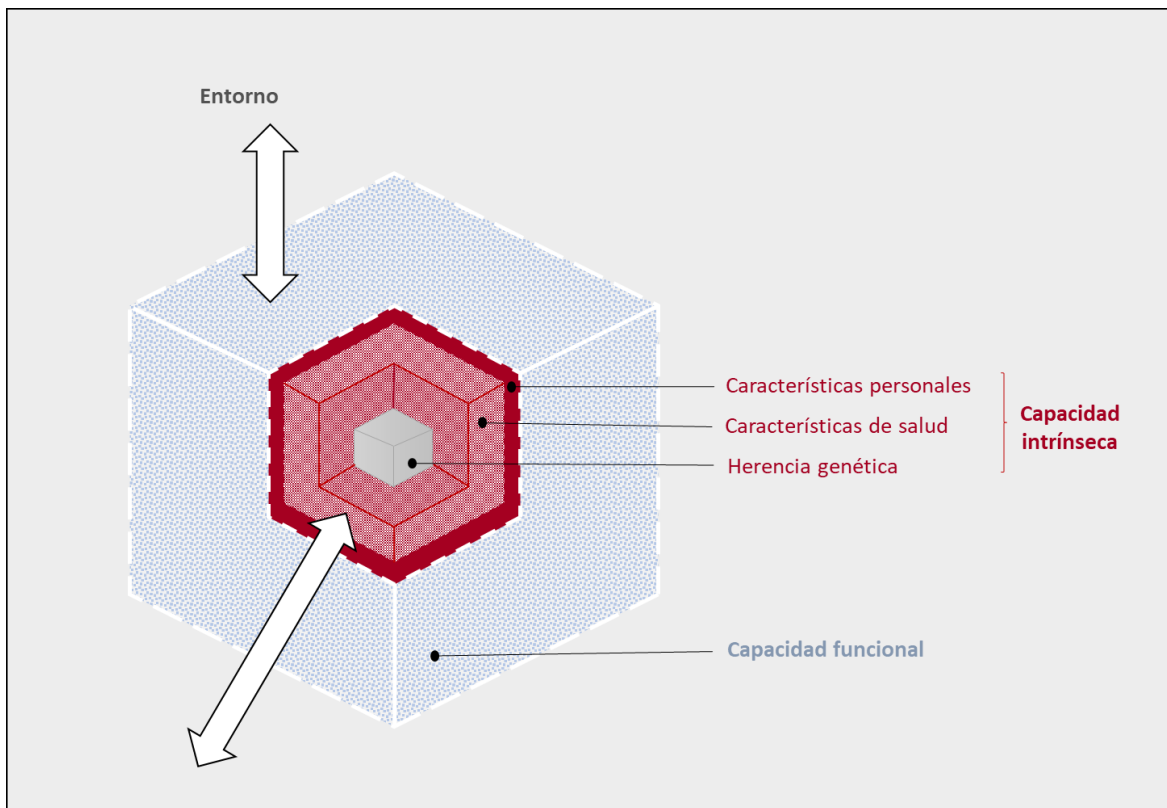
En un intento de avanzar en los compromisos derivados de la II Asamblea Mundial sobre el Envejecimiento, la OMS estableció que el periodo comprendido entre 2020 y 2030 sería conocido como la década del envejecimiento saludable. El objetivo, acorde con el título, pretendía reivindicar la posibilidad de envejecer en las mejores condiciones posibles dentro de un contexto en el que, como se ha argumentado al principio de este capítulo, el aumento de la esperanza de vida se mantiene permanentemente al alza desde hace más de un siglo. En este contexto, la OMS sustituyó su compromiso con el concepto de envejecimiento activo, que mantenía desde 2002, por el de envejecimiento saludable.

Aunque se hayan difundido diferentes definiciones del concepto de envejecimiento saludable (Menassa et al., 2023), en 2015 la OMS en el informe sobre envejecimiento y salud (World Health Organization, 2015) lo definió como “el proceso de desarrollar y mantener la capacidad funcional que permite el bienestar en la vejez” (p. 28).

Es importante reconocer que para envejecer de manera “saludable” no se trata únicamente de llegar a una edad avanzada, sino más bien de mantener una funcionalidad óptima y experimentar satisfacción con la vida (Michel et al., 2016). Como afirma la directora general de la OMS, Margaret Chan, en el prefacio del informe (World Health Organization, 2015), “el envejecimiento saludable es más que la ausencia de enfermedades [...]; el mantenimiento de la capacidad funcional tiene la mayor importancia” (p. VIII). Así, como se observa en la Figura 1.2, la capacidad funcional se entiende como el resultado de la interacción entre la capacidad intrínseca del individuo (es decir, la combinación de todas sus capacidades físicas, mentales y psicosociales), y sus condicionantes ambientales (en su sentido más amplio e incluyendo el entorno físico, social y político). En particular, en el informe se considera que la multitud de características genéticas, personales y de salud, así como los cambios psicosociales asociados con el envejecimiento, interactúan para determinar la capacidad intrínseca de una persona.

Figura 1.2

Modelo de envejecimiento saludable



Nota. Adaptado de *World report on ageing and health* (p.28) por World Health Organization, 2015, World Health Organization.

La vía del envejecimiento saludable corresponde a un proceso que se extiende a lo largo de la vida. Después de la concepción, la primera y la segunda parte de la vida parecen tener la mayor influencia en la trayectoria funcional de una persona, que puede volverse más o menos positiva en cualquier momento. Una trayectoria óptima podría ser aquella en la que un individuo sea capaz de construir y mantener la capacidad intrínseca y vivir con independencia funcional dentro de su propio entorno (Michel et al., 2016). De hecho, aunque la capacidad intrínseca tienda a disminuir con la edad, algunos individuos de 80 años o más consiguen mantenerla en un nivel superior al promedio observado en adultos jóvenes, mientras que otros experimentan pérdidas de capacidad muy significativas en edades mucho más tempranas. Estas tendencias, por un lado, resaltan la diversidad como sello distintivo de las últimas décadas de la vida y, por el otro,

apuntan a un potencial de mejora de aquellas trayectorias no óptimas (Beard et al., 2017). Además, la capacidad intrínseca es sólo una de las dimensiones del funcionamiento de una persona. Los entornos en los que habitan y su interacción con ellos también son determinantes importantes ya que les proporcionan recursos o barreras para la participación en actividades que les interesan (Östlund-Lagerström et al., 2015).

La investigación para dilucidar los factores que pueden influir positivamente en el envejecimiento saludable se ha convertido en una prioridad para los gobiernos y las agencias de financiación. El mismo documento de la OMS sugiere cuál podría ser la estrategia más adecuada para desarrollar el envejecimiento saludable (World Health Organization, 2015), estableciendo cinco objetivos: (1) Lograr el compromiso de cada país para adoptar medidas adecuadas sobre el envejecimiento saludable. (2) Crear entornos adaptados a las personas mayores. (3) Armonizar los sistemas de salud con las necesidades de las personas mayores. (4) Fomentar sistemas sostenibles y equitativos para ofrecer atención a largo plazo (domiciliaria, comunitaria e institucional). (5) Mejorar los métodos de medición, seguimiento e investigación sobre envejecimiento saludable.

En general, se puede afirmar que el modelo de envejecimiento saludable representa un “reflejo importante de las realidades sociales y culturales que están reconstruyendo la comprensión de la vejez en el siglo XXI” (Gilleard & Higgs, 2002, p.371) y constituye un enfoque preeminente a nivel científico y político para responder al envejecimiento demográfico. Siendo la participación deportiva particularmente aludida en los discursos de promoción del buen envejecer resulta interesante explorar su relación con estos modelos de envejecimiento activo y saludable. Es por ello que, en el siguiente capítulo, se profundiza sobre el papel del deporte en el proceso de envejecimiento.

CAPÍTULO II: EL PAPEL DEL DEPORTE EN EL PROCESO DE ENVEJECIMIENTO

2.1 Algunas precisiones conceptuales

En el lenguaje cotidiano, así como en la literatura, los conceptos *actividad física*, *ejercicio físico* y *deporte* se combinan y confunden a menudo. Según las normas culturales y las direcciones políticas de cada país, estos términos se definen de forma distinta, lo que conlleva una falta de consenso universal. Para clarificar dicha distinción, resulta conveniente proceder con algunas precisiones conceptuales relativas a cada uno de estos términos.

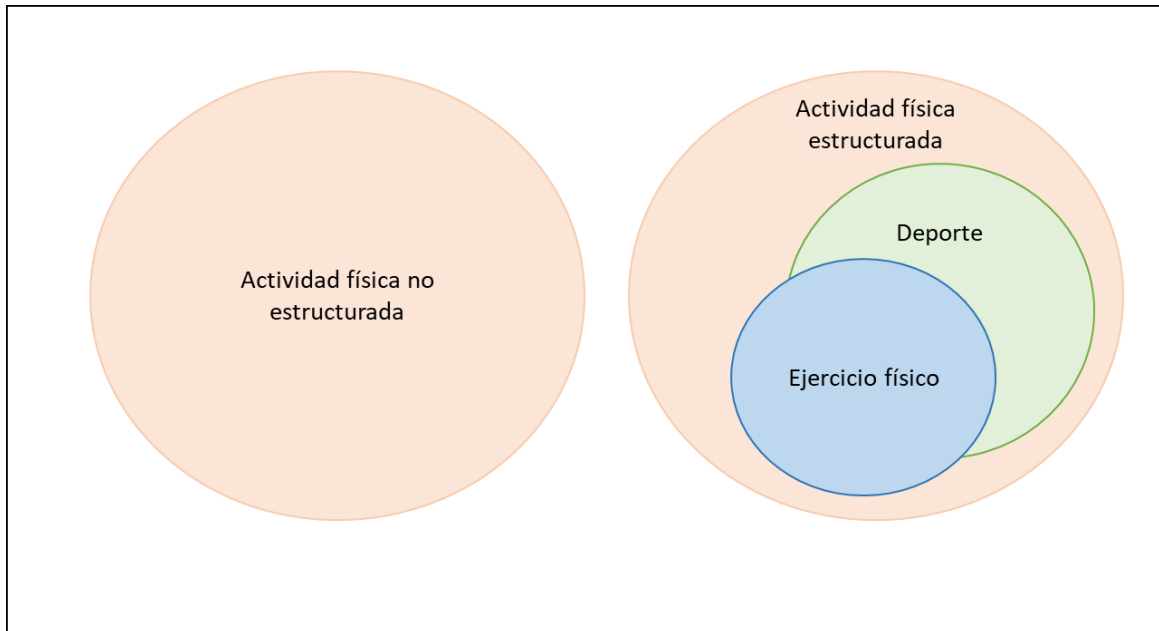
En la presente tesis la definición de *actividad física* adoptada es “cualquier movimiento corporal que se produce por la contracción de los músculos esqueléticos y que produce incrementos sustanciales en el consumo de energía del cuerpo respecto al estado de reposo” (Caspersen et al., 1985, p.126). Bajo esta definición se incluye tanto la actividad física no estructurada como aquella estructurada. La primera hace referencia a las actividades domésticas (por ejemplo, las tareas del hogar o la jardinería), las que se desarrollan en el lugar de trabajo, y aquellas vinculadas a modalidades de transporte activo (por ejemplo, usar la bicicleta o caminar). La segunda se refiere a un conjunto de actividades planificadas y repetitivas como las clases de ejercicios organizadas (por ejemplo, clases de aquagym) (World Health Organization, 2018).

En este sentido, cabe precisar que el término *ejercicio físico* se suele usar indistintamente junto al término de actividad física, y, de hecho, ambos tienen una serie de elementos comunes. Así, tanto la actividad física como el ejercicio involucran cualquier movimiento corporal que gaste energía; se miden en kilocalorías; y se correlacionan positivamente con la condición física a medida que aumentan la intensidad, la duración y la frecuencia de los movimientos. Sin embargo, el ejercicio no es sinónimo de actividad física: “es una subcategoría de la actividad física estructurada que tiene como objetivo la mejora o el mantenimiento del estado físico” (Caspersen et al., 1985, p.128).

Finalmente, en cuanto al término *deporte*, en la presente tesis se considera como una subcategoría de la actividad física estructurada que incluye la práctica de ejercicio físico (Figura 2.1).

Figura 2.1

Actividad física, ejercicio físico y deporte



Nota. Adaptado de Khan, et al. (2012)

El deporte se puede realizar individualmente o como parte de un equipo (Khan et al., 2012). Su práctica puede requerir tácticas, estrategias, habilidades neuromusculares especializadas y un alto grado de dificultad y esfuerzo (Canadian Heritage, 2013). Un aspecto que lo diferencia de los conceptos de actividad física y ejercicio es el grado de formalidad que su adhesión conlleva. Es decir, el deporte implica una participación planificada dentro de una estructura de reglas o normas codificadas y estandarizadas a desempeñar por todos los participantes dentro de un espacio o área determinada (campo de juego, pista, etc.) (Khan et al., 2012). El objetivo de la práctica del deporte consiste en el mantenimiento o la mejora de la condición física, el bienestar mental, y el desarrollo de las relaciones sociales (Council of Europe, 1992), lo que puede

corresponder a la finalidad de otras formas de ejercicios. No obstante, el rasgo diferencial del deporte es el elemento de competición entendida como la superación de una marca o un adversario para poderse calificar o clasificar en función del resultado obtenido (Canadian Heritage, 2013).

2.2 Participación deportiva y envejecimiento

2.2.1 Perspectivas tradicionales de participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida

El deporte es un fenómeno social y cultural importante para el desarrollo humano a lo largo de todo el ciclo vital. En el ámbito práctico, tiene efectos tangibles y predominantemente positivos en las esferas de la educación, la economía y la salud pública. En el terreno educativo, el deporte juega un notable papel de transmisión de valores como respeto, responsabilidad, compromiso, perseverancia, tolerancia a la frustración y dedicación, entre otros. Asimismo, la influencia en varios sectores de la economía del deporte como consumo y espectáculo de masas es indudable. Y en cuanto a su función en el ámbito de la salud pública, la participación deportiva promueve el bienestar y la calidad de vida de los individuos (Council of Europe, 1975).

Sin embargo, a lo largo de la historia el reconocimiento de estos beneficios no se ha contemplado como algo aplicable y extensible a todas las etapas de vida. Tradicionalmente la participación deportiva ha estado orientada en gran medida a una población joven (Hobart, 1975), y por ende, la mayoría de las investigaciones se han centrado en niños o adultos jóvenes, con una tendencia a enfatizar las “características juveniles” como el vigor, la fuerza, la agilidad y el riesgo (Bodner, 2009). Durante la mayor parte del siglo XX, la participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida no se esperaba ni se alentaba y, por el contrario, se percibía como algo inapropiado (Gard et al., 2017; Kluge, 2002). Se suponía que las actividades deportivas, a menos que no implicasen ejercicios suaves por motivos terapéuticos, podían tener efectos perjudiciales (incluso mortales) para los cuerpos en proceso de envejecimiento (Coakley, 2017; Grant, 2001). En esta línea, el “bien merecido descanso” y el ocio pasivo se consideraban como las conductas más adecuadas para las últimas décadas de la vida (Palmer et al., 2018, p.675) y, en consecuencia, actividades como los bolos, la jardinería, el bingo, las manualidades y los juegos de carta se empezaron a asociar estereotípicamente a las personas mayores (O’Brien Cousins, 1998, 2000).

El desaliento a que las personas a partir de la segunda mitad de la vida participen en actividades deportivas por temor a que fueran peligrosas y pudieran imponer demasiadas exigencias físicas,

se puede vincular a los prejuicios y estereotipos tradicionales basados en una visión del envejecimiento asociada a problemas de salud, fragilidad, pérdida, discapacidad y desconexión (Blaikie, 1999; Bytheway, 1995; Chodzko-Zajko, 2000); es decir, a un inevitable declive biológico, fisiológico, psicológico y social a medida que se envejece (Dionigi, 2006a). En este sentido, algunos autores (e.g., O'Brien Cousins, 2000) destacaron una relación entre estos estereotipos de envejecimiento y la falta de participación deportiva en las últimas décadas de la vida, sugiriendo que las personas a menudo se adhieren a estas creencias culturales basadas en "cómo debe comportarse una persona mayor" (Grant, 2001, p.793). Esto a su vez influye en sus percepciones de lo que es posible (y aceptable) física, atlética y socialmente a medida que envejecen y, consecuentemente, en sus decisiones de iniciarse o mantenerse involucrados en diversas actividades (Levy & Myers, 2004).

2.2.2 Nuevas perspectivas de participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida

Tal y como argumentado en el Capítulo I de esta tesis, a finales del siglo XX, con la aparición de los discursos positivos sobre el envejecimiento en los campos relacionados con la gerontología (Rowe & Kahn, 1998), la segunda mitad de la vida empezó a concebirse como un período de disfrute, independencia, vitalidad, exploración, desafío, productividad, crecimiento y desarrollo (Featherstone & Wernik, 1995). En la literatura prosperaron múltiples mensajes sobre la autonomía de las personas que envejecen, las formas alternativas de concebir el envejecimiento y los consejos sobre una vida activa.

Sin embargo, las nociones de actividad física y deporte no aparecieron en los primeros documentos internacionales relevantes respecto a la promoción del buen envejecer. Como sugiere Guillemard (2013), esta omisión puede ser debida a la fuerte correlación entre la idea de envejecimiento activo y envejecimiento productivo reflejada en estos primeros documentos. Fue solo a principios de la década de 2000 que las prácticas de actividad física y deporte aparecieron en las recomendaciones de importantes autoridades internacionales como estrategias para

mantener la mayor independencia posible y durante el mayor período de tiempo (Chodzko-Zajko, 2000; Grant, 2002; Shephard, 1997). Por ejemplo, el Informe de la II Asamblea Mundial sobre el Envejecimiento de Naciones Unidas exhortaba a la necesidad de “animar a las personas mayores a adoptar o mantener un estilo de vida activo y saludable, en particular mediante la realización de actividades físicas y deportivas” (United Nation, 2002, p. 28). En esta misma línea, la campaña *Healthy Ageing* lanzada en 2003 estableció una correlación entre la actividad física, el bienestar y la calidad de vida: “Los amplios beneficios de la actividad física para las personas mayores están bien documentados y asociados con una mejor duración y calidad de vida” (The Swedish National Institute of Public Health, 2007, p.9). Así pues, se adoptó un enfoque preventivo relacionado a la práctica de actividad física y deporte. Se trataba de tener un estilo de vida 'activo', esforzándose para prevenir las enfermedades o los potenciales efectos nocivos del envejecimiento. A partir de este momento, se asistió a un cambio de los discursos dominantes sobre el sentido de idoneidad de la participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida. Así, se proporcionaron instrucciones cada vez más detalladas para el desarrollo de entornos amigables con las personas mayores, con el objetivo de brindarles oportunidades para la participación deportiva (ampliación de la oferta en los clubes deportivos, refuerzo del apoyo a las federaciones deportivas para personas mayores, etc.).

Paralelamente al auge de políticas sobre una nueva visión del envejecimiento, otro factor que impulsó a las personas mayores a participar en el deporte fue el desarrollo de nuevas políticas deportivas. En 1975, con la *Carta Europea de Deporte para Todos* (Council of Europe, 1975), el Consejo de Europa estableció las bases de las políticas gubernamentales en el ámbito del deporte. Basado en la idea de que todo ciudadano debería tener el derecho y las oportunidades para practicar deporte en un entorno saludable, este documento propugna un acceso a la participación deportiva sin ningún tipo de discriminación por motivos de raza, color, edad, idioma, religión, género u orientación sexual, opiniones políticas o de otro tipo, origen nacional o social, pertenencia a una minoría nacional, ingresos, nacimiento o cualquier otra condición. Desde su

versión de 1992 y con su reciente revisión en 2021, la Carta Europea del Deporte sigue inspirando a los responsables de la formulación de políticas y brindando orientación a los estados miembros sobre cómo perfeccionar sus legislaciones deportivas existentes y desarrollar un marco integral para el deporte que permita a los ciudadanos aprovechar los importantes beneficios que conlleva en temas de salud, inclusión y educación (Council of Europe, 2021). Alentando los contactos entre los ciudadanos y los países europeos, reconoce que la participación deportiva puede contribuir al desarrollo tanto personal como social. Por ello, con este documento, se intenta promover la oferta de actividades deportivas y orientar adecuadamente las intervenciones para que puedan contribuir a la mejora del equilibrio psicofisiológico de las personas, así como a la consolidación de una identidad cultural europea en temas de deporte.

2.2.3 Tendencias actuales de participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida

Actualmente se dispone de informes que, aunque no diferencien claramente los conceptos de ejercicio, actividad física y deporte, resultan valiosos por representar las tendencias de participación deportiva de la población (Australian Sports Commission, 2018; European Commission, 2018; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Entre ellos, un documento muy informativo es el Eurobarómetro, que recoge los resultados de encuestas en materia de deporte y actividad física realizadas en los 28 Estados miembros de la Unión Europea.

Según el último informe (European Commission, 2018), la probabilidad de no realizar ejercicio o deporte aumenta con la edad. Como se puede observar en la Tabla 2.1, la proporción de personas que no hacen ejercicio ni practican deporte es del 24 % entre los 15 y los 24 años, y se incrementa hasta un 61 % entre los mayores de 55 años. Además, un análisis de los datos sociodemográficos revela que el sexo, la educación y la situación económica podrían tener un efecto determinante en la participación. En concreto, entre las personas que nunca hacen ejercicio ni practican deporte, el 64 % son mujeres, el 73 % ha abandonado el sistema educativo a los 15 años o antes y el 66 % tiene dificultades para pagar sus facturas.

Tabla 2.1

Porcentaje de encuestados que nunca practican ejercicio o deportes, por variables sociodemográficas

Edad	%
15-24	24
25-39	35
40-54	44
55 +	61
Género y edad	
Hombres 15-24	15
Hombres 25-39	28
Hombres 40-54	39
Hombres 55 +	58
Mujeres 15-24	33
Mujeres 25-39	42
Mujeres 40-54	50
Mujeres 55 +	64
Educación (finalización estudios)	
15 o menos	73
16-19	52
20 +	31
Siguen estudiando	16
Dificultades para pagar facturas	
La mayoría de las veces	66
De vez en cuando	55
Casi nunca /Nunca	41

Nota. Adaptado de “*Special Eurobarometer 472 - December 2017. Sport and physical activity*” (p.12), por European Commission, 2018.

Esta tendencia también se confirma en otras regiones del mundo, como en Estados Unidos, donde las personas con niveles más bajos de educación tienen menos probabilidades de participar en deportes (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Asimismo, en Australia la tasa de participación en actividades físicas y deportivas organizadas desciende desde el 56 % para el grupo de edad de entre 40 a 54 años, hasta el 46 % para las personas mayores de 55 años, alcanzando el 39 % entre las personas mayores de 75 años. Además, se registra una disminución más pronunciada entre las mujeres que entre los hombres (Australian Sports Commission, 2018).

En cuanto a la distribución geográfica dentro de la Unión Europea, los datos del Eurobarómetro indican que en los 28 estados miembros encuestados los niveles de participación deportiva muestran una gran variación (European Commission, 2018). En términos generales, en función de la posición geográfica y de la admisión oficial a la Unión Europea, se podría establecer una división entre el grupo de los países escandinavos (Dinamarca, Finlandia y Suecia); los países anglosajones (Reino Unido e Irlanda); los países continentales (Alemania, Austria, Bélgica, Francia, Luxemburgo y los Países Bajos); los países del sur de Europa (Grecia, Italia, Portugal y España) y finalmente los países que ingresaron en la Unión Europea posteriormente al 2004 (Bulgaria, Chipre, Croacia, Eslovenia, Eslovaquia, Estonia, Hungría, Letonia, Lituania, Malta, Polonia, República Checa, Rumanía), siendo estos últimos la mayoría países del Este.

Como se observa en la Tabla 2.2, los resultados indican unos porcentajes más altos de las personas que nunca practican ejercicio o deporte tanto en los países del sur de Europa como en aquellos que ingresaron en la Unión Europea posteriormente al 2004. Se observa, por el contrario, una disminución de este porcentaje en los países continentales, los anglosajones, hasta alcanzar una notable reducción en los países escandinavos, donde se obtienen los índices de práctica más elevados.

Estos datos sugieren que Europa no se puede considerar un todo homogéneo, ni en términos políticos, culturales, económicos, ni en la comprensión y adhesión a la práctica deportiva. A pesar de que las políticas del *Deporte para Todos* se hayan desplegado desde hace varias décadas en muchos países europeos, la participación deportiva aún no está completamente democratizada, sobre todo entre las personas que se encuentran en la segunda mitad de la vida. Esto puede atribuirse en parte a las diferencias en los valores culturales que sustentan el sistema político de cada país (Bergsgard et al., 2007). Por ejemplo, en los países escandinavos, la igualdad y la solidaridad se consideran muy importantes y determinan muchas decisiones políticas. Por lo tanto, no sorprende observar que en estos países las políticas de *Deporte para Todos* se priorizan

sistemáticamente, y la desigualdad social en términos de participación deportiva es menor en comparación con otros países (Van Bottenburg et al., 2005).

Así pues, la participación deportiva sigue teniendo principalmente un carácter nacional, lo que ha conllevado a que la mayor parte de la investigación empírica en materia de deporte en la segunda mitad de la vida tenga también lugar a nivel nacional. Por ende, la escasez de datos comparables, sobre todo en cuanto a la operacionalización del deporte y la actividad física, ha determinado una escasez de estudios comparativos dentro de Europa (Scheerder et al., 2011; van Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010).

Tabla 2.2

Porcentaje de encuestados que nunca practican ejercicio o deportes, por los 28 países miembros de la EU

Países	%
<i>Escandinavos</i>	
Dinamarca	20
Finlandia	13
Suecia	15
<i>Anglosajones</i>	
Irlanda	34
Reino Unido	37
<i>Continental</i>	
Alemania	38
Austria	40
Bélgica	29
Francia	46
Luxemburgo	27
Países Bajos	31
<i>Sur</i>	
España	46
Grecia	68
Italia	62
Portugal	68
<i>Ingresados en EU post 2004</i>	
Bulgaria	68
Chipre	46
Croacia	56
Eslovenia	24
Eslovaquia	49
Estonia	48
Hungría	53
Letonia	56
Lituania	51
Malta	56
Polonia	56
República Checa	41
Rumanía	63

Nota. Adaptado de “*Special Eurobarometer 472 - December 2017. Sport and physical activity*” (p.10), por European Commission, 2018.

2.3 Competición deportiva y envejecimiento

La implicación en la participación deportiva puede situarse en un continuo que va desde niveles lúdicos y recreativos hasta niveles competitivos. En el primer caso, la finalidad trasciende los resultados en términos de rendimiento y se centra en el disfrute, el goce, la diversión, la amistad y el buen estado físico que la participación deportiva genera (Dionigi, 2005). En el segundo caso, los objetivos de la participación deportiva giran alrededor de la competitividad (Smither & Houston, 1992), entendida como el deseo de “ganar en situaciones interpersonales”, y “ser mejor que otros” (Remor, 2007, p.168). En esta línea, Martens (1975) la define como una disposición a alcanzar un estándar de excelencia cuando se realizan comparaciones en presencia de evaluadores externos, siendo la evaluación social el componente clave de este proceso. Por tanto, la competitividad se entiende comúnmente como un proceso social que se centra en superar a otros que están realizando la misma tarea deportiva. Asimismo, puede referirse a una orientación personal enfocada en desafiarse a uno mismo, monitoreando el propio desempeño en función de los mejores logros o metas personales futuras.

Tradicionalmente se creía que el deporte competitivo era una actividad de “formación del carácter” de los jóvenes atletas, crucial para su desarrollo (Coakley, 2017). Esta creencia se remonta al periodo de la revolución industrial y a la importancia de incentivar el buen estado físico entre los trabajadores varones jóvenes para mejorar su productividad. En consecuencia, la participación deportiva competitiva tiene un historial de promoción dirigido a jóvenes, especialmente hombres. De hecho, los atletas competitivos han sido históricamente representados en la cultura occidental como jóvenes, fuertes, agresivos, físicamente hábiles e independientes (Dionigi, 2005).

En este escenario, la “competitividad seria”, caracterizada principalmente por el esfuerzo físico extremo, el foco en la mejora constante del rendimiento, la victoria y la ganancia, se ha considerado como una conducta extraña, excepcional, casi desviada o anormal en la segunda mitad de la vida (Dionigi, 2016). Por tanto, la orientación competitiva no ha sido reconocida

socialmente como actividad apropiada en esta etapa de la vida, en comparación con la más aceptada orientación recreativa basada en nociones de amistad y diversión (Evans & Sleaf, 2015).

2.3.1 Masters sport

Un momento decisivo para la inclusión de las personas mayores en la participación deportiva competitiva fue la instauración de un nuevo movimiento social, el movimiento de los Masters, que allanó el camino para aquellos atletas que, de lo contrario, no serían admitidos a eventos deportivos debido a su edad. Así pues, los *Masters Sports* (también denominados *Senior* o *Veteranos*), que surgieron localmente como un conjunto de acciones comunitarias, se desarrollaron como una forma institucionalizada para la participación deportiva competitiva de los atletas que habían superado la edad típica de rendimiento máximo (McIntyre et al., 1992).

Aunque es difícil identificar la fecha de nacimiento de los *Masters Sports*, en general se acepta que sus orígenes se remontan a mediados de la década de los 60, con la proliferación de eventos deportivos competitivos nacionales e internacionales a gran escala organizados para participantes de edad superior a aquella típica de rendimiento máximo en múltiples disciplinas deportivas. Precisamente, en 1966 en Estados Unidos, el abogado y corredor californiano David Pain creó la primera *Milla de Masters* para atletas mayores de 40 años, un evento tan exitoso que incentivó una rápida expansión de competiciones deportivas de las mismas características en varios países (Olson, 2001). En el amplio panorama de estos eventos competitivos cabe mencionar los *World Masters Games* (WMG), calificados como el "evento multideportivo más grande del mundo" dirigido a atletas mayores de 30 años (International Masters Games Association, 2022). Celebrado cada cuatro años, este evento está regido por la *International Masters Games Association* (<https://imga.ch>), una asociación internacional no gubernamental sin ánimo de lucro reconocida por el Comité Olímpico Internacional como el organismo representativo de los *Masters Sports* en todo el mundo, cuya misión, en consonancia con la filosofía del *Deporte para Todos* (Council of Europe, 2021), incluye la promoción de la competitividad y la amistad entre deportistas, "sin

importar la edad, el género, la raza, la religión o el estatus deportivo” (Weir et al., 2010, p.5). De aquí que los WMG han sido calificados como una "celebración mundial del deporte para todos y para toda la vida" (O'Bryan, 2012). Los WMG permiten que las personas puedan competir regularmente contra otras, dentro de un rango de edad similar (en franjas de edad de cinco a diez años), generalmente comenzando a los 30 años, aunque esto puede variar dependiendo de la edad típica de rendimiento máximo para cada deporte. La participación es más elevada entre los adultos de 40 a 49 años, aunque, como se comentará en el siguiente párrafo, en los últimos años se ha registrado un aumento entre los deportistas mayores de 55 años (Weir et al., 2010).

En cuanto a su evolución, después de la edición inaugural en Toronto (Canadá) en 1985, que atrajo 8305 participantes procedentes de 61 países y que compitieron en 22 disciplinas deportivas, el evento creció rápidamente. En 2009, en Sídney (Australia), se registró un aumento de casi cuatro veces en el número de participantes en comparación con los juegos originales; esto es, 28.676 atletas compitiendo en 28 disciplinas deportivas diferentes (Heazlewood et al., 2011). En esta misma línea, las ediciones sucesivas de los WMG celebradas en 2013 en Turín (Italia) y la más reciente en 2017 en Auckland (Nueva Zelanda), registraron la presencia de un mayor número de competidores, disciplinas deportivas y países representados en comparación con los eventos anteriores (International Masters Games Association, 2022). Hoy en día, los eventos *Masters* se realizan regularmente en Norteamérica, Australia, Japón, Nueva Zelanda y Europa a nivel local, estatal, nacional e internacional, con al menos 44 disciplinas deportivas diferentes (Baker, Horton, et al., 2010).

2.3.2 El fenómeno de los atletas senior

Pese a que la participación deportiva general tiende a disminuir con los años (European Commission, 2018), el reciente auge de los *Masters Sports* desafía esta tendencia registrando crecientes tasas de participación entre atletas cuya edad supera aquella de rendimiento típica de la disciplina deportiva practicada. En función de la edad, estos atletas se denominan “masters” a

partir de los 30 años y “senior” o “veteranos” a partir de los 55 años (Young et al., 2018). En la presente tesis, centrada en explorar la experiencia de este último colectivo de atletas, se usará el término anglosajón “senior” de forma consistente.

Los atletas senior se caracterizan por una serie de aspectos comunes (Young, 2011). En primer lugar, cabe destacar su participación en deportes regidos por reglas que tienen un grado inherente (aunque variable) de competitividad, y que se distinguen claramente de otras formas de actividades físicas o ejercicios. Por otro lado, se caracterizan por su registro formal en eventos multideportivos (como por ejemplo los *Masters Games*) o campeonatos (que prevén una calificación previa a la participación) que se organizan a nivel local, nacional o internacional. Asimismo, otro aspecto distintivo es que sus aspiraciones competitivas generan un patrón regular de actividades de preparación y entrenamiento deportivo.

La popularidad y el crecimiento del fenómeno de atletas senior, que utilizan su tiempo e ingresos disponibles para competir en el deporte, es claramente una tendencia de ocio emergente, que se puede asociar a diferentes razones. Por un lado, cabe mencionar el envejecimiento demográfico (explicado en el Capítulo I de esta tesis), así como la presencia de una cohorte de *baby boomers* que en su mayoría posee unos requisitos personales y estructurales favorables para concebir el deporte como forma predominante de ocio (Son & Dionigi, 2020). Asimismo, en línea con lo que se ha argumentado en los párrafos anteriores (Chodzko-Zajko, 2000; Grant, 2002; Shephard, 1997), otro factor clave es la mayor aceptación cultural de la participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida en sociedades que han empezado a enfatizar la importancia de la alfabetización física y deportiva temprana para promover la salud de las personas a medida que envejecen (Jones et al., 2018). En este sentido, las proyecciones indican que este fenómeno aumentará con el envejecimiento de la generación de los *baby boomers* ya que, de acuerdo con van Norman (1995, p.4) parecen “más preocupados por practicar deporte que las generaciones anteriores y no están dispuestos a aceptar la imagen de envejecimiento caracterizado por un estilo de vida sedentario, y por el deterioro de la salud física”. Tales consideraciones no apuntan

necesariamente a que todas las personas a medida que envejecen busquen actividades de ocio físicamente exigentes (como la participación deportiva competitiva), ni implica que la enfermedad y la dependencia no afecten a una gran proporción de la población envejecida. Más bien, significa que las generaciones emergentes de personas en su segunda mitad de la vida pueden implicarse, cada vez más frecuentemente, en actividades competitivas extenuantes físicamente, que como se ha mencionado anteriormente, habitualmente se consideraban actividades orientadas a los jóvenes e inapropiadas para los más mayores (Eman, 2011).

Aunque resulte difícil realizar una estimación exacta, los atletas senior representan un porcentaje pequeño, aunque creciente, del total de la población (Ruiz et al., 2008). De hecho, con respecto al resto de personas de su edad, los atletas senior se muestran como dotados de capacidades físicas superiores (Mckendry et al., 2018; Trappe, 2001), al punto de percibirse a sí mismos como personas "únicas" o "excepcionales" (Dionigi, 2015b) y ser percibidos por los demás como un ejemplo de envejecimiento óptimo llevado casi al límite extremo (Cooper et al., 2007; Geard et al., 2016; Hawkins et al., 2003). Así pues, este fenómeno representa una clara ruptura del discurso dominante que identificaba las últimas décadas de la vida con la fragilidad y la enfermedad, e incluso va más allá de la idea de la práctica deportiva como actividad lúdica y recreativa (Dionigi, 2010).

El afán de estos atletas por competir para ganar, lograr su mejor marca personal, batir récords mundiales o llevar sus habilidades físicas al límite refleja un cambio en la forma de conceptualizar y experimentar el cuerpo envejecido (Palmer et al., 2018). La constante práctica de probar y monitorear sus competencias físicas les proporciona la posibilidad de mantener un sentido coherente del yo como físicamente activo, capaz y competitivo, lo que a su vez puede contribuir significativamente a sus sentimientos de empoderamiento y control (Tulle, 2008). El potencial emancipatorio del deporte se traduce así en la capacidad de estos atletas senior en transgredir y desafiar las imágenes comunes del envejecimiento, ejercitando sus cuerpos. De esta forma la participación deportiva competitiva representa para ellos una estrategia para adaptarse al

proceso de envejecimiento, resistiendo a los estereotipos negativos. En esta línea, algunos estudios argumentan que el riesgo es que los atletas senior, adoptando el discurso del envejecimiento positivo, podrían llegar a negar la inevitabilidad de la vejez en su intento de resistir el envejecimiento del cuerpo (Phoenix, 2011). En general, el fenómeno los atletas senior puede ser más complejo que la resistencia, los sentimientos de empoderamiento personal o una expresión de falta de deseabilidad de una vejez patológica. Esta participación puede, en cambio, representar una interacción y negociación simultánea de todas estas dimensiones (Dionigi, 2006a).

A la luz de todo lo expuesto, el fenómeno de la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior representa nuevas formas de entender el deporte, la competitividad y el envejecimiento en la mayoría de los países con altos ingresos. Su estudio resulta particularmente interesante por diferentes razones. Por un lado, porque podría indicar el potencial de los límites del envejecimiento activo en condiciones extremas. Por otro lado, profundizar sobre este tipo de participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida, podría facilitar la comprensión tanto de los factores que determinan el compromiso deportivo a lo largo de la vida, como del establecimiento de nuevos comportamientos legitimadores en el proceso de envejecimiento, de los que los atletas senior son líderes a través de sus prácticas competitivas.

Sin embargo, pese a que este fenómeno haya recibido una atención creciente en los medios populares y haya sido el foco de un creciente cuerpo de trabajos empíricos en las últimas dos décadas, la investigación centrada en las experiencias de los atletas senior sigue siendo escasa y poco sistematizada.

CAPÍTULO III: REVISIÓN DE LOS ANTECEDENTES DE LAS VARIABLES PSICOSOCIALES ASOCIADAS A LA PARTICIPACIÓN DEPORTIVA COMPETITIVA EN LA SEGUNDA MITAD DE LA VIDA

3.1 El modelo socioecológico

La literatura sobre la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida se ha centrado predominantemente en los aspectos fisiológicos y médicos (en términos de resistencia, fuerza y flexibilidad) vinculados a los altos niveles de rendimiento que la participación deportiva sostenida requiere (Wright & Perricelli, 2008). Una de las limitaciones de este enfoque es que se ha vinculado excesivamente a la narrativa del declive físico asociado al envejecimiento (Tulle & Phoenix, 2015), desatendiendo el hecho de que las implicaciones del deporte son de largo alcance y van más allá de la salud física.

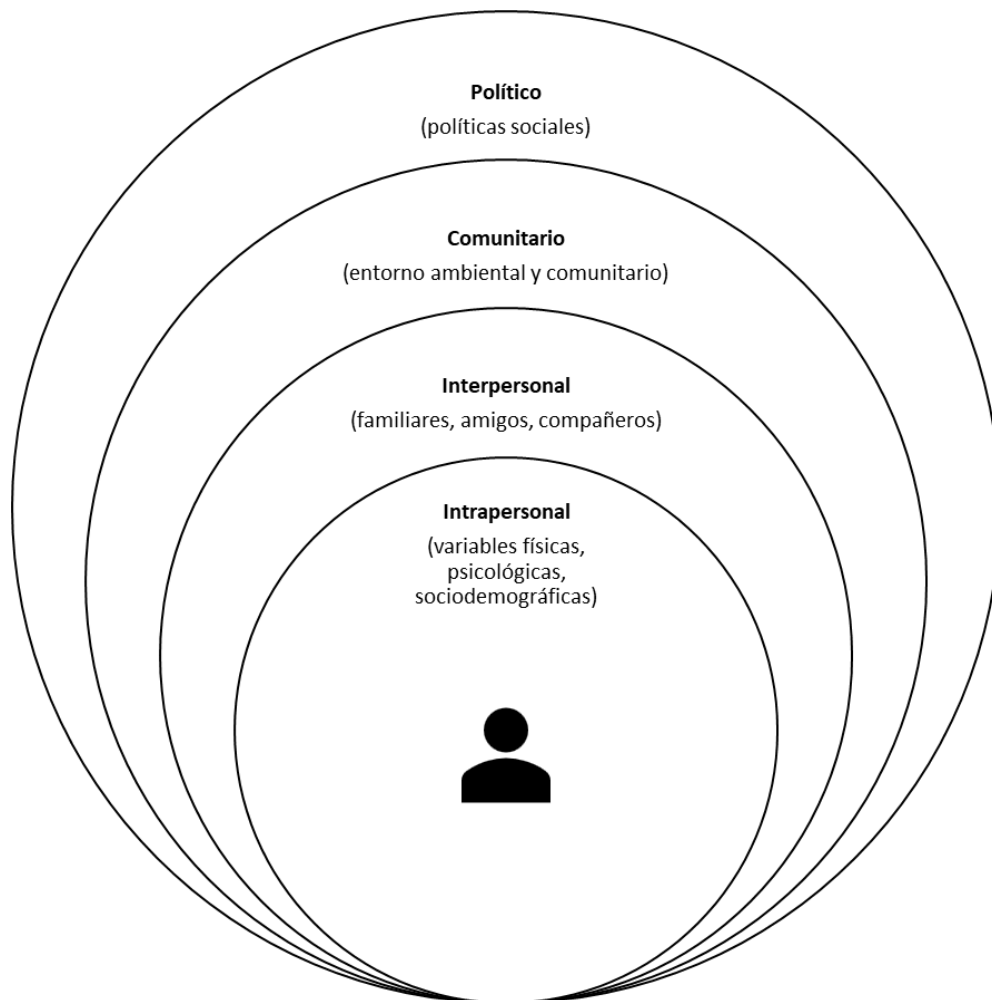
Sin ignorar la importancia de ésta, la dimensión psicosocial, aunque haya sido menos explorada, juega un papel clave en la comprensión de la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida. Así, se trata de un fenómeno que se desarrolla en particulares circunstancias sociales y ambientales y tiene un claro impacto psicológico en las personas que practican deporte. Por ello, un abordaje psicosocial multifacético que vaya más allá de un enfoque centrado solo en los individuos y el funcionamiento de sus cuerpos puede resultar clave. Cabe precisar que, aunque el término "psicosocial" tiene un significado amplio en la investigación social, en la presente tesis nos referimos a éste como "la intersección e interacción de las influencias sociales, culturales y ambientales en la mente y en el comportamiento" (VandenBos, 2015, p.862).

De acuerdo con esta definición, para comprender de una manera holística las implicaciones psicosociales de la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida, en la presente tesis adoptaremos el modelo socioecológico, definido como "un marco general para comprender la naturaleza de la relación de las personas con su entorno físico y sociocultural" (Stokols, 1992, p.7). Los principios fundamentales de este modelo fueron presentados por primera vez por Urie Bronfenbrenner a finales de la década de 1970 (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), y fueron sucesivamente aplicados en diferentes propuestas teóricas (e.g., McLeroy et al., 1988;

Sallis et al., 2008; Stokols, 1992). La lógica que rige el modelo es que los individuos no son estáticos y aislados sino dinámicos y sujetos a constantes cambios y adaptaciones (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Una de sus fortalezas radica en la visión amplia del entorno como una serie de estructuras anidadas. Así, se sitúa a los individuos en el centro de un sistema conformado por cuatro capas: los denominados niveles intrapersonal, interpersonal, comunitario y político (ver Figura 3.1).

Figura 3.1

Modelo socioecológico de los niveles de influencia



El primer nivel representa la capa más interna del microsistema (Sallis et al., 2008). La investigación centrada en este nivel explora las variables físicas, psicológicas (por ejemplo, actitudinales, cognitivas y conductuales) y sociodemográficas (por ejemplo, el género, el nivel educativo, el estado civil, la condición económica, la ocupación laboral) que podrían influir en ciertos comportamientos de los individuos. Ejemplos de este cuerpo de investigación son los estudios que indagan los factores motivacionales que determinan la participación deportiva de atletas en la segunda mitad de la vida (e.g., Hodge et al., 2008).

El nivel interpersonal representa el complejo de relaciones del individuo con su entorno inmediato (por ejemplo, la familia, el trabajo, las amistades). Los estudios que abordan este nivel tienden a investigar cómo estas relaciones facilitan o limitan ciertos comportamientos (por ejemplo, el apoyo de los compañeros de equipo contribuye al mantenimiento de la participación deportiva; e.g., Choi et al., 2018).

El tercer nivel incluye factores relacionados con la comunidad y el entorno ambiental. La investigación enfocada en este nivel se centra en determinar cómo el entorno comunitario y ambiental donde viven las personas puede influir en sus comportamientos (por ejemplo, la falta de instalaciones deportivas puede representar una barrera para el acceso a la participación deportiva; e.g., Eime, Charity, et al., 2015).

Finalmente, el cuarto nivel representa la capa más externa del modelo socioecológico. Las decisiones tomadas a este nivel influyen en el comportamiento de los individuos (por ejemplo, las políticas sociales orientadas a la promoción del deporte en la segunda mitad de la vida pueden facilitar la participación deportiva de los individuos en esta etapa vital; e.g., Gard & Dionigi, 2016).

En general, se acepta que ningún nivel por sí solo explica adecuadamente el comportamiento humano. Por el contrario, adoptando un abordaje integrador el modelo socioecológico contempla una interacción compleja entre los niveles, en la que los factores de uno pueden influir en los factores de otro; es decir que todos los niveles pueden influir en el comportamiento de un individuo (Stokols, 1996). En otras palabras, los individuos están integrados en el entorno que les

rodea y, por lo tanto, sus conductas se ven influenciadas no solo por sus características intrapersonales, sino también por su interacción con los entornos sociales (Bengtson & Settersten, 2016).

El modelo socioecológico se ha utilizado en los estudios sobre el envejecimiento (e.g., Bengtson & Settersten, 2016), así como en estudios sobre las conductas de salud (e.g., Marquez et al., 2009; Stokols et al., 1996) y la actividad física (e.g., Giles-Corti & Donovan, 2002; King & King, 2010; Sallis et al., 2006). Esta literatura generalmente reconoce que las intervenciones multinivel basadas en modelos socioecológicos y dirigidas a los entornos sociales, físicos y políticos de los individuos son los medios más viables para lograr cambios relacionados con la manera de envejecer y con la adopción de hábitos saludables (como, por ejemplo, la práctica de actividad física) dentro de una población.

Sin embargo, la aplicación del modelo socioecológico en el ámbito de la investigación deportiva es escasa (Casey et al., 2009; Eime, Casey, et al., 2015). Y en el caso específico de la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior, tan solo en la última década los investigadores han comenzado a utilizar el enfoque socioecológico para abordar su estudio (Chen et al., 2022; Jenkin et al., 2016; Naar et al., 2017). Así pues, desde este enfoque, competir en la segunda mitad de la vida se concibe no únicamente como el producto de factores personales, sino también de factores vinculados al entorno en el que vive el individuo. Y es precisamente a través de estas influencias bidireccionales entre la persona y su entorno que se intentan explicar, en parte, las diferencias entre los atletas senior.

En la presente tesis, el modelo socioecológico se usará como marco de referencia para la comprensión de los estudios que se presentan en el Capítulo V. Siguiendo las premisas del modelo, su aplicación servirá para explorar, de forma más sistematizada, los determinantes de la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida. Esto es, los factores que facilitan o, por el contrario, limitan la participación en deportes competitivos entre atletas senior, incluyendo tanto aquellos que entrenan y compiten en distintas disciplinas deportivas desde que

eran jóvenes, como a las personas que han comenzado o reanudado su participación en la segunda mitad de la vida (Dionigi, 2015a). A continuación, profundizaremos en los conocimientos existentes en la literatura sobre las motivaciones para la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior, las barreras que podrían alejarlos de su participación deportiva competitiva, y sus opiniones sobre las barreras para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva.

3.2 Antecedentes de las motivaciones para la participación deportiva competitiva

La cuestión de por qué algunas personas participan en deportes mientras que otras no lo hacen se ha debatido durante décadas. Específicamente en el contexto deportivo, la motivación es uno de los factores más importantes que pueden influir en la participación y el rendimiento de los atletas (Stefanek & Peters, 2011). Y es por ello que la literatura sobre la participación deportiva ha prestado considerable atención a esta cuestión, adoptando varios enfoques para comprender el constructo psicológico de la motivación. Por ejemplo, algunos estudios (e.g., Vallerand, 2007), se han centrado en los motivos intrínsecos, que se refieren a la participación en una actividad puramente por el placer y la satisfacción que su práctica conlleva (por ejemplo, el placer de intentar superarse constantemente, el mantenerse sano). Otros estudios (e.g., Deci et al., 1999), se han enfocado en los motivos extrínsecos referidos a una amplia variedad de comportamientos que se realizan para obtener una recompensa externa (por ejemplo, la oportunidad de ganar trofeos, obtener reconocimiento social). Asimismo, se han desarrollado varias teorías de la motivación en relación con la participación deportiva, como las teorías cognitivas sociales de la motivación, entre las cuales la teoría de la meta de logro (e.g., Nicholls, 1984) y la teoría de la autodeterminación (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985) representan buenos ejemplos.

En cualquier caso, hay que remarcar que el número de estudios que examinan las motivaciones para la participación entre atletas senior ha sido sustancialmente menor en comparación con la población de atletas más jóvenes. En una reciente revisión sobre las razones que impulsan la participación de los atletas senior en deportes genéricos (es decir, no necesariamente competitivos), Stenner y colaboradores (2020) identificaron cinco temas principales relacionados con la (1) salud; (2) el sentido de comunidad; (3) las relaciones sociales; (4) la competitividad y (5) el envejecimiento con éxito. Según sus resultados, los factores relacionados con la salud fueron los motivos más reportados para la participación en el deporte (Cardenas et al., 2009a), aunque en los estudios revisados se encontró poca diferenciación entre la salud física, psicológica y cognitiva. Independientemente del deporte practicado, el sentido de comunidad se consideró

otro motivador crucial en muchos estudios (Lyons & Dionigi, 2007), lo cual puede relacionarse al mayor riesgo de soledad y aislamiento que pueden experimentar las personas a medida que envejecen y al impacto negativo que éste puede tener en su proceso de envejecimiento. Asimismo, la presencia de otras personas significativas en la vida de los atletas senior (por ejemplo, familiares, compañeros de equipo y entrenadores que los apoyan) pareció representar una gran fuente de motivación en los estudios revisados (Naar et al., 2017). La competitividad, incluyendo el acto de competir y el resultado de las competiciones (por ejemplo, ganar medallas, alcanzar récords mundiales, etc.) fue otra razón que se reportó con frecuencia en la literatura (Dionigi, 2002). Finalmente, la contribución del deporte a la experiencia de un envejecimiento con éxito se mencionó en estudios centrados en demostrar como la participación deportiva ayuda a disipar los estereotipos negativos sobre el envejecimiento (Heo et al., 2013).

Desde un punto de vista metodológico, la mayoría de los estudios revisados por Stenner y colaboradores (2020) privilegiaron un enfoque cualitativo con un uso predominante de entrevistas semiestructuradas o en profundidad. Entre los estudios cuantitativos, se reportó mayoritariamente el uso de cuestionarios diseñados *ad hoc* (p. ej., Cárdenas et al., 2009) o estandarizados. Sin embargo, en la mayoría de los casos sigue faltando una validación para la población de atletas senior (por ejemplo, la *Sport Motivation Scale*; Pelletier et al., 1995), o un enfoque en deportes competitivos en lugar de actividad física genérica (por ejemplo, el *Participation Motivation Questionnaire for Older Adults*; Kirkby et al., 1998, 1999).

En general, aunque de la revisión de la literatura se desprende que ha habido cierta investigación sobre las motivaciones para participar en el deporte entre atletas senior, esta evidencia podría no ser aplicable al caso específico de la participación deportiva competitiva. En este caso, comprender los motivos que subyacen al compromiso imprescindible para sostener una actividad tan exigente en la segunda mitad de la vida podría contribuir a la identificación de factores clave para mantener este tipo de práctica deportiva e incluso llegar a animar a otras personas de la misma edad a participar. Además, se hace patente la falta de un instrumento específicamente

dirigido a explorar las motivaciones para participar en el deporte competitivo entre los atletas senior y centrado en los factores de competitividad, así como en todas las dimensiones de la salud (física, emocional, cognitiva y social).

Por otro lado, cabe señalar un aspecto a tener en cuenta para explorar las motivaciones que sustentan la participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida. Tal y como se ha mencionado en el Capítulo I, las personas que envejecen constituyen un colectivo diverso, que lejos de ser monolítico agrupa a personas con diferentes identidades, circunstancias, experiencias y preferencias (Kolb, 2014; McPherson, 1994). Esta heterogeneidad, por lo tanto, podría tener un impacto en las motivaciones para la participación deportiva, ya que las personas pertenecientes a diferentes grupos sociodemográficos podrían tener diversas razones para hacerlo. A su vez, esto podría ser importante en el diseño de intervenciones para aumentar su participación y mejorar la probabilidad de permanencia en el deporte.

Aunque algunos autores (Gayman et al., 2017) hayan recomendado evaluar la influencia de ciertas variables sociodemográficas en la participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida, hasta hoy la mayoría de los estudios que han abordado esta cuestión son limitados. Cardenas y colaboradores (2009b) exploraron las razones para participar en los *North Carolina Senior Games*, encontrando algunas diferencias con respecto al sexo (las mujeres eran más propensas a indicar razones relacionadas con factores interpersonales y de salud); las situaciones de convivencia (las personas que vivían solas eran más propensas a indicar razones relacionadas a factores interpersonales); niveles de educación e ingresos (los participantes con menor nivel educativo y de ingresos eran más propensos a indicar razones relativas a la salud física y a aspectos interpersonales).

En otro estudio (de Pero et al., 2009), aunque no se encontraron diferencias en relación a la variable sexo, se evidenció que los atletas senior que compiten a nivel local presentan puntajes inferiores de autodeterminación en comparación con los atletas más jóvenes que compiten a nivel nacional o internacional. Exceptuando este estudio, cabe destacar que no ha habido

prácticamente investigación centrada en el contexto sociocultural europeo y en posibles diferencias entre participantes de un país u otro.

3.3 Antecedentes de las barreras para la participación deportiva competitiva

Tal y como se ha argumentado en el párrafo anterior, si la investigación sobre las motivaciones de los atletas senior para participar en deportes competitivos ha sido limitada, aquella sobre las barreras que enfrentan en sus disciplinas deportivas competitivas ha sido aún menos frecuente. Aunque contamos con algunos estudios centrados principalmente en los factores que limitan el acceso a la práctica deportiva genérica en la segunda mitad de la vida, son muy escasos aquellos que abordan los aspectos competitivos de la participación deportiva entre atletas activamente involucrados en sus disciplinas. Recurriendo al modelo socioecológico (McLeroy et al., 1988; Stokols et al., 1996), estos factores que actúan como barreras, identificados en los estudios existentes, se podrían clasificar en las dimensiones intrapersonales, interpersonales, comunitarias y políticas.

Dentro de la dimensión intrapersonal, se han estudiado principalmente factores vinculados con algunas variables físicas, psicológicas y sociodemográficas. En cuanto a las primeras, un mal estado de salud física (Spiteri et al., 2019) junto con el miedo a posibles lesiones que la práctica deportiva podría ocasionar (Bowness, 2020b) han sido entre las principales barreras aludidas. Asimismo, entre las barreras psicológicas más mencionadas se destacan la falta de motivación o interés en el deporte (Baert et al., 2011) así como la adhesión a estereotipos relacionados al declive físico en el envejecimiento que conlleva un sentimiento de falta de idoneidad para la participación deportiva (Grant, 2001; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). Las variables sociodemográficas, como un nivel socioeconómico bajo y el sexo femenino (vinculado al papel tradicionalmente atribuido a la mujer y centrado en el mantenimiento de la casa y el cuidado de otros), también pueden actuar como barreras para la participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida (Kokolakakis et al., 2012; Liechty et al., 2017).

Con respecto a la dimensión interpersonal, la investigación indica que la falta de apoyo por parte de la familia, los amigos o los compañeros de equipo también puede constituir una barrera para la participación en deportes (Horton et al., 2015; Kirby & Kluge, 2013). Asimismo, los compromisos

relacionados con la etapa del ciclo de vida de la familia (p. ej., edades de los hijos, nietos o padres) podrían actuar como barreras para la participación debido a las limitaciones de tiempo que en la mayoría de los casos se asocian (Dionigi et al., 2012; Hirvensalo & Lintunen, 2011).

Entre los factores contextuales se han abordado las barreras relacionadas con el entorno en el que viven las personas mayores. Entre ellas se pueden incluir la falta de una oferta deportiva adecuada a las necesidades de las personas a medida que envejecen, así como la falta o insuficiencia de conocimiento, información y promoción de los programas deportivos existentes (Naar et al., 2017). Además, otros factores a tener en cuenta en este abordaje contextual son la disponibilidad de instalaciones e infraestructuras deportivas adecuadas (por ejemplo, en términos de distancia geográfica, calidad) y los costes asociados a la participación deportiva (equipamiento, matriculas, etc.) (Bonaccorsi et al., 2020).

Por último, dentro de la dimensión política se incluyen barreras relacionadas a la carencia o inespecificidad de políticas deportivas públicas (a nivel local, estatal y nacional), siendo éstas principalmente centradas en el deporte de élite infantil y juvenil (Jenkin et al., 2017, 2018).

Cabe señalar que todos estos estudios se han centrado sobre todo en las barreras que enfrentan las personas para comenzar a participar en alguna disciplina deportiva a partir de la segunda mitad de la vida, esto es, las barreras para el reclutamiento. Sin embargo, pocos estudios se han centrado en las barreras que enfrentan aquellas personas que ya están participando en el deporte competitivo para continuar haciéndolo, es decir, las barreras para la retención.

Comprender las barreras percibidas a partir de las experiencias de atletas senior resulta esencial. Contar con este conocimiento podría ayudar a explorar las restricciones que limitan, pero no necesariamente detienen la participación, así como las posibles razones para dejar el deporte competitivo en el futuro. Además, podría ser significativo no solo a nivel individual para maximizar los beneficios del compromiso continuo, sino también a un nivel de política más amplio, para poder enfocar las estrategias de apoyo a los atletas de manera más adecuada e incluso generar políticas dirigidas a mejorar el reclutamiento.

De igual manera que en el caso de las motivaciones, la mayor parte de la investigación previa no ha explorado sistemáticamente la posible relación entre los diferentes tipos de barreras y las características individuales y aquellas vinculadas a la participación deportiva (por ejemplo, deporte individual o de equipo). Asimismo, no constan estudios centrados en el contexto sociocultural europeo y en las posibles diferencias transnacionales.

3.4 Antecedentes de las opiniones sobre las barreras para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva

Como se ha señalado en el párrafo anterior, la mayoría de los estudios sobre los factores que actúan como barreras para la participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida se centran principalmente en las experiencias de personas que no practican ningún tipo de deporte o lo hacen sin alcanzar niveles competitivos. Sin embargo, adoptar la perspectiva de los atletas senior que compiten de forma regular y sistemática en alguna disciplina deportiva podría aportar un conocimiento alternativo para la comprensión de las barreras para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva. Por ello, explorar las opiniones de los atletas senior podría ser crucial, porque como expertos que participan activamente en el deporte a niveles competitivos, podrían brindar sus puntos de vista sobre las barreras potenciales que otras personas mayores pueden encontrar para involucrarse, que pueden coincidir o no con las que han tenido que enfrentar en sus trayectorias deportivas. Además, la exploración de las opiniones de los atletas senior podría ayudar a comprender si ellos mismos se adhieren a ciertos estereotipos acerca de la participación deportiva y el envejecimiento, que como hemos argumentado en el Capítulo II de la presente tesis, se han anidado en las creencias colectivas hasta hace relativamente poco.

El desarrollo de una carrera deportiva se caracteriza por diferentes momentos como la iniciación, la plena participación deportiva, en algunos casos la inactividad y la reanudación, y finalmente el retiro que marca el cese de la actividad deportiva (Hastings et al., 1995). Los atletas senior podrían conocer de primera mano los determinantes de estos procesos, tanto por haberlos experimentado en primera persona o bien visto en otras personas en sus contextos deportivos específicos.

Considerando que cada disciplina deportiva representa una especie de “subcultura” caracterizada por ideales, normas, valores y creencias distintivas (Heo et al., 2013), estos atletas tienen un papel clave en el contexto de su deporte. Constituyen de alguna manera una fuente de socialización

primaria dentro del contexto deportivo de referencia, una vía de acceso para las personas que deciden iniciarse a éste. Así pues, sus opiniones sobre las personas mayores que no participan pueden ser un indicador del comportamiento potencial hacia ellas, lo que en última instancia podría facilitar la inclusión de estas personas en los diferentes contextos deportivos.

Hasta la fecha, existen pocas investigaciones (Gard et al., 2017; Horton et al., 2018, 2019) que hayan explorado las perspectivas de los atletas senior sobre el fenómeno en cuestión. Concretamente, estos estudios cualitativos se realizaron durante los *World Masters Games* de 2013, con una muestra relativamente pequeña de atletas senior (16, 17 y 63 participantes en cada estudio respectivamente). Al preguntarles sobre las razones por las que otras personas de la misma edad no practican deporte, los entrevistados tendían a atribuir la falta de participación deportiva a ciertas características internas (o personales) como la falta de motivación o fuerza de voluntad. Los factores externos (como los determinantes socioculturales y ambientales), a pesar de estar ampliamente avalados en la literatura, no fueron mencionados (Bonaccorsi et al., 2020). Así pues, los participantes tendían a interpretar los bajos niveles de participación deportiva entre los pares como un signo de pereza y conformidad ciega con las ideas obsoletas sobre el envejecimiento como proceso de declive (Gard et al., 2017). De hecho, utilizaron palabras como "perezosas" para describir a las personas que no practicaban deporte, incluso llegando a culparlos por su mala salud o enfermedad (Horton et al., 2018, 2019). Estos resultados van en línea con los mensajes de promoción del deporte basados en políticas que asumen que todas las personas pueden practicar deporte (por ejemplo, la filosofía de *Deporte para Todos*, argumentada en el Capítulo II de la presente tesis).

Sin embargo, hasta donde sabemos, ningún estudio ha explorado estas opiniones acerca de las barreras para la iniciación en la participación deportiva de otras personas mayores en una muestra grande de atletas senior activamente comprometidos en sus disciplinas deportivas. Además, tampoco se ha intentado identificar los factores potencialmente asociados con estas opiniones.

Es bien sabido que la participación en el deporte no sólo está influenciada a nivel individual por un conjunto de variables demográficas, sino que también está fuertemente influenciada por desigualdades y diferencias sociales, culturales y geográficas más amplias (Stebbins, 2017). Dado que las características sociodemográficas de los atletas y aquellas vinculadas a la participación (por ejemplo, tipo de deporte) pueden tener influencias sobre cómo los atletas perciben las potenciales barreras de iniciación en la participación deportiva de otras personas mayores, explorar estas asociaciones podría proporcionar una comprensión más profunda y matizada de lo que impide a las personas mayores participar en deportes.

CAPÍTULO IV: OBJETIVOS

4.1 Objetivo general

La presente tesis tiene como objetivo general explorar las variables psicosociales asociadas con la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior.

4.2 Objetivos específicos

Objetivo 1: Explorar y organizar el conocimiento existente sobre las variables psicosociales de la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida.

1.1 Identificar y clasificar los estudios relativos a las dimensiones intrapersonal, interpersonal, contextual y política de la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida.

1.2 Señalar lagunas de conocimiento y proponer futuras líneas de investigación.

Objetivo 2: Explorar las motivaciones para la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior.

2.1 Identificar los tipos de motivaciones principales para la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior.

2.2 Determinar la influencia de las variables intrapersonales, interpersonales y contextuales en las motivaciones para la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior.

Objetivo 3: Explorar las barreras para la retención de la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior.

3.1 Identificar los tipos de barreras principales para la retención de la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior.

3.2 Determinar la influencia de las variables intrapersonales, interpersonales y contextuales en las barreras para la retención de la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior.

Objetivo 4: Explorar las opiniones de atletas senior sobre las barreras para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva.

4.1 Identificar los tipos de barreras que los atletas senior perciben como obstáculos para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva.

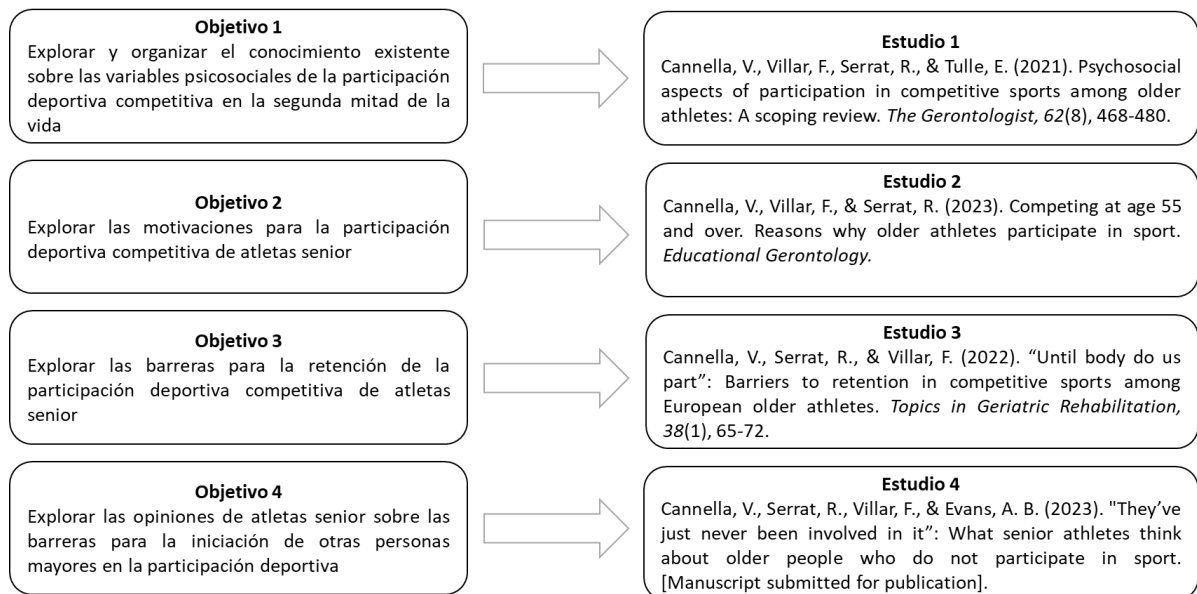
4.2 Determinar la influencia de las variables intrapersonales, interpersonales y contextuales en las opiniones de los atletas senior sobre las barreras para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva.

CAPÍTULO V: ESTUDIOS

Con el propósito de dar respuesta a los objetivos de investigación, se llevaron a cabo un total de cuatro estudios empíricos. En la siguiente figura (Fig. 5.1), se muestra la relación de cada uno de los estudios que forman parte del compendio con los objetivos de la tesis.

Figura 5.1

Relación entre objetivos y estudios de la presente tesis doctoral



A continuación, se incluyen los estudios en sus versiones *pre-print* y en el idioma original de publicación.

5.1 Estudio 1

Cannella, V., Villar, F., Serrat, R., & Tulle, E. (2021). Psychosocial aspects of participation in competitive sports among older athletes: A scoping review. *The Gerontologist*, *62*(8), 468-480. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnab083>
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**Psychosocial aspects of participation in competitive sports among older athletes: A scoping
review**

Valentina Cannella, MS^{a*}, Feliciano Villar, PhD^a, Rodrigo Serrat, PhD^a and Emmanuelle Tulle, PhD^b

RUNNING HEAD: Senior athletes' competitive sports participation

^a Department of Cognition, Development, and Educational Psychology, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

^b Department of Social Sciences, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow, United Kingdom

* Address correspondence to: Valentina Cannella, Department of Cognition, Development, and Educational Psychology, University of Barcelona, Passeig de la Vall d'Hebrón 171, 08035 Barcelona, Spain; E-mail: cannellavalentina@ub.edu

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Conflict of interest

We have no conflict of interest to declare.

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: In the last decade, sport has been considered a tool in active aging to maintain physical fitness, improve mental well-being, and form social relationships among older people. However, a thorough psychosocial understanding of the phenomenon of older athletes competing in sports events is lacking. Most research has focused on competitive sports participation in the young population. This study analyzes the general state of knowledge of competitive sports participation among athletes aged 50 years and older from a psychosocial perspective.

Research Design and Methods: We followed the 5-step process outlined by Arksey and O'Malley. After the search in 4 electronic databases, 69 peer-reviewed articles met the inclusion criteria.

Results: The findings indicate that psychosocial research into older people's participation in competitive sports has grown moderately in the last decade. While intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects have dominated the academic psychosocial discourse on older athletes' competitive sports participation, aspects related to the environment/community and policy have largely been overlooked.

Discussion and Implications: We identified several critical gaps in the literature, classified into conceptual (e.g., lesser attention to personality, emotional, and cognitive aspects), methodological (e.g., longitudinal studies almost absent), and diverse aspects (e.g., focus on a wide indiscriminate age range; few comparisons between types of sports; underrepresentation of some nation or world regions as well as few cross-national comparative studies). These research gaps hint at opportunities that future research on older people's participation in competitive sports should address.

Keywords: Active aging; Master athlete; Seniors games; Socioecological model; Sport participation

Introduction

Sport is a social and cultural phenomenon that is important for human development. According to the Council of Europe's definition (1975), sport participation promotes the quality of life of those who practice it, and has a clear impact on physical, psychological and social dimensions. However, in the past, sports participation was targeted at a young population (Hobart, 1975), since it was assumed that intense physical effort could have detrimental effects on an aging body, unless it was therapeutic in nature. These traditional prejudices and stereotypes were based on a vision of aging associated with inevitable physical decline.

In the last three decades, negative perceptions of later life have changed fundamentally. This can be seen in concepts of successful (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Rowe & Kahn, 1987), active and healthy aging (World Health Organization, 2002, 2015) that celebrate later life as a period of wellbeing, personal development and social engagement, rather than focusing on the ideas of disease, withdrawal and passivity. With the emergence of this new discourse, sports participation has begun to be recognized as a way to help older people maintain their health status and avoid diseases, in other words, to age actively (Dionigi & Gard, 2018). Concurrent with the emergence of this active aging paradigm, opportunities have increased for older people to participate in sport at recreational and highly competitive levels (Weir et al., 2010), but not at the same pace as for young people.

In fact, the dominant discourse about sport for older people has typically emphasized fun and friendship, or friendly competition, rather than serious competition, peak performance or winning. Consequently, sports participation among older people has been promoted more at recreational (e.g., Evans & Sleep, 2015) than competitive level, in which it is a behavior based on comparisons in the presence of external evaluators. Hence, the competitive sports achievements of older athletes have been documented to a lesser extent and only recently (Weir et al., 2010), with the spread of international competitive events across the world (i.e., the Senior/Masters Games). The study of competitive sports in later life, a period traditionally dominated by notions

of frailty and decline, is particularly interesting, since it could indicate the potential and limits of active aging in extreme conditions. However, despite recent interest in competitive sports participation among older athletes, a thorough psychosocial understanding of the phenomenon is lacking.

The literature on older adults' competitive sport participation has focused predominantly on physiological aspects associated with sustained involvement in competitive sport activity, such as high levels of performance in terms of strength, endurance and flexibility (e.g., Wright & Perricelli, 2008). One of the limitations of this approach based on biological aspects of sport and aging is that it has been too steeped in the decline narrative of old age (Tulle & Phoenix, 2015) and has overlooked the fact that the implications of sport are far-reaching and go beyond physical effects. Whilst the physical health factors of sport should not be ignored, sport also has psychosocial dimensions that have been much less explored (Young, 2011). Therefore, a multifaceted approach that moves beyond a focus only on individuals and their bodies' functioning is required to study the participation of older adults in competitive sport, since this activity has a psychological impact and takes place in the community.

One framework that could be useful to understand the psychosocial implications of competitive sport in later life, in a multilayered and holistic way, is what is known as the social ecological model, which has been defined as "a general framework for understanding the nature of people's relation with their physical and sociocultural surroundings" (Stokols, 1992, p.7). Using this model (McLeroy et al., 1988; Sallis et al., 2008), we can state that four main domains can influence sport participation in older competitors: intrapersonal, interpersonal, environmental/community-related and policy. Although all these socioecological domains influence each other, we reflect on the current state of knowledge in the literature for each aspect separately.

Research focused on the intrapersonal level explores psychological and sociodemographic variables that could be studied as antecedents and outcomes of participation in competitive sport

among older people. In the case of antecedents, studies tend to focus on motivational factors that determine participation in competitive events among older athletes (e.g., Hodge et al., 2008). In the second case, studies address the outcome of competitive sport participation in terms of benefits in emotional state due to enjoyment during sports participation (e.g., Andersen et al., 2018).

In the second domain of the socioecological model, research on interpersonal factors tends to investigate the presence of “significant others” (family, friends, teammates, coaches) as a relevant factor that could facilitate or constrain the maintenance of competitive sports practice among older people (Young, 2011). This domain also explores the social nature of participation in competitive sports, which, especially during events, promotes meaningful social interactions for older athletes within and outside the sports network (Andersen et al., 2018).

The third domain of the socioecological model (Sallis et al., 2008) includes factors related to the community and the environment. Studies exploring these topics claim that, beyond socialization and friendship, participation in competitive sports can enhance a sense of belonging to a community among older athletes (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In this area, research focuses on determining how the social environment where older people live (including the availability of facilities, access to them and costs associated with a specific sport discipline) could facilitate or hinder their participation in competitive sport (Collins & Kay, 2014).

Finally, the wider domain in the socioecological model includes research on how sports policy can shape older athletes’ participation in competitive sports. The basic assumption is that a political change would contribute to long-term social changes that could significantly increase active participation in competitive sport for older people (Gard & Dionigi, 2016). Therefore, it can be considered whether current sports policies include older athletes in the competitive sport agenda or still prioritize younger age ranges.

The literature on psychosocial aspects of competitive sports in later life has not been fully systematized and no scoping studies have reviewed overall knowledge on this field. Therefore,

the purpose of this article is to identify the current state of knowledge about psychosocial aspects of older people's participation in competitive sports, and to highlight gaps in the social sciences literature and propose new directions for research.

Methods

Guided by the five-step framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), and expanded by Levac and colleagues (2010), we conducted a scoping review on older people's competitive sport participation for summarizing the existing literature and uncovering gaps.

Step 1: Identify the research question(s)

We identified two research questions for the scoping review:

- (1) What is the current knowledge on psychosocial aspects of older people's participation in competitive sports?
- (2) What challenges should be addressed in future research on older people's participation in competitive sports?

Step 2: Identify relevant studies

With the help of a professional librarian, we developed an iterative process of selecting databases and search terms. The search protocol was initiated in September 2020. Four electronic databases (Web of Science, Scopus, PsycINFO and Sociological Abstract) were searched. We used a combination of keywords related to the concept categories of competitive sport participation and older athletes: (Sport* OR Games) NEAR (Competiti* OR Participation OR Master* OR event OR Vigorous OR Organization OR Olympic OR 'Athletic participation') AND (Adult OR Athlete) NEAR (Older OR Master* OR Senior* OR Veteran) OR (Ag*ng OR elder*). The search terms were adjusted for each database to maximize comprehensiveness.

Step 3: Select studies

Studies were accepted if they were written in English, available electronically in full-text and peer-reviewed. Although we limited our searches to empirical, review or conceptual papers,

we did not use any year of publication limit. We scanned titles and abstracts and applied specific inclusion criteria. The most broadly limiting criterion was to include only papers focused on a working definition of sport participation (Canadian Heritage, 2013): “An activity that involves persons engaged for the purpose of competition, which involves formal rules and procedures, requires tactics and strategies, specialized neuromuscular skills, and a high degree of difficulty and effort” (p. 13). Therefore, articles on general physical activity were excluded. Furthermore, we included studies on athletes. Papers that focused exclusively on other participants in sport, such as volunteers, coaches, healthcare professionals or spectators, were excluded.

Other criteria in addition to the above were followed for the scoping review. In the sporting context there is no universally accepted definition of "older adults". For example, in Masters' and Seniors' sport competitions, participants are usually defined as “Masters” from the age of 35 and "Seniors" from the age of 50 (Wright & Perricelli, 2008). Consequently, in line with previous studies (e.g., Heo & Lee, 2010), we limited the review to athletes aged 50 years and older. However, articles that included younger athletes (< 50 years) were included if the study focused on comparisons between older and younger age groups. In the case of conceptual and review studies, we operationalized the age variable when the title and/or abstract included words such as “aging” or “older”.

Second, we included studies only if the paper's focus was on participation in competitive sports, including individual and team sports that require serious training and vigorous preparation to be played at regional, national and world events (Baker et al., 2010). If the competitiveness dimension was not explicitly expressed (i.e., the focus was recreational sport and/or leisure physical activities), papers were excluded.

Lastly, according to the socioecological model (Sallis et al., 2008), we only included papers that focused on psychosocial aspects. Therefore, studies focused exclusively on biomedical issues, including illness or disease, were excluded.

Decisions about excluding or including papers were based on a review of the title and abstract, followed by a full-text review when the abstracts did not provide enough information to make a decision. Screening of the four databases was performed in two phases. First, one reviewer (CV) searched each database to exclude out-of-scope articles using predefined eligibility criteria applied to the titles and abstracts of identified articles. Second, two reviewers (CV and SR) screened full texts of the potential studies to determine whether they were eligible for inclusion in the review. Disagreement between the two reviewers was resolved by iterative discussions among them and another reviewer (VF). All relevant articles were then compiled into a database for article management and duplication removal.

Step 4: Chart the data

Data were extracted from all selected articles using a standard extraction template. The abstracted data for studies included authors and date, the main study purpose, research design and methodology, sample and type of sport participation characteristics. These data were presented in table format (see Table 5.1.1). We extracted key information from each paper that was included in the final sample, and we charted it using a data-charting form in Microsoft Excel.

Step 5: Collate, summarize, and report the results

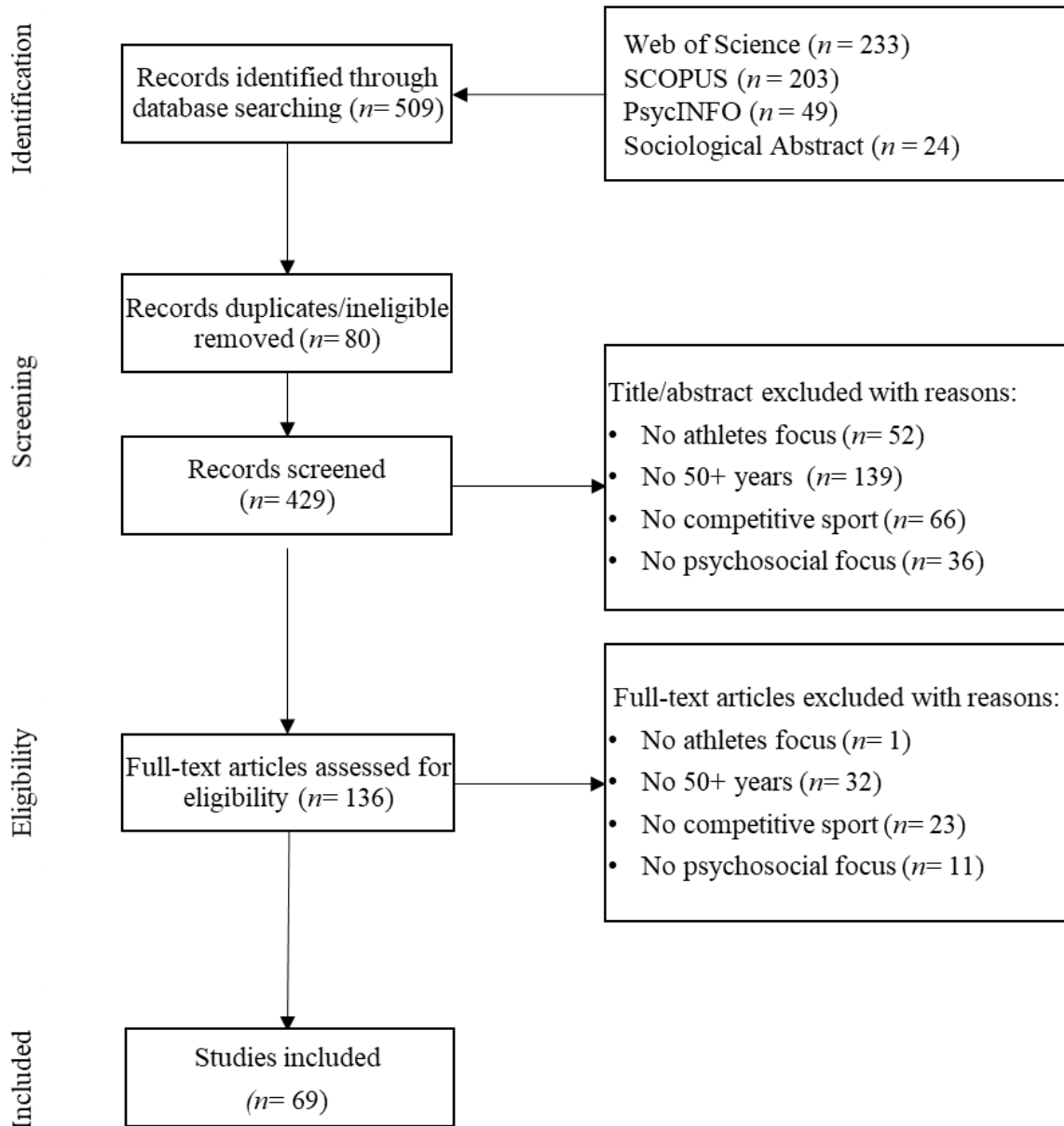
The data collected from the studies were entered into a table, analyzed descriptively and reported as frequency counts. The findings were presented first by descriptive mapping and second by qualitative mapping through a content analysis technique.

Results

The database search yielded an initial 509 records. After removing duplicates, 429 titles and abstracts were screened for eligibility and 136 potentially relevant citations were retrieved in full text. Following the full text review, 69 articles that met the criteria were included. A flow chart of the search is presented in Fig. 5.1.1.

Figure 5.1.1

Study selection flow diagram



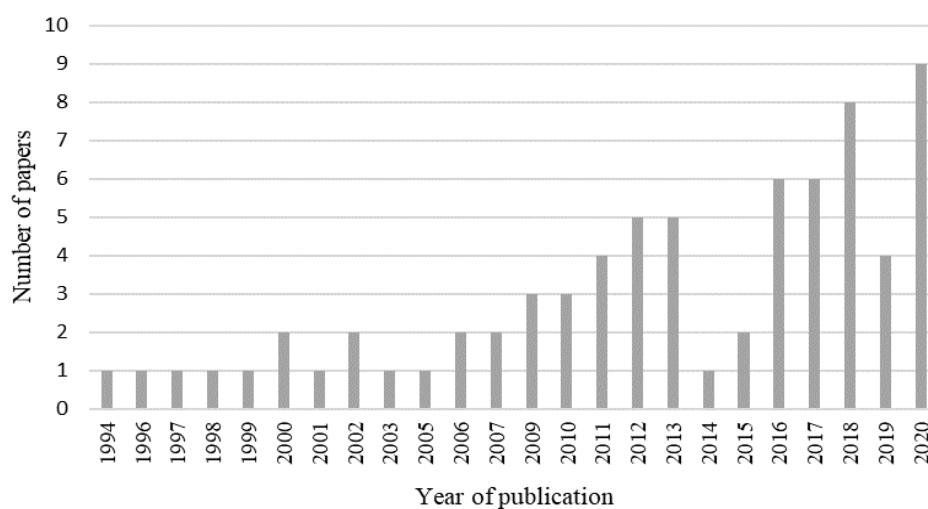
The results are presented in two sections below. First, we provide a descriptive summary of the methodological aspects of the reviewed papers, the sample characteristics and the type of sport participation. Second, according to socioecological model levels (Sallis et al., 2008), we synthesize the results of the qualitative content analysis of the papers.

Descriptive mapping

Studies included in the scoping review were published between 1994 and 2020 with a relevant increase in the number of publications from 2012 onwards. This is related to the fact that in many studies, samples were collected during sporting events for older athletes such as the Masters/ Senior Games, which have seen an exponential rise in participants aged over 50 years, compared to the initial editions. This may have influenced the increased interest in the recent phenomenon of older athletes (see Fig. 5.1.2).

Figure 5.1.2

Number of publications on older people's participation in competitive sport. Period 1994–2020 (N = 69)



Most papers included in the review were empirical (59), with a smaller proportion of review (6) and conceptual papers (4). Among the latter, most review papers focused on psychosocial outcomes of participation in competitive sports in later life (e.g., Gayman et al., 2017). Conceptual papers mainly addressed gender and age issues in the context of competitive sports (e.g., Pfister, 2012), and the implications of the promotion of sport to older people (e.g., Geard et al., 2016). Most of the empirical studies adopted a cross-sectional design (61 out of 62 papers). Over half of the empirical papers used qualitative designs (35), while a lower proportion

adopted quantitative designs (21) and only three papers a mixed method. Only four of the sixty-two empirical papers used secondary data, mainly from archived data on sporting websites.

The analysis of empirical papers included in the review showed a strong presence of studies using samples from more than one country (16), due to the international character of the sporting events on which many studies are based. The most reported countries were the USA (26) and Australia (15) where most of the Seniors and Masters Games took place. Other regions and countries of the world were underrepresented or absent. Moreover, samples of studies included in this scoping review tended to include both male and female participants (46 papers). Only eight empirical studies were focused exclusively on women, whereas another five studies were exclusively on men. Although one of the inclusion criteria stated that the athletes were older than 50 years, four comparative studies included younger athletes (<50 years). According to other inclusion criteria, forty-nine of the fifty-nine empirical studies were on competitive athletes only. A smaller number of papers (10) also included “non-competitive” athletes who do sport at recreational level as a comparison group.

In over three-quarters of the empirical studies included in this scoping review, the type of sport practiced by the sample was specified explicitly. Furthermore, over half of the revised papers (36) reported having collected data at sporting events. The nature of these competitive events was predominantly national (27 papers) with fewer international competitions reported (9 papers). As a result, studies were related to a wide variety of sports disciplines. When sports were grouped by typology, the most frequent individual sports were athletics (track and field), swimming, cycling and triathlon. Among team sports, racquet games were predominantly present in the studies (in particular, tennis and badminton). Likewise, bat and ball games (e.g., softball and basketball) were frequent, with a lower percentage of stick games (e.g., hockey). The difference between the type of sport practiced was only analyzed in two articles (Helsen et al., 2020; Medic et al., 2009). In the remaining studies, the type of sport practiced was not considered a differential variable.

Table 5.1.1*Empirical papers' key methodological, sample and sport participation characteristics (N= 59)*

Characteristic	n	%
Research design		
Cross-sectional	58	98,3%
Longitudinal	1	1,7%
Methodology		
Qualitative	35	59,3%
Quantitative	21	35,6%
Mixed	3	5,1%
Data collection		
Questionnaire	18	30,5%
Interviews and observations	25	42,4%
Archived records data	4	6,8%
Focus group	7	11,9%
Others	5	8,5%
Type of data		
Primary data	55	93,2%
Secondary data	4	6,8%
Sample country ^a		
North America	38	64,4%
Oceania	27	45,8%
Europe	11	18,6%
Asia	4	6,8%
Gender distribution of the sample		
Mixed	46	78,0%
Only women	8	13,6%
Only men	5	8,5%
Age distribution of the sample		
Only ≥ 50 years	55	93,2%
Including < 50 years	4	6,8%
Level of sport participation		
Just competitive	49	83,1%
Including recreational	10	16,9%
Data collected in sports events		
Yes	36	61,0%
No	23	39,0%
Typology of sports ^a		
Athletics	30	50,8%
Racquet sports	27	45,8%
Water sports	24	40,7%
Cycling	21	35,6%
Bat and ball games	19	32,2%
Ball games	17	28,8%
Stick games	10	16,9%
Triathlon	5	8,5%

Note. ^a The sum of categories' frequencies may exceed the total number of papers as a same paper could be classified in more than one category.

Additionally, almost half of the empirical articles included in this scoping review analyzed characteristics of the participants' sports involvement. Specifically, they examined the duration (in training hours), frequency and intensity of sports participation. They also addressed data related to participation in competitive events, focusing on the years that the athletes had been participating in Sports Games, the number of events they had attended and the type of events. Table 5.1.1 presents all the characteristics of the papers, including methodology, sample and type of sport participation.

Qualitative mapping according to the socioecological model

Intrapersonal level

Drawing upon the socioecological model, in the first domain we included forty-nine papers on intrapersonal aspects of competitive sport participation in later life. Most of the selected studies focused on motivational factors determining older athletes' participation in competitive sport (e.g., Newton & Fry, 1998). In particular, competitiveness was stressed as a significant factor for older athletes' participation in competitive events, which challenges the common notion that sport in later life is merely about fun and recreational involvement (e.g., Buzzelli & Draper, 2020). In fact, competitiveness seemed to encourage athletes to train to achieve a "personal best" while they compared themselves with others of their own age cohort (e.g., Dionigi et al., 2010, 2011). Another four papers explored what the authors called "the five constituent year effect" (Helsen et al., 2020; Medic et al., 2009, 2018), in reference to the increase in older athletes' motivation to participate in competitive events if they are in the first or second year of any 5-year age category and the decrease when they are in the fourth or fifth year. Only three of the reviewed papers (e.g., Hirvensalo et al., 2000) analyzed the continuity of competitive sport participation over the lifespan and focused on understanding possible patterns and factors that promote or discourage lifelong involvement in competitive sport. Personality and emotional factors were addressed in only six of the forty-nine articles. These papers focused on

personality traits (Smith & Storandt, 1997), anxiety and depression (e.g., Bardhoshi et al., 2016), happiness (e.g., Ito & Hikoji, 2019) and precompetitive stress (Hoar et al., 2012).

In many of the remaining studies, the reasons for participating in competitive sports coincided with the benefits reported by older athletes (e.g., Heo et al., 2012). Namely, nine studies focused on how competitive sports participation enhanced the overall well-being of older participants (e.g., Chan & Lee, 2020), contributing to their life satisfaction (e.g., Heo & Lee, 2010). Other studies focused on the sense of personal empowerment (e.g., Dionigi, 2002b), fun and enjoyment (e.g., Cardenas et al., 2009a).

In some studies, participation in competitive sports was described as an opportunity for older athletes to expand their athletic identity (e.g., Dionigi, 2002a, 2006). This entailed redefining and normalizing what it means to be a competitive older athlete (e.g., Dionigi & O'Flynn, 2007), resisting traditional negative stereotypes through the acceptance of the aging process (e.g., Dionigi et al., 2013b; Pike, 2012) as well as resisting gender "norms" (e.g., Eman, 2011; Liechty et al., 2017).

There are widespread societal fears about loss of abilities in this period of life. However, only one paper addressed the cognitive functioning changes related to participation in competitive sports in later life (Geard et al., 2020). The fear of pain, falls and injuries, internalized as a result of society's view of aging as increasing fragility, was noted in some studies as a constraint on participation in competitive sports (e.g., Kirby & Kluge, 2013). One study reported that older athletes' participation in competitive sports helped them gain endurance with regard to pain (Heo et al., 2013), another that it helped them to accept the risk of falls (Brennan et al., 2018). Finally, three papers addressed the adaptation strategies for performance maintenance in competitions (Dionigi et al., 2013a), such as reducing participation intensity in low-ranked activities before major competitions (Rathwell & Young, 2015).

Interpersonal level

Approximately half of the empirical articles included in this scoping review (26 out of 59) addressed the interpersonal level of the socioecological model. In most of the studies, participation in competitive sports during later life was considered an opportunity for older athletes to expand social networks (e.g., Casper & Jeon, 2018), to strengthen social ties with other athletes (e.g., Kim et al., 2020), not only during the competitive event but also during the preparation for it (Cardenas et al., 2009b, 2009a). Some of these studies revealed how the kind of friendship established through competitive involvement and based on a common interest in sport could be an incentive for older athletes to continue participating in competitive sports (e.g., Lyons & Dionigi, 2007). Some papers (e.g., Liechty et al., 2017) also mentioned pride in social status and the recognition that older athletes usually gain in competitive sports participation. In terms of positive interpersonal benefits of sport participation, five articles addressed the opportunity to be role models for peers (e.g. other older women; Horton et al., 2018) and younger players (e.g. children and grandchildren; Naar et al., 2017). In these studies, older athletes also mentioned the intergenerational opportunities to play sport with other members/generations of their family (Jenkin et al., 2016, 2018).

Some papers (e.g., Wong et al., 2018) addressed the social support provided by significant others (family, friends, coaches, teammates, competitors and supporters) who encourage involvement in competitive sports. However, six of the twenty-six papers included in this socioecological domain focused on the disapproval that older athletes perceived from significant others, mainly from a few friends and family, due to concerns about possible injuries (e.g., Young & Medic, 2011). Other papers revealed the difficulties of balancing family, friends and sport, mentioning family members' willingness to negotiate factors such as training time and competition participation (Ito & Hikoji, 2018). Furthermore, most participants in these studies indicated some level of dissatisfaction with their social life outside their sport discipline, reporting difficulties in engaging in meaningful activities beyond competition priorities (Appleby & Dieffenbach, 2016).

Environmental/community related level

The third level of the socioecological model was addressed in less than a quarter of empirical studies of this scoping review. The thirteen papers included in this section explored sociocultural and organizational characteristics as well as community-related aspects in which competitive sports were experienced during later life. These characteristics could facilitate or jeopardize the competitive sporting lifestyle.

The influence of cultural elements on sports participation was addressed by Chan et al. (2020), who defined badminton as a cultural symbol that determines and strengthens the participation of older British and Hong Kong players. Other seven articles highlighted organizational barriers related to participation opportunities, in terms of practicing sport and competing in specific events. In the first case (e.g., Cardenas et al., 2009b), the constraints and the lack of appropriate opportunities to train were linked to a lack of access to equipment and playing facilities. In the second case, two articles (Hall & Ferreira, 2012; Ito & Hikoji, 2018) analyzed specific aspects related to sport events in which older competitors participate, such as the costs involved, the quality of facilities, the travelling distance and time of year when the event takes place, and its history/tradition.

A further six studies illustrated the support that older athletes received from their sporting community to maintain participation in competitive disciplines (e.g., Roper et al., 2003). Specifically, three of them (e.g., Lyons & Dionigi, 2007) referred to McMillan and Chavis' sense of community construct (1986) defined as "a feeling that members have of belonging, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p.9). According to this definition, the main constituents of community (membership, influence, fulfilment of needs and a shared emotional connection) were experienced by older adults who participated in competitive sports.

Policy level

Only eight of the fifty-nine empirical articles in this scoping review included an analysis of variables related to policy level. Issues related to public policies on aging and sport were considered predictive factors (barriers on many occasions) of participation in competitive sports among older people. In three studies (e.g., Gard et al., 2017) the authors addressed the influence of the public policy discourses around older adults' sport participation within a neoliberal framework. The moral viewpoints embedded in these policy discourses, for example, that there is a good/bad or right/wrong way to age or that how we age is a personal choice, are reproduced by older athletes when they talk about their sport participation and the lack of participation by others.

Other three studies (e.g., West et al., 2019) reiterated that any sport policy focusing on older adults could significantly increase active participation in this age group. However, these studies mentioned the tendency of some sports policies to prioritize the participation of younger age groups. They stated that older adults are not a main priority group in the sports policy agenda.

Despite a variety of national policy initiatives to promote competitive sports in late adulthood across gender, another two studies addressed the limited policies for female athletes. Specifically, Wong et al. (2018) critically stated that older women's competitive sports participation is not being supported at the local level by an effective public sport policy. Similarly, Naar et al. (2017) pointed to the lack of policies for the recruitment and retention of older women in team sports.

Discussion

This scoping review sought to analyze research on competitive sport participation in later life from a psychosocial perspective, and to identify knowledge gaps and propose new directions for research. A first conclusion arising from this scoping review is that research into older people's participation in competitive sport has grown moderately during the last two decades. Despite the

pursuit of public policies in promoting active forms of aging through sports practice (e.g., Council of Europe, 1992; WHO, 2002, 2015), these data reflect the still limited academic research interest in psychosocial aspects of competitive sport participation among older people. The review identifies several critical gaps that should be at the forefront of future research. These gaps can be classified as conceptual, methodological and related to diversity in research on psychosocial aspects of older people's participation in competitive sport.

Conceptual gaps

Drawing upon the socioecological framework (McLeroy et al., 1988; Sallis et al., 2008; Stokols, 1992), our findings were interpreted through the lens of the interrelated domains of this model (intrapersonal, interpersonal, environmental and policy). The results reveal that not all domains of the socioecological model have received the same attention in research. Intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects have dominated the academic psychosocial discourse on older athletes' competitive sport participation. The other two domains of the socioecological model (environmental/community and policy) have been largely overlooked. Therefore, our scoping review demonstrates that intrapersonal aspects have been studied more than other factors in the psychosocial understanding of older athletes' participation in competitive sports. The body of evidence supports the broader focus of the reviewed studies on motivational factors and the benefits derived from participation in competitive sports in later life (e.g., Dionigi et al., 2011; Gill et al., 1996).

Among studies of participation in competitive sports in later life, personality and emotional factors have received the least attention. In fact, in our review, we found only three studies on this area (e.g., Smith & Storandt, 1997). Since athletes' personality can act as a protective determinant for involvement in competitive sport, appropriate coping strategies and developing resilience can help older athletes to deal with stressors that participation could entail at this stage of the life course. Hence, further research needs to be conducted on how personality

influences athletes' decisions to start, rekindle and/or continue the practice of competitive sport in later life (Dionigi, 2015).

Among the reviewed studies only one focused on cognitive aspects (Geard et al., 2020). The positive impacts of sport on brain health over the lifespan are well-known in terms of the creation of routines and stimulation of memory and executive and attentional functions (Williams et al., 2011). Since later life has been associated with a decrease in cognitive abilities, the scope of research on older athletes' participation could be expanded to include this less studied, intrapersonal dimension.

As older athletes' participation in competitive sport is surely shaped by the contexts, considering where participation takes place is essential to enhancing understanding of this phenomenon. Some of the studies included in our scoping review have stressed the importance of sports participation opportunities that a specific environmental context could provide for older people, in terms of access to sport facilities (e.g., West et al., 2019) and participation in competitions (e.g., Heo et al., 2013). Moreover, an emerging body of studies suggests that a sense of community plays an important role in the maintenance of their involvement (e.g., Lyons & Dionigi, 2007). However, as criticized in Jenkin's studies (2016, 2018), the influence of the environmental and community dimension on older athletes' competitive sport participation remains under-researched in the literature. Hence, greater focus should be placed on the environment in which the athlete develops.

Lastly, although governments in many nations have enacted sport participation policies (e.g., the Sport for all Charter; Council of Europe, 1992) and have promoted an active and healthy way of aging (World Health Organization, 2002, 2015), it has been highlighted that the impact of sport policy on the participation of young children and adolescents in competitive sport has been extensively explored (e.g., Eime et al., 2013). In the scoping review, we identified only eight of the fifty-nine empirical studies that addressed policy aspects of competitive sport participation in

later life (e.g., Naar et al., 2017). Hence, a more consistent body of evidence is needed, which could be the basis for public policy decision-making about sports for the older population.

Methodological gaps

The evolution of competitive athletes' participation during their sports career, as well as critical professional transitions (Park et al., 2013), are topics largely unexplored in the literature. Although the acquisition of sporting habits in youth may be a factor that determines the participation of athletes in sport throughout their lives, there is no uniformity in competitive sports careers. As Dionigi et al. (2015) propose, we can distinguish three categories of athletes: those who continue practicing sport during their lives (continuers), those who, after a period of rest, restart sports participation (re-kindlers) and those who initiate the practice of competitive sports in adulthood, usually after retirement (late starters). A more systematic specification of the patterns of participation in competitive sports across athletes' lifespans could provide more complete information for understanding the phenomenon and could have practical implications for improving the targeting of older athletes.

Hence, a change in methodological design would be useful in the general literature. In our scoping review, most empirical studies adopted a cross-sectional design. There was only one longitudinal research design study (Hirvensalo et al., 2000). To allow researchers to examine changes in athletes over time, future research should extend beyond the current predominant use of cross-section methods to a longitudinal design.

Diversity

If we approach the phenomenon of competitive participation in later life from the domains of the socioecological model (McLeroy et al., 1988; Sallis et al., 2008; Stokols, 1992), we find considerable diversity in the group of older athletes. Depending on personal characteristics as well as the socio-geographic context in which participants live, the form of participation of older athletes in competitive sports may vary.

Regarding personal characteristics, variables such as age, gender and type of sport may influence participation. It is well-known that age, that is, where a person is in his or her lifespan development, can make a difference in relation to the barriers and motivators that athletes face. In our scoping review, most studies focused on a wide, indiscriminate age range of athletes (that is, 50 to 101 years). We can assume that later life is not a uniform sum of years, so, as also suggested by Appleby and Dieffenbach (2016), future researchers should stratify age groups and investigate the unique influences on athletes during each age range over time. Secondly, few studies (e.g., Helsen et al., 2020) analyze the gender variable as a differential factor in the participation of athletes and compare, for example, male and female athletes in aspects that go beyond athletic performance, such as interpersonal factors and social expectations. Finally, very few articles (e.g., Medic et al., 2009) compare types of sports disciplines. In fact, most of the studies reviewed in this work were based on data collected from national and international events that cover many sports disciplines. In these studies, general involvement in the sport event was assessed, without considering the type of sport (individual or team sport). Hence, a possible challenge for future research could be to try to measure the effect of these variables.

Regarding socio-geographic context, while most research reviewed in our study was conducted using US, Canadian and Australian samples, other nations and world regions were clearly underrepresented, if not absent. As highlighted by Park et al. (2013), the investigation of cultural, environmental and geographical diversity could help to test the generality and validity of existing knowledge and may have practical implications in public sport policies on older athletes' participation in competitive sport. Thus, there is a need for more evidence drawn from other countries, and especially for further cross-national comparative studies to better understand similarities and differences in competitive sports participation across diverse geographic and social contexts.

Limitations and conclusions

Several limitations should be considered in the interpretation of this study's results. First, the review focuses on literature published in English and in peer-reviewed journals. This might have influenced the sample characteristics (e.g., the location of the study) and led to the omission of relevant literature published in other languages and/or formats that may be potentially significant (e.g., books and chapters). Secondly, while the search strategy was created thoughtfully in consultation with an expert research librarian, the chosen search string may have limited the findings that emerged through various search engines. Moreover, the lack of quality assessment of the studies may be perceived as a limitation of our scoping review frameworks. Finally, since this scoping review was aimed at broad summaries of an area of research, space limitations have precluded a more detailed presentation of results from the qualitative content analysis.

Notwithstanding these issues, this is, to the best of our knowledge, the first scoping review to address psychosocial aspects of Seniors athletes' competitive sport participation. The review confirms the key role of competitive sport participation as a way for older people to keep active and socially involved. By thematically synthesizing findings from selected studies, our scoping review provides original contributions on the body of research. Given the gaps identified in this work, there is a need for more research to advance conceptual and methodological understanding of the multidimensional nature of older people's participation in competitive sport. Our findings can provide guidance to both academic and policy fields on how to reinforce older adults' participation in competitive sport. Any practical implementations should consider the psychosocial determinants broadly and include all domains of the socioecological model, to ensure a holistic, multilayered approach to the phenomenon.

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5.2 Estudio 2

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Competing at age 55 and over. Reasons why older athletes participate in sport

Valentina Cannella^{a*}, Feliciano Villar^a, and Rodrigo Serrat^a

^aDepartment of Cognition, Development, and Educational Psychology, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

*Corresponding author: Valentina Cannella, MS, Department of Cognition, Development, and Educational Psychology, University of Barcelona, Passeig de la Vall d'Hebrón 171, 08035 Barcelona, Spain; Telephone number: +34 933125831; E-mail: cannellavalentina@ub.edu

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Abstract

This study explores the reasons why older people participate in sports. A total of 463 senior athletes ($M = 61.4$, $SD = 5.5$) who are actively engaged in competitive sports disciplines participated in this study. The participants indicated their degree of agreement with reasons for practicing sport on a 4-point Likert scale with 20 items, developed on the basis of a literature review on motivation theories in sports. These items were analyzed psychometrically. The exploratory factorial analysis revealed five components: competitiveness, interpersonal, cognitive, physical and emotional reasons. The most frequently reported reasons for participation were to feel healthier, to improve mood, and to release tension and stress. Analyses of variance showed significant differences in reasons for participating in sport based on sex, age, comparative health status, type of sport and number of competitive events attended per year. These findings could contribute to the development of age-specific sports promotion interventions tailored to different groups of older people.

Keywords: competitiveness; sport participation; successful aging; motivations; senior athletes

Introduction

Sport is a unique phenomenon that contributes to people's development across the lifespan and has well-established benefits on physiological, social and psychological dimensions (Kim et al., 2020). In recent decades, shifting social attitudes and policies have begun to normalize sport for older adults (Gard et al., 2017) and consider it a vehicle for improving health and well-being in later life. However, in many Western countries, sports participation is known to decrease with age, especially from 55 years onwards (Eime et al., 2016; European Commission, 2018; Jenkin et al., 2017).

Despite the generalized downward trend, there are increasing numbers of older athletes who keep training and competing in later life. They are generally older than 55 years and are called senior athletes. These athletes participate in rule-governed sport, including individual and team competitive events, typically bracketed by age and gender (e.g., the World Masters Games, the National Seniors Games). This ground-breaking phenomenon of participation in competitive sport represents an important strategy for older adults to find sources of enjoyment, maintain competence, and adapt themselves to later life through a process of negotiation of its meaning (Dionigi, 2006). In fact, senior athletes who maintain outstanding physical abilities throughout their lifespan have been proposed as an ideal model for successful and active aging (e.g., Geard et al., 2016).

Comparisons of performance show a decline in later stages of life (de Pero et al., 2009). This is due to physiological (e.g., loss of muscle mass, aerobic and anaerobic capacities), psychological (e.g., loss of sense of control over life and self-confidence) and contextual limitations (e.g., lack of age-appropriate sports support). Given these quite challenging circumstances, it is interesting from a psychological perspective to explore motivational factors that can explain the persistence of senior athletes' behavior in terms of sports participation. In the sports context, motivation is one of the most important factors that might influence sporting involvement and achievement (Roberts, 2001). Consequently, understanding the reasons for

participating in sport at this stage of life could contribute to the identification of key factors and ways of maintaining sporting involvement and encouraging others to join in.

In the literature, various approaches have been explored to understand the psychological construct of motivation in sport. For example, some studies have focused on intrinsic motives, referred to engaging in an activity purely for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from doing the activity (e.g., the pleasure of constantly trying to surpass themselves), and/or extrinsic motives, pertaining to a wide variety of behaviors that are engaged in as a means to an end and not for their own sake (e.g., the opportunity to win trophies) (Deci, 1975; Hodge et al., 2008). Motivation has been also considered an antecedent (e.g., self-determination predicts high levels of sports performance) or outcome of sports conduct (e.g., rewards decrease intrinsic motivation) (Gillet et al., 2013). Overall, several motivation theories have been developed in relation to sports participation, such as social cognitive theories of motivation that focus on particular behavioral phenomena (e.g., achievement goal theory, Nicholls, 1984; and self-determination theory, Deci & Ryan, 1985). However, the body of research that examines motivations for participation among older athletes is substantially smaller than among younger adult counterparts (e.g., Roberts, 2001).

Nevertheless, the existing evidence has revealed a plethora of reasons that drive older athletes' participation in sports that tend to be different from those at other times in the lifespan. For the purpose of systematizing existing knowledge about why older people play sports, in a recent review, although it was not focused exclusively on studies on competitive sport, Stenner and colleagues (2020) identified five main themes related to health, social groups/community, relationships, competition/achievement and successful aging. According to their results, health-related factors were the most reported reasons for participation in sport (Naar et al., 2017), even though little differentiation between physical, psychological and cognitive health was found in the studies that were reviewed. Regardless of the sport played, the sense of community was considered another crucial motivator in many studies (Appleby & Dieffenbach, 2016; Dionigi et al.,

2011), often due to the increased risk of loneliness and isolation that older people could experience and the negative impact this can have on their aging process. Similarly, the presence of significant others in older athletes' lives (such as supportive family members, teammates and coaches) seems to represent a large source of motivation, since they could facilitate and validate some of the difficult choices related to lifestyle that are often made by these athletes (Kirby & Kluge, 2013; Gayman et al., 2017). Competitiveness (especially the desire to challenge their own limits, set goals and achieve them) was another reason that was frequently reported in the literature. The act of competing and the outcome of the competition (such as winning, medals and world records) seem to enable older athletes to compare themselves with others of their own age cohort, to attain a high level of personal empowerment (Dionigi, 2002). Finally, the contribution of sport to the experience of successful aging is evident from available evidence (Heo et al., 2013) in which sports participation helps to dispel negative social perceptions, and challenges outdated stereotypes of being older.

As for the methodological approach, most of the studies on why older people play sports that were reviewed (Stenner et al., 2020) were qualitative and mainly characterized by the use of semi-structured and/or in-depth interviews. However, quantitative studies tended to use a variety of questionnaires that were designed ad hoc (e.g., Cardenas et al., 2009) or standardized. To illustrate this, one of the most frequently used questionnaires (e.g., de Pero et al., 2009) is the Sport Motivation Scale (Pelletier et al., 1995), which assesses intrinsic/extrinsic motivation and amotivation. However, the same authors originally called for caution when this instrument was applied to older athlete populations. Another instrument is the Participation Motivation Questionnaire for Older Adults (Kirkby et al., 1998, 1999), which assesses types of motivators (social, fitness, recognition, challenges/benefits, medical and involvement). However, its use is mainly focused on the practice of physical activity and generic exercise (e.g., Kolt et al., 2004; Cancela et al., 2021). At this point, it is important to make an aside about the tendency to conflate the concepts of physical activity, exercise, and sport. Adopting some classic definitions (Caspersen

et al., 1985), we understand physical activity as "any body movement that is produced by the contraction of skeletal muscles and that produces substantial increases in the energy consumption of the body with respect to the state of rest" (p.126) and by exercise "a subcategory of structured physical activity that aims to improve or maintain physical condition" (p.128). Thus, the concept of sport encompasses "all kinds of physical activities whose purpose is the maintenance or improvement of physical condition and mental well-being, the development of social relations or the achievement of results in competitions of all levels" (Council of Europe, 1992, p.1). In particular, this competitive orientation is the distinctive feature of sports participation among senior athletes, the object of study in this work. However, to our knowledge, an instrument that is specifically aimed at exploring the reasons for participating in sports among older people specifically focused on competitiveness factors, as well as physical, emotional, cognitive and interpersonal aspects, is still lacking.

Although some authors (e.g., Gayman et al., 2017) have recommended assessing the influence of demographic variables on the relationship between sports participation and psychosocial determinants, past research has often failed to compare the reasons for participating in sports among sociodemographic groups of older adults, to explore which factors play a role in motivation and decisions to maintain sports performance. Studies focused on competitive sports are limited. To illustrate this fact, Cardenas and colleagues (2009) explored the reasons for participating in senior games among older adults. They found some differences regarding sex (with women more likely to indicate reasons related to interpersonal and health factors); co-living situations (with higher interpersonal relationship reason scores among individuals who live alone); education and income levels (with higher scores relative to physical health and interpersonal relationship reasons among participants with lower educational level and less income). In another study, de Pero and colleagues (2009) showed that age and competition level modulate motivation for sports participation in older individuals. The oldest athletes competing at local level are less supported by their self-determination than their younger

counterparts competing at national or international level. Moreover, studies on reasons for sports participation in young people and adults highlighted differences according to the type of sports classified by their nature: individual-based, where each player has only themselves to count on (i.e., running); and team-based, where more players are organized into opposing teams which compete to win (i.e., football). Their findings suggested greater competitiveness related- reasons for participating among athletes involved in individual sports (e.g., Devin et al., 2015) and more reasons linked to social aspects (e.g., better social interactions) among athletes participating in team sports (e.g., Andersen et al., 2018). Since in later life social networks tend to shrink, a better understanding of interpersonal reasons according to the type of sport practiced could be crucial. However, studies focused on older athletes are lacking (Stenner et al., 2020).

Since some sociodemographic variables and characteristics related to participation in sport (such as the type of sport practiced and the number of competitive events attended) might create conditions for a desire to keep participation in competitive sports among older athletes, it is crucial to explore their possible association. People in different sociodemographic groups might have varied motives for participating in sport, and this could be important in designing interventions to increase involvement and enhance the probability of lifelong adherence.

Therefore, the aim of this study was to identify the reasons why older athletes participate in their competitive sports discipline, using an instrument that was designed expressly to explore a wide range of physical, emotional, cognitive and interpersonal reasons and those especially linked to competitiveness. Specifically, the research was guided by two broad questions: a) the reasons for participating in competitive sports among older athletes and b) the associations that exist among these reasons for participating and the demographic and participatory characteristics of the sample.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 463 athletes from four European countries: France ($n = 105$), Italy ($n = 98$), Spain ($n = 180$) and the UK ($n = 80$). To be eligible for participation, individuals were required to (a) be aged 55 years or older, (b) be involved in at least one competitive sport, and (c) participate in competitive sports events. The age of the study participants ranged from 55 to 82 years, with a mean of 61.4 years ($SD = 5.5$ years). The sample was composed of 78.4 % men and 21.6 % women, which reflected the masculinization in competitive sports participation (Litchfield & Dionigi, 2012).

Table 5.2.1

Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample

Variable	Total (N = 463)
Mean age (SD), years	61.4 (5.5)
Sex (%)	
Male	78.4
Female	21.6
Country of residence (%)	
France	22.6
Italy	21.2
Spain	38.9
United Kingdom	17.3
Educational level (%)	
Primary studies or less	5.4
Secondary	33.6
University	61.0
Income (€/\$/month), (%)	
< 2000	21.3
2001-3000	26.7
> 3001	52.0
Employment (%)	
Employed	58.9
Not employed	41.1
Comparative health (%)	
Worse/Similar	18.6
Better	81.4
Type of sport	
Individual	83.2
Team	16.8
Mean number of events per year, (SD)	11.1 (10.8)

Note. SD = standard deviation

Education levels varied, but more than half (61 %) had completed university studies. Most of the participants were married (80.3 %), employed (58.9 %), and more than half (52.0 %) reported household monthly incomes exceeding €3,001. Of the participants, 81.4 % rated their health better than other people of the same age (out of three categories: worse, similar and better). Regarding the type of sport practiced, the participants reported involvement in individual (83.2 %) and team (16.8 %) sports and competing in an average of 11.1 sporting events per year ($SD = 10.8$ years). The full sociodemographic characteristics are shown in Table 5.2.1.

Instruments

For the purpose of the study, we designed a questionnaire and translated it into four languages (French, Italian, Spanish and English). To check understanding of the questions, the questionnaire was pilot tested by native people who were subsequently excluded from final study participation. Based on the pilot feedback, the questionnaire was revised.

The final version comprised sociodemographic items (sex, age, country of residence, relationship status, education, income, employment situation and comparative health); items related to sport participation (type of sport and number of competitive events per year); and a series of questions aimed at gathering senior athletes' experience in competitive sports.

Specifically, in this article we analyzed data obtained in response to a scale designed to assess the reasons behind participation in competitive sports among senior athletes. According to Boateng et al. (2018), we followed a series of steps for the creation of the scale. The first step consisted of identifying the domain we seek to develop. Since the existing instruments were mainly aimed at a younger athlete population or focused specifically on physical activity and/or exercise (Kirkby et al., 1998, 1999; Kolt et al., 2004), we confirm the need for a new instrument that will adequately serve our purpose, that was the inclusion of competitiveness-related factors, as well as physical, emotional, social and cognitive factors. The next step was the identification of the items to determine appropriate questions that fitted the identified domain. We applied the deductive method based on a literature review on motivation theories in physical activity,

exercise, and sports and an assessment of existing scales and indicators similar to our domain. After developing the items (30 in this first version of the scale), five judges experts in gerontology independently assessed the content validity of the items based on their research experience and on previous work with related instruments. They reviewed the items and gave feedback on each by adding comments on some items to report their opinions about whether or not the content of each item captured the target definition. Items were either accepted, rejected, or modified based on majority opinion. The last version of the scale consisted of 20 items representing five dimensions: physical, emotional, cognitive, interpersonal and competitiveness-related reasons.

In accordance with Lozano et al. (2008) 's recommendations, who suggest that the minimum number of response categories for items with Likert-type scale format should be at least four, participants were asked to rate the importance of each reason on a 4-point Likert scale with a minimum score of 1 and a maximum of 4, where low scores indicate strong disagreement, and high scores correspond to greater agreement with the sentence stated in the question (1 = 'strongly disagree'; 2 = 'moderately disagree'; 3 = 'moderately agree'; 4 = 'strongly agree'). Of note, 18 participants did not complete any part of this Likert scale. These participants were discarded from the analysis so that the final sample comprised 445 participants.

Procedure

To foster wider distribution of the questionnaire among athletes, we created two versions: on paper and web-based (using Qualtrics survey software). The first author of this article distributed both versions of the questionnaire at the 2019 European Masters Games held in Turin (Italy), among athletes from four countries (France, Italy, Spain and UK) during their relaxation time in different sports facilities. Moreover, the first author contacted sports federations of the same disciplines included in the Masters Games in the above-mentioned countries by email to ask for their collaboration in distributing the web-based questionnaire among their affiliates.

Both questionnaire versions included information about the study's objectives, instructions for answering the survey, and the researchers' contact details. They also comprised

an informed consent section with information on confidentiality, the preservation of anonymity, and their right not to answer and to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were volunteers and no payment or other incentive was offered. The university's ethics committees (blinded for review) approved the study (no. blinded for review).

Given that the participants came from two groups (those attending the European Masters Games and those affiliated to sports federations), we used statistical techniques to compare the parameters of the sociodemographic variables of the two samples. Since the results did not show significant differences, we considered the samples to be equivalent.

Data analysis

Frequencies, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were used to analyze the data. The frequencies were estimated to generate descriptive statistics on the participants and on all items of our Likert scale.

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with principal components extraction and varimax rotation (Loo, 1979) was used to examine the construct validity of our Likert scale. Namely, to determine its initial composition and structure, internal consistency reliability estimates (Coefficient α) and Pearson r correlations between factors were computed. Tests were performed with the IBM SPSS statistics program (version 25) and significance was established at $p < 0.01$ to control for error rate inflation (Bonferroni adjustment). All available data from the participants were included in the analysis. A cut-off criterion for factor loadings of at least .45 and communalities greater than .40 was used to interpret the factor solution (Hair et al., 1998). The selection of appropriate factors was based on Cattell's scree test and having an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 (Child, 1990). The component variables for each factor were added to create factor scores that reflected the dimensions of the reasons for participation in the sample.

Multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were used to assess differences in reasons for participating in sports between sex, age groups, country of residence, educational level, monthly income, compared health, type of sport and number of competitive events per year.

Since the functioning of a 55-year-old athlete may be quite different from that of someone who is 82 years old (Gayman et al., 2017), for the analysis of age differences, participants were categorized into three age groups, 55-58 years (36.6 %), 59-63 years (33.7 %) and 64 years and older (29.7 %), based on the variable's median. Likewise, in terms of the participatory characteristics, participants were categorized into three groups based on the median of competitive events they attended per year: between 1 and 5 (33.8 %); between 6 and 10 (34.0 %) and more than 11 (32.2 %).

The analyses were conducted using the scores from the factor-analysis solution as dependent variables. The multivariate effect size (Partial η^2) associated with Wilk's Λ was reported with F and p . No relationship between the factor and dependent variables was indicated if the partial η^2 was 0. Bonferroni post hoc tests were used when there were more than two groups being compared, to ascertain which groups differed significantly.

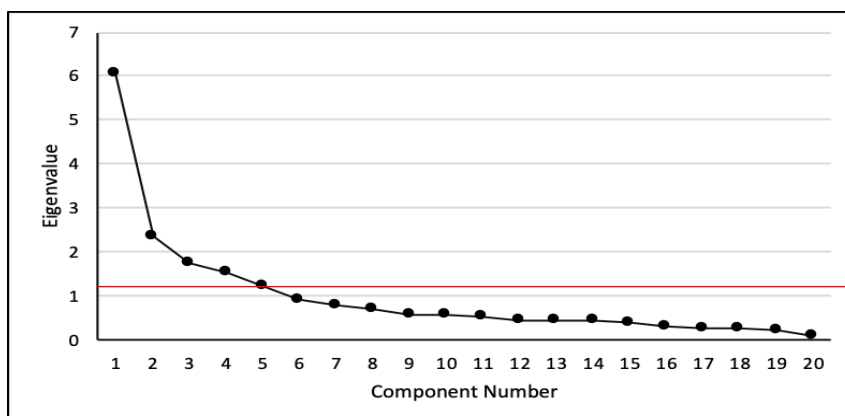
Results

Exploratory factor analysis

Principal components analysis revealed the presence of five components with eigenvalues exceeding 1. An inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the fifth component. Hence, using Cattell's (1996) scree test, all five components were retained for further investigation (Figure 5.2.1).

Figure 5.2.1

Scree Plot of Eigenvalues for the Principal Component Analysis



As shown in Table 5.2.2, in the final solution, the five components explained 64.7 % of the variance, with each component contributing 18.1 %, 14.7 %, 11.6 %, 10.6 % and 9.6 % of the variance respectively. Each component was assigned a label according to the common theme that grouped the items together.

The first component consisted of items related to 'competitiveness' as reasons for participating in sports, namely, the act of entering into rivalry with themselves and with other athletes (e.g., 'To beat someone I've never beaten before'). A second component was labeled 'interpersonal reasons', which referred to the influence of family members and other people in their own sports practice (e.g., 'To make my family or friends proud of me'). A third component was termed 'cognitive reasons', which comprised items related to the potential improvement of memory, attention and control functions (e.g., 'To improve my attention'). Another component was called 'physical reasons', which related to the state of physical health with emphasis on an aging body (e.g., 'To slow down the aging of my body'). The last component was termed 'emotional reasons' since it referred to the influence of sports practice on the participants' self-esteem, mood and stress control (e.g., 'To improve my mood').

To establish the reliability of our Likert scale, Cronbach's alpha was calculated and found to be .87, which indicates that our scale was reliable for the overall sample. Cronbach's alphas were also calculated for the groups of items that made up each of the derived components in the factor analysis. The reliability of the components was as follows: Competitiveness = .85, Interpersonal reasons = .79, Cognitive reasons = .83, Physical reasons = .77 and Emotional reasons = .66. The .60 level of minimum acceptability used by other motivation researchers was adopted (e.g., Hastings et al., 1995). Bartlett's sphericity test reached statistical significance ($\chi^2(190) = 3754.51, p < .001$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sample size adequacy indicator was adequate (.839), as it exceeded the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1974).

Table 5.2.2

Means, Component Loadings of Items for Total Sample (N = 445) and Percentage of Variance Explained

Component	Components loadings					M	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Component 1 (Competitiveness)						3.11	.73
To compete with other athletes	.77					2.89	.93
To improve my current personal best	.77					2.78	1.02
To compete with myself	.76					3.16	.94
To beat someone whom I've never beaten before	.68					2.19	1.06
To receive medals and trophies	.67					2.11	.95
To have some goals to strive for	.66					3.28	.84
Component 2 (Interpersonal reasons)						2.76	.71
To get recognition from people		.77				1.99	.87
To make my family or friends proud of me		.75				2.20	.95
To have more friends		.66				2.87	.85
To have better relations with my family		.67				2.22	.90
To feel more physically attractive		.51				2.47	.96
Component 3 (Cognitive reasons)						3.15	.75
To improve my memory			.90			2.71	.95
To improve my attention			.89			2.79	.94
To feel in control of my body			.49			3.19	.74
Component 4 (Physical reasons)						3.59	.62
To prevent disease				.84		3.19	.84
To slow down the aging of my body				.78		3.18	.88
To feel healthier				.76		3.69	.55
Component 5 (Emotional reasons)						3.67	.57
To release tension and stress					.79	3.48	.69
To improve my mood					.75	3.49	.73
To be proud of myself					.57	3.30	.82
Variance explained (%)	18.1	14.7	11.6	10.6	9.6	64.7	
Cronbach's Alpha (α)	.85	.79	.83	.77	.66		

Note. SD = standard deviation. Based on a 4-point Likert scale with 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Component scores are calculated as a mean score for the items that contribute to the component.

Descriptive findings

The reasons for participating in sports were classified according to the mean degree of agreement of each item on the scale (see Table 5.2.2). The three most important reasons for participating in exercise for the total sample were: 'To feel healthier' ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.55$), 'To improve my mood' ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.73$) and 'To release tension and stress' ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 0.69$). The three least important reasons were: 'To beat someone whom I've never beaten before' ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.06$), 'To receive medals and trophies' ($M = 2.11$, $SD = 0.95$) and 'To get recognition

from people' ($M = 1.99, SD = 0.87$). Relative to the components structure, the 'emotional reasons' component was the highest rated ($M = 3.67, SD = 0.57$).

Summary of analyses of variance

As for the association between demographic and participatory characteristics and the athletes' reasons for participating in sport, we found some statistically significant differences.

The results of analysis of variance (MANOVA) indicated a significant difference between males and female when the components of competitiveness, interpersonal, cognitive, physical and emotional reasons were considered jointly: Wilk's $\Lambda = .947, F(5, 404) = 4.503, p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .053$.

Table 5.2.3

Means and Standard deviation for each component by participants' sex

Component		M	SD
Component 1 (Competitiveness)	Female	3.37	.08
	Male	3.03	.04
Component 2 (Interpersonal reasons)	Female	2.83	.08
	Male	2.74	.04
Component 3 (Cognitive reasons)	Female	3.39	.08
	Male	3.07	.04
Component 4 (Physical reasons)	Female	3.66	.07
	Male	3.56	.03
Component 5 (Emotional reasons)	Female	3.76	.06
	Male	3.66	.03

Note. M = Mean; SD = standard deviation.

A separate ANOVA was conducted for each dependent variable using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .01. This showed a significant difference between men and women on competitiveness $F(1, 408) = 15.104, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .036$, with women ($M = 3.37, SD = .08$) scoring higher than men ($M = 3.03, SD = .04$). We also found statistical significance in the cognitive

reasons component $F(1, 408) = 12.890, p = .000, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .031$. Namely, an inspection of the mean scores (Table 5.2.3) indicated that women reported slightly higher levels ($M = 3.39, SD = .08$) than men ($M = 3.07, SD = .04$).

A significant overall multivariate effect was also found when the three age groups (55-58; 59-63; and over 64 years) were compared with the five components, Wilk's $\Lambda = .952, F(5, 408) = 2.034, p = .028, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .024$. Specifically, subsequent univariate analyses demonstrated that only the emotional reasons component showed significant differences: $F(1, 412) = 6.682, p = .001$. For athletes aged between 55 and 58 years ($M = 3.80, SD = .05$), emotional reasons for sport participation were given higher scores than for those aged between 59 and 63 years ($M = 3.64, SD = .05$), and those over 66 years ($M = 3.58, SD = .05$).

The analyses of variance also showed a significant main effect between the five components and the participants' comparison of health status, Wilk's $\Lambda = .939, F(5, 408) = 5.268, p = .000, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .061$. When each component is considered individually, univariate analyses revealed significant differences in cognitive ($F(1, 412) = 13.708, p = .000$) and physical ($F(1, 407) = 15.635, p = .000$) reasons. Namely, participants who considered their health better than that of other older people scored higher in the cognitive ($M = 3.21, SD = .04$) and physical reasons ($M = 3.64, SD = .034$) than those who rated their health similar or worse than their peers ($M = 2.86, SD = .08$ and $M = 3.33, SD = .07$ respectively).

In terms of type of sport (individual or team), significant differences were found when the five components were considered jointly, as follows: Wilk's $\Lambda = .924, F(5,408) = 6.732, p = .000, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .076$. Specifically, the univariate analysis revealed that the competitiveness component ($F(1, 412) = 14.452, p = .034$) was significantly higher among older athletes who participate in individual sports ($M = 3.17, SD = .04$) than among participants practicing team sports ($M = 2.82, SD = .09$).

Finally, a significant main effect was also found when the number of competitive events per year, categorized into three groups (1-5; 6-10; and over 11 events) were compared with the

five components, Wilk's $\Lambda = .950$, $F(5, 401) = 2.084$, $p = .023$, partial $\eta^2 = .025$. Specifically, subsequent univariate analyses demonstrated that the competitiveness component showed significant differences: $F(1, 405) = 9.098$, $p = .000$. For athletes who participate in more than 11 sports events per year ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .06$), competitiveness related reasons for sport participation were given higher scores than for those participating in less events (between 6 and 10 events: $M = 3.18$, $SD = .06$; and between 1 and 5 events: $M = 2.19$, $SD = .06$).

When the rest of the variables (country of residence, educational level, and monthly income) were compared with the five components, no significant differences were found relative to reasons for participating in sport.

In summary, the reasons for participating related to competitiveness were higher in female athletes and among athletes who practiced an individual sport and who participated in more than 11 events per year. Reasons to participate related to cognitive aspects were higher among female participants and those who rated their health better than other people of the same age, who also rated more physical reasons than participants who considered their health similar or worse than other peers. Finally, reasons to participate associated with emotional aspects were higher among athletes aged between 55 and 58 years than other participants aged between 59 and 63 and over 64 years.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine reasons for participating in competitive sports among senior athletes who actively compete in different disciplines. The study also aimed to explore the possible association between these reasons and the sociodemographic and participatory characteristics of the sample.

Reasons for participating

The results suggest that the main reasons reported for sports participation were related to physical and emotional aspects. 'Feeling healthier' was the reason that scored highest on the

scale. Although most studies on the reasons for participating in sport in later life do not differentiate between the physical, psychological and cognitive dimensions of health, our findings were consistent with studies that identified health benefits as a crucial reason (e.g., León-Guereño et al., 2021), especially to address some age-related decline in physical abilities (Gayman et al., 2017; Jenkin et al., 2017). Furthermore, the emotional reasons underlying sports involvement were found to be very important for senior athletes participating in the study. In particular, they considered the practice of sports as a valid tool for improving mood and reducing tension and stress. This focus on emotional regulation is consistent with a host of studies that demonstrate that regular exercise, physical activity and sport can contribute to psychological well-being (Bardhoshi et al., 2016). Hence, it is understandable that these benefits become reasons for participating among older athletes and may even be successful if utilized to promote sports participation in later life.

Surprisingly, the less relevant reasons for participating in sports were related to interpersonal and competitiveness aspects. Our participants stated that they were not particularly motivated by gaining social recognition for their participation in sport, rewards (i.e., receiving trophies and medals) or competing to beat someone they had never beaten before. These results are consistent with traditional empirical studies on sports motivation (Gill et al., 1996) that indicate that older athletes predominantly seek to be physically active rather than gain recognition or rewards. As an illustration, in Fontane and Hurd's study (1992), older athletes rated social recognition for their accomplishments quite low among their reasons for competing in sports. However, when qualitative data were added to the study survey, the authors found that participants valued social validation more than they had admitted in the survey. In this vein, further investigations (Dionigi et al., 2011) found that older sports participants valued and enjoyed the outcome of the competition, such as winning, medals, world records and recognition, which gave them a sense of purpose in that they felt they were contributing to society and positively influencing others. These contradictory findings could be due to the fact that older

adults do not like to disclose that they value social recognition and external rewards, as they have internalized a commonly accepted opinion that the main purpose of their involvement in sport should be to have fun rather than competing to win. Moreover, even though our participants were competitive at different levels and sports, the competition is not limited to competing with others. A number of studies identified the importance of self-competition, self-improvement and achievement of goals as drivers of participation in sport (e.g., Appleby & Dieffenbach, 2016; Heo et al., 2013). In fact, in our study, reasons related to this self-focus on competitiveness ('To have some goals to strive for', and 'To compete with myself') were rated higher than merely beating someone else.

Associations with sport participation

The associations between the reasons for participating and the demographic and participatory attributes of the respondents were particularly interesting regarding the differences and similarities found in relation to other studies. Regarding the sociodemographic characteristics of older athletes, in our study, we found that senior women athletes rated reasons related to competitiveness and cognitive domains as significantly more important than their male counterparts (Table 5.2.3). Although previous research has not extensively focused on demographic differences in the participation motives of older adults, in some existing literature that reported differences in reasons for participation between women and men. Specifically, older women athletes generally placed greater emphasis on their health, well-being and medical status than men. They also tended to value social aspects of involvement in sport such as interpersonal relationships as more important than other factors such as competition and achievement, which were more important to men (Kolt et al., 2004). Hence it is surprising that in our findings reasons related to competitiveness had higher scores given by older women. Stereotyped gender roles traditionally influenced the decision about the gender-appropriateness of sports behavior and, consequently, sports participation and motivation of men and women (Sobal & Milgrim, 2019). Since sports participation in later life seems to derive directly from sports

participation at younger ages (Smith & Storandt, 1997), it is likely that older female athletes in our study had to overcome higher social barriers to sports participation in their youth, which made them a selected population that shares with men a similar motivational style, or an even more competitive orientation.

Furthermore, we found higher scores related to emotional reasons among senior athletes aged between 55 and 58 years than other older participants. These findings seem to be novel if they are compared to similar studies in which the reasons for participating in sports were also assessed according to the older participant's age group. For example, in a recent study on motivations behind running among older adults, competition motives showed differences in terms of age, being the eldest runners (over 60 years) less motivated for competitive reasons (León-Guereño et al., 2021). In a study by Kolt et al. (2004), participants older than 75 tended to choose more reasons related to physical health, especially medical aspects. This is probably due to a greater risk of poor health and impairment in this age group than in the younger one. Distinctively, in a systematic review (Spiteri et al., 2019) focused on the difference in motivators between middle-aged (50-64 years) and older adults (65-70 years), the youngest sample tended to mention more reasons related to appearance and stress management. Our younger (55-58 years) sample's tendency to score higher on emotional reasons, especially regarding emotional regulation and stress management, could be explained if we consider the peculiarity of this age range. As supported by many studies (e.g., Walsh et al., 2019), the middle-aged roles that participants are likely to assume could entail stress that sport helps them to manage.

Another significant difference in reasons for participation was based on comparative health. Namely, participants who rated their health better than other older people of the same age tended to score higher on cognitive and physical reasons. To our knowledge, no previous studies have contrasted reasons for participating in sport with comparative health. Yet the reasons related to the improvement of cognitive functions (i.e., control, memory and attention) and the prevention of disease or an aging body, seem to be coherent with a tendency among the

participants to take care of their health through sport, which in some cases could lead them to this perception of superiority in terms of general health in relation to the population of older people.

Regarding the participatory characteristics of the sample, senior athletes who practiced individual sports tended to score significantly higher on reasons related to competitiveness than those who participated in a team sport. In the literature on aging and sport, no comparative differences have been described in reasons for participating based on the type of sport (Stenner et al., 2020). However, our results are consistent with others focused on younger age groups (e.g., Devin et al., 2015). These findings seem to be plausible, since individual sports are related to self-sufficiency and independence, while team sports promote teamwork and the virtue of relying on teammates, which could lead to less competitiveness. Surprisingly, we have not found significant differences between interpersonal reasons and types of sport. Based on previous literature (e.g., Andersen, 2018), we expected higher interpersonal scores among senior athletes who play team sports rather than individual ones. This may be due to the fact that in our sample the athletes regularly participated in competitive events that usually represent occasions for social interactions and camaraderie, which compensated in some way, the reasons linked to the social sphere for athletes who practiced individual sports.

Finally, senior athletes who participated in more than 11 sports events per year showed higher scores related to competitive reasons than those who participated in lesser events. Although, as far as we know, there are no other previous studies analyzing this variable, it can be understood that the people most likely to participate in these events have high reasons linked to competitiveness. In fact, despite the moments of fun and the sense of camaraderie that these events con generated (Dionigi, 2005), the peculiarity is that they represent unique occasions to compete with other people of a similar age range, with the goal of outperforming other opponents or one's own personal performance record (Weir et al., 2010).

Limitations

The results of this study should be treated with caution since there are some limitations that should be considered and addressed in future research. We used convenience sampling and the sample size was relatively small, so the results cannot be generalized. In our studies, we did not find significant differences in country of residence (France, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom). However, additional studies could expand the geographic coverage of data collection because older competitive athletes may have different reasons for their involvement in sports (Cancela et al., 2021). A comparison with participants from other countries or cultural backgrounds (i.e., different sports policies) may add useful comparative data to facilitate understanding of the findings.

Regarding the variables analyzed in our study, one of the significant ones in relation to the reasons for participating in sport in our sample was "biological sex". Given that most of the studies cited in the discussion focused on gender differences, we consider that the discussion of the results related to this variable should be interpreted with caution. Furthermore, in accordance with previous studies (e.g., Andersen et al., 2018; Devin et al., 2015), we have classified the "type of sport" variable based on its individual or team nature. However, given that there are other criteria for conceive the types of sports, we acknowledge that this can be considered a limitation.

As for the process of developing the instrument, we recognize some limitations since we did not test the scale on a specific research sample, nor did we apply the reliability of the replicability of the test. Another limitation of the study was that respondents were provided with lists of possible reasons to participate in competitive sports and asked to indicate which applied to them. This may have resulted in respondents identifying reasons that they would not have thought of for themselves. Therefore, the importance of different factors may have been overestimated or factors that were not considered on the scale could have been underestimated. Moreover, far from psychometric/methodological specific purposes, our objective was to explore the reasons for competitive sports participation among senior athletes, using a new scale as a

tool. Hence, we only applied the EFA to find, in an exploratory way, an internal structure between the measured variables. However, we consider the process incomplete, and we propose to address in future studies more psychometric oriented, both confirmatory factor analysis to test whether the hypothesized structure of the instrument adequately fits the data and measurement of the invariance to observe if our results were generalizable among groups (Floyd & Widaman, 1995).

The phenomenon of older people competing in sports in later life underlies a complex, simultaneous interaction of a range of factors. Since it is important to undertake research that captures this complexity, one useful way forward is to examine the meanings behind particular reasons for participating. To a large degree, these are a product of the particular context in which they appear (Lyons & Dionigi, 2007). Further studies using additional methodologies (such as in-depth interviews) could enable deeper understanding of the meanings of the experience of sports involvement.

Conclusions

Despite the limitations described above, the findings of this study provided further evidence of physical and emotional aspects as crucial reasons why senior athletes participate in sports. The study also identified several significant differences in reasons for participation based on sex, age, comparative health status, type of sport practiced and number of competitive events attended per year.

Aging often involves perceptions of diminishing competence and capabilities, or feelings of reduced autonomy (Dacey & Newcomer, 2005), which can be modified through sport practice. Understanding the primary reasons why senior athletes participate in competitive sports may contribute to the development of effective long-term strategies to support the trend of increasing sports commitment at older ages. This information could be used not only to sustain athletes who currently practice sports but also to encourage older people who do not have the same activity

levels, providing them with opportunities to obtain the benefits of participating in sport. Our findings based on sex differences in the reasons for sports participation could be used to choose the most appropriate messages for promoting sport among women. Since in recent times, there has been a greater focus and investment in encouraging more women to play sports (Kirby & Kluge, 2021), research investigating sex differences in sports motivation of senior athletes within a more comprehensive theoretical framework could in some way influence policy change. In particular, our unexpected findings suggesting greater competitiveness-related reasons for sports participation among women could guide program developers to foster competitive sports opportunities for women athletes, who may also represent role models for other older women (Kirby & Kluge, 2013).

Overall, practical implications of this study could also lead to the development of sports programs focused on promoting aspects related to reasons for sports participation (competitiveness, interpersonal, physical, cognitive and emotional). Professionals working in sports areas could be benefited from the findings of the present study and they could include these variables in their sports schedules according to athletes' characteristics. In fact, programs that offer diverse activities and alternative approaches are likely to meet people's interests and motives and provide a more satisfying experience for more diverse participants. In this way, sports participation could represent one of the potential activities that favor successful and meaningful aging.

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5.3 Estudio 3

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‘Until body do us part’: Barriers to retention in competitive sports among European older athletes

Valentina Cannella ^{a*}, Rodrigo Serrat ^b and Feliciano Villar ^c

^a Department of Cognition, Development, and Educational Psychology, University of Barcelona, Passeig de la Vall d’Hebrón 171, 08035 Barcelona, Spain; Telephone number: +34 933125831; E-mail: cannellavalentina@ub.edu

^b Serra Húnter Tenure-Track Lecturer, Department of Cognition, Development, and Educational Psychology, University of Barcelona, Passeig de la Vall d’Hebrón 171, 08035 Barcelona, Spain; Telephone number: +34 933125817; E-mail: rserrat@ub.edu

^c Department of Cognition, Development, and Educational Psychology, University of Barcelona, Passeig de la Vall d’Hebrón 171, 08035 Barcelona, Spain; Telephone number: +34 933125095; E-mail: fvillar@ub.edu

* Address correspondence to: Valentina Cannella, MS

Department of Cognition, Development, and Educational Psychology, University of Barcelona, Passeig de la Vall d’Hebrón 171, 08035 Barcelona, Spain; Telephone number: +34 933125831; E-mail: cannellavalentina@ub.edu

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The second author is a Serra Húnter Tenure-Track Lecturer at the University of Barcelona.

Abstract

Using a socioecological model as a theoretical framework, we aimed to explore the barriers to retain in competitive sport 463 senior athletes (61.4 ± 5.5 years) actively engaged in sports disciplines from four European countries. Participants answered an open-ended question regarding perceived barriers to continued engagement in sport and their answers were subject to content analysis. The results highlighted physical determinants as the main reasons for potential disengagement from competitive sport. Our data suggest the need to minimize these potential barriers by implementing programs that are designed to keep senior athletes competing in sports for as long as is possible.

Introduction

Older adult participation in sports has traditionally been neither expected nor encouraged.¹ Indeed, attitudes were that this population was incapable of athletic achievements and unmotivated to succeed, with some considering that physically strenuous sports activities could be harmful and even life-threatening for the aging body.^{2,3} These views were based on the dominant biomedically driven narrative of aging as a process of unavoidable and irreversible decline. However, over the last three decades, gerontological researchers and social policymakers have shown increased interest in a positive view of 'well aging', which re-stories later life as a time of challenge and growth rather than illness and dependency.⁴

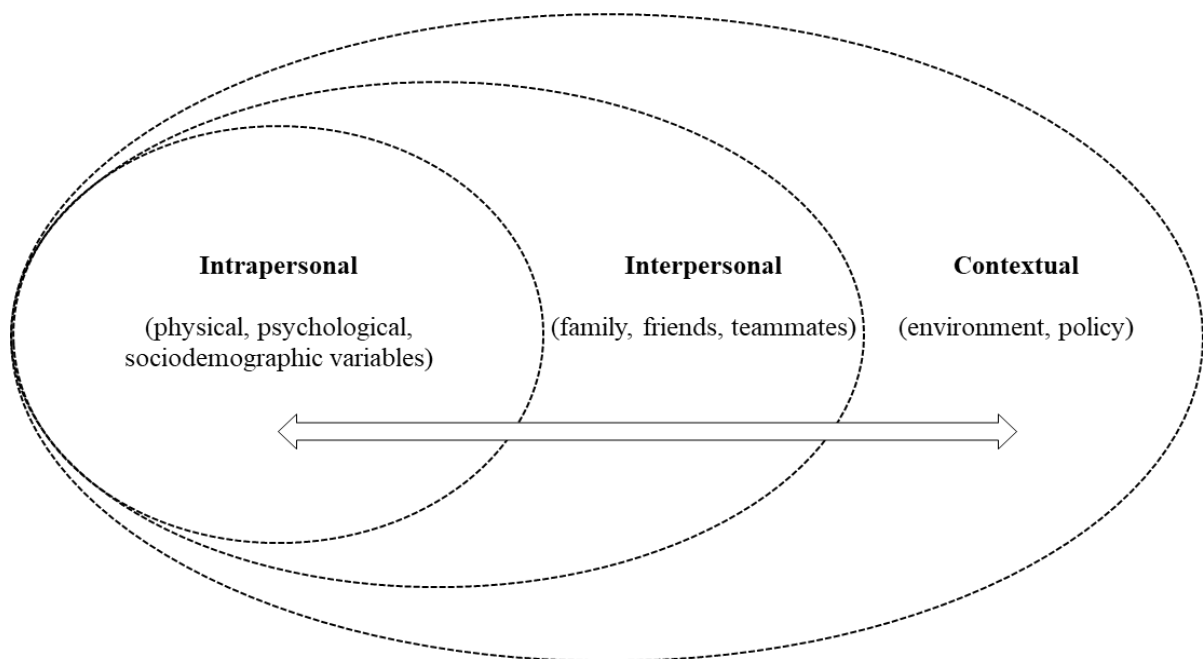
Concepts of successful,^{5,6} active and healthy aging,^{7,8} have been coined to help develop guidelines and policies on aging. With the emergence of this new discourse, sports participation is now recognized as important to helping older people maintain their well-being and avoid disease. In other words, sports engagement can help with active and healthy aging.⁹ Thus, the phenomenon of 'senior athletes' (i.e., those aged 50 years and older) competing in physically and objectively strenuous and demanding sports has become more visible in the community, being idealized in policy, celebrated in the media and subject to research.¹⁰⁻¹²

Research on senior athletes has shown that competing in sport can be an empowering experience, bringing not only physical benefits but also psychological and social ones.¹³⁻¹⁵ Studies on competitive sport in later life have evidenced that it offers several benefits: it helps to manage the aging identity of athletes;¹⁶ it provides opportunities to compete and beat others, break records and test personal abilities;¹⁷ it encourages the development or strengthening of social relationships;^{14,18} and it affords opportunities for travel.¹⁹ Furthermore, several studies have shown how adults who continue to be involved in competitive sport in later life are more likely to experience prolonged periods of health (i.e., freedom from disability, high cognitive and motor functioning).^{20,21}

Despite the growth in knowledge about the benefits of sport engagement by older adults,

less is known on antecedent aspects of participation. Although there is more extensive literature on motivational factors as predictors of competitive sports participation,^{22,23} few studies have focused on the barriers faced by older athletes in their sports disciplines. The social-ecological model is a useful framework that can help to explore and classify these barriers to participation among older athletes (Figure 5.3.1).²⁴⁻²⁶ This model allows sport behaviors to be understood beyond a focus on the individual, instead considering the multiple levels of an individual's environment: intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual.

Figure 5.3.1 A socioecological framework for sport participation barriers. Adapted from Stokols et al²⁶ and McLeroy et al²⁴.



At the intrapersonal level, barriers to competitive sport participation are related to physical, psychological and sociodemographic variables. The main physical barriers are poor physical health and fear of injury that could prevent further participation.²⁷⁻²⁹ Among the commonly cited psychological barriers are a lack of motivation and/or interest in sport,³⁰ as well as the personal stereotypical view of old age as being an inappropriate time for competing in

sport.^{3,31,32} Sociodemographic variables, such as a lower socioeconomic status and female sex, may also function as barriers to participation.^{33,34}

At the interpersonal level, research indicates that insufficient social support from family, friends and teammates can also be a barrier to competitive sport participation.^{35,36} Other research on those currently active in sport has also indicated that social influences are not always positive.³⁷ Their findings indicated that those with a broad social network might need to reduce the social pressures from that network to perform better. Similarly, discouragement from community members (especially family and friends) tending to deter older athletes from continuing to play in competitive sport, could constrain their participation.^{32,33,36} Likewise, commitments related to the family's lifecycle stage (e.g., ages of children, grandchildren or parents) could act not only as barriers to participation but also as constraints during participation itself.^{38,39}

At the contextual level, barriers related to the environment in which athletes live have also been addressed. This includes a lack of appropriate sports opportunities for older athletes, such as access to playing facilities.^{29,32,40} Indeed, older adults not living in close geographic proximity to a sports facility, park or swimming pool had significantly reduced activity.⁴¹ Other barriers included at this level concern public sport policies (e.g., at local, state and national levels) as being decisive in facilitating the building of lifelong sports habits. In their studies, Jenkin et al^{29,42} noted that policies currently focus on children and youth elite sport, overlooking other demographic groups, such as seniors.

It should be noted that all these studies have addressed only barriers to recruiting older people to participate in sport. By contrast, few studies have focused on those who already participate in competitive sports or have explored the constraints that limit but do not necessarily stop participation. Dionigi et al³⁸ theorize that perceived constraints do not equate with complete withdrawal from sports participation if they can be negotiated. However, no studies have specifically addressed the barriers to retaining these older athletes who are currently engaged in

competitive sports, investigating potential reasons for stopping competitive sport in the future. Understanding the perceived barriers from the experiences of these older athletes could help to maximize the benefits of continued engagement. Further, it could be meaningful at not only the individual level but also at a wider policy level, with a more nuanced understanding of the barriers to retention helping to focus supportive strategies more appropriately.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived barriers to retain in competitive sport those senior athletes actively engaged in sports disciplines from four European countries (France, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom). The socioecological model was used as a conceptual underpinning to assess whether those barriers to recruitment in sports were generalizable to barriers to retention in competitive sports.

Design and methods

Participants

The sample included 463 athletes from four European countries: 105 from France, 98 from Italy, 180 from Spain and 80 from UK. Participants were required to meet the following inclusion criteria: (a) aged 55 years or older, (b) involved in at least one competitive sport, and (c) participating in competitive sport events. The average age of participants was 61.4 ± 5.5 years (range, 55–82 years), with men comprising 78.4 % of respondents consistent with masculinization in competitive sports participation.⁴³ Most participants were married (80.3 %) and employed (58.9 %), with more than half (52.0 %) reporting household monthly incomes exceeding €3,001 and only 2.6 % having incomes less than €1,000. Participants reported involvement in both individual (83.2 %) and team (16.8 %) sports for 28.0 ± 18.2 years (range, 1–71 years), competing in an average of 11.1 ± 10.8 sporting events per year. Table 5.3.1 shows the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 5.3.1 Sociodemographic characteristic of participants

Variable	Total (n = 463)
Mean age (SD), years	61.4 (5.5)
Country of residence (%)	
France	22.7
Italy	21.2
Spain	38.9
United Kingdom	17.3
Gender (%)	
Male	78.4
Female	21.6
Relationship status (%)	
Married	80.3
Not married	19.7
Educational level (%)	
Primary studies or less	5.4
Secondary education	33.6
University education	61.0
Income (€/\$/month), (%)	
< 1000	2.6
1001-2000	18.7
2001-3000	26.7
> 3001	52.0
Employ situation (%)	
Employed	58.9
Not employed	41.1
General self-rated health (%)	
Bad or Fair	7.8
Good	55.9
Very good	36.3
Comparative health (%)	
Worse	1.1
Similar	17.5
Better	81.4
Type of sport	
Individual	83.2
Team	16.8
Mean number of years participating, (SD)	28.0 (18.2)
Mean number of events per year, (SD)	11.1 (10.8)

Abbreviation: SD, standard deviation.

Instruments

Data were obtained using a questionnaire, designed by the authors, that was translated into French, Italian, Spanish and English. It was pilot tested in all four languages to check the understanding of the questions, and any suggestions were considered when constructing the final revision. The questionnaire consisted of purpose-designed items, incomplete sentences and open-ended questions about competitive sport participation across three main sections:

1. Sociodemographic items, including gender, age, country of residence, relationship status, education, income, employ situation, and self-rated and comparative health (Table 5.3.1).
2. Sport characteristics, including the type of sport, number of years participating and number of competitive events per year (Table 5.3.1).
3. A series of open-ended and multiple choice questions to collect details of senior athletes' experience in competitive sports, including barriers to retention.

Data analyzed in this article were obtained in response to a specific open-ended question: 'If at some point in the future you decided to stop doing your current sport, what could be the reason/s for this?'. The use of an open-ended question to explore barriers to future participation in competitive sport allowed respondents' own words to be used in preference to a predetermined set of responses. There was no restriction on the number of ideas participants could record.

Of note, 28 questionnaires did not include a response to the question that was the focus of this study, and consequently, these were discarded from the analysis. The final sample therefore comprised 435 participants.

Procedure

To expand the distribution range, we created paper and web-based (using Qualtrics survey software) versions of the questionnaire. Both versions were distributed in the different sports facilities at the 2019 European Master Games that was celebrated in Turin, Italy, for athletes to complete during their recreation and relaxation time. The first author also contacted sports

federations in four countries (France, Italy, Spain and UK) by email to request their help in distributing the web-based questionnaire among affiliates. Both questionnaire versions included the following: information about the purpose and voluntary nature of the study, instructions for answering the survey, contact details for the research team, and statements that all data would be handled anonymously and in strict confidence, with participants retaining their rights to decline to answer any question and to withdraw consent at any time. The process was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Barcelona (no. IRB00003099).

Data analysis

The study was designed to provide a multifaceted analysis of the factors perceived as threats to senior athletes' future participation in competitive sport. Drawing on the socioecological model,²⁴⁻²⁶ we used a directed content analysis⁴⁴ of participants' responses to determine salient themes deductively at each level of the socioecological model. A multi-step analysis was employed using the ATLAS.ti version 8 qualitative analysis software. The first three steps were conducted independently by two researchers to increase the trustworthiness of results. In the first step, they became acquainted with the data by reading participants' answers and isolating ideas or units of meaning from answers. In the second step, these units of meaning were condensed into categories by repetitions or similarities in meaning according to the three levels of the socioecological model.⁴⁵ In the third step, the draft category systems obtained by each researcher were compared and differences were discussed until a consensus was reached. In the final step, a third researcher not involved in developing the category system received a randomly selected 30 % of units of meaning based on the final version of the system. The kappa reliability index of interobserver agreement was used to compare the new and original categorization. The value obtained (0.96) indicated that the reliability of the category system was very high.⁴⁶

Results

The content analysis of 435 athletes' perceived barriers to continued involvement in competitive sport identified three first-order categories: 'physical barrier', 'psychosocial barrier', and 'never or death'. Within each category, two second-order categories emerged (Table 5.3.2). Some participants mentioned more than one type of barrier, so their answers were coded in more than one superordinate category. Consequently, respondents identified 528 barriers, with a minority (2.5 %) giving an answer that did not fit into the three first-order categories.

Table 5.3.2 Frequency and percentages of the categories regarding the content analysis of the responses (N = 435) to 'If at some point in the future you decided to stop doing your current sport, what could be the reason/s for this?'

Category	France	Italy	Spain	UK	Total
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Physical	103 (24.7)	83 (19.9)	161 (38.6)	70 (16.8)	417 (95.9)
Illness	64 (23.3)	72 (26.2)	99 (36.0)	40 (14.5)	275 (63.2)
Injury	39 (27.5)	11(7.7)	62 (43.7)	30 (21.1)	142 (32.6)
Psychosocial	20 (26.0)	15 (9.5)	35 (45.5)	7 (9.1)	77 (17.7)
Intrapersonal	16 (33.3)	9 (18.8)	18 (37.5)	5 (10.4)	48 (11.0)
Interpersonal /Contextual	4 (13.8)	6 (20.7)	17 (58.6)	2 (6.9)	29 (6.7)
Never or death	5 (21.7)	5 (21.7)	5 (21.7)	8 (34.8)	23 (5.3)
Never	3 (27.3)	2 (18.2)	2 (18.2)	4 (36.4)	11 (2.5)
Death	2 (16.7)	3 (25.0)	3 (25.0)	4 (33.3)	12 (2.8)
Others	4 (36.4)	1 (9.1)	4 (45.5)	1 (9.1)	11 (2.5)

Physical barriers

This category included participants' responses that identified poor health as a potential barrier to continued participation in competitive sports. It was further divided into subcategories related to 'illness' and to the possible 'injuries' associated with participation. Illness concerns referred to the alteration of health status as a medical condition that affects the human body and could cause limitation, decline or loss of functional capacity to perform and/or compete in the

sport. This subcategory frequently cited health problems in general, without referencing specific diseases: 'When physically I can no longer support the effort' (woman, age 62 years, Italy). Injury then referred to the participants' concerns of the potential for physical damage to the body directly associated with sport participation. For instance, a respondent stated: 'If I have a major injury that prevents me from jumping or running' (woman, age 67 years, Spain).

Psychosocial barriers

This category included psychosocial barriers in intrapersonal and interpersonal/contextual aspects. Concerning the intrapersonal aspect, ceasing their participation seemed unlikely to some participants unless they lost interest and motivation, resulting in them deciding to change the activity type: 'Being a little tired of this practice and preferring other leisure options' (man, age 62 years, Spain). This subcategory also included ideas related to personal concepts of the stage of aging as respondents reported that feeling 'too old' could result in them eventually stopping their participation in competitive sport: 'Being too old for the required level and accepting my age' (man, age 65 years, France). Other respondents also mentioned a lack of time.

The second subcategory included interpersonal and contextual barriers as concerns. Alluding to the influence of other people in their sport participation, some participants identified the need to take care of the family as being of higher priority, and that this could affect their involvement in competitive sport: 'Changes could be produced by family issues: taking care of grandchildren, parents or my wife' (man, age 57 years, Spain). Other participants mentioned doctors as people who could influence their participation, referring concretely to medical restrictions: 'Being considered medically unfit for competitive sports by the sports doctor' (Man, 60, Italy). A lack of teammates was also identified as a potential barrier. Respondents mentioned contextual aspects that could also impact their ongoing involvement in competitive sport. Several examples were cited, such as access to sports facilities ('The removal of all swimming pools in my location'; woman, age 57 years, UK), financial difficulties and policy issues ('Not enough interest from others, the local council and the local federation'; man, age 62 years, Spain).

'Never or death'

Participants in this category did not identify potential barriers, instead stating that they did not intend to stop participating in their sport (subcategory 'never'), considering the possibility of leaving their sport to be unimaginable: 'I don't think I'll ever stop swimming, it's an essential part of me and my life' (woman, age 55 years, Spain). At the more extreme end of this spectrum (subcategory 'death'), participants alluded to death as being the only barrier: 'I would have gone from the land of the living and gone to the land of the dying' (Man, 81, UK).

We analyzed each theme and overarching category for the frequency with which respondents mentioned them. As shown in Table 5.3.2, most (95.9 %) mentioned physical barriers, with 'illness' mentioned by over 63 % and 'injury' by 32 %. Psychosocial barriers were also important, but for fewer respondents (17.7 %), while intrapersonal barriers (11 %) and interpersonal/contextual barriers (6.7 %) were mentioned least often. Finally, bivariable analyses indicated that gender, age and nationality did not yield statistically significant differences between the first-order categories.

Discussion

In the current study, our aim was to explore the perceived barriers to persisting with competitive sport in later life, using the socioecological model as a reference framework.²⁴⁻²⁶ Specifically, this focused on the perceived factors affecting potential future disengagement among senior athletes actively engaged in competitive sports in France, Italy, Spain and the UK. Our results indicate that greater importance was attributed to the physical dimension, with less emphasis placed on psychosocial aspects, including intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual dimensions.

Among the physical barriers identified, illness (63.2 %) and injuries (32.6 %) were the two subcategories cited most often. These are consistent with potential barriers to undertake a sport in later life identified previously.²⁷⁻²⁹ In a recent systematic review on sport and aging,⁴² a dual

relationship is noted by which physical health can not only motivate older athletes to participate in sport but also act as a barrier if the practice of that sport is limited or suspended by its absence. In our study, senior athletes were especially concerned about potential physical loss and the possibility of fragility and dependency in the future. Many commented on the possibility of being forced to stop participating in competitive sports due to the risk of injury, a fear that was greatest when individuals performed at the highest levels of intensity, such as competitive sports.²⁷ Given that it is harder to recover from injuries as people age,⁴⁷ concerns about their adverse impact could be understood in the context of the value older athletes placed on the use and capability of their bodies. In this view, the body is a biological and material entity that must be trained and monitored continuously to maintain performance and avoid the consequences of the passage of the time.^{48,49} Although the body is relevant to the identity of any person, it has a particular meaning to athletes, who often build and maintain their identities around having a body that is free from pain, physically fit and in good shape.⁵⁰ However, the physical changes experienced with aging can mean that this scenario arises long before athletes reach middle age. Concerns about the biological aging process for these athletes may be more intense than those of people who inhabit different body types in their youth.⁵¹

With a considerably lower frequency (17.7 %), participants mentioned psychosocial aspects (i.e., intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual) as perceived barriers to future participation in competitive sport. These aspects had a much less decisive impact on our participants' responses than in previous research addressing the psychosocial barriers to starting sport participation in later life. Among the intrapersonal barriers identified by respondents (11.1 %), loss of interest or motivation was mentioned as a potential reason for future cessation. Given that motivation is a crucial factor in influencing behavior, it may serve as either an outcome or (as in our case) an antecedent.⁵² Motivations and interests were also mentioned in previous studies addressing barriers to recruitment in sport among older people, but in these cases, they were related to a lack of knowledge or familiarity with sports activities.⁵³ The answers in our study were related to

concerns about losing interest in sports already established in athletes' lives. Consistent with this, some participants alluded to a possible change of activity or sport from the discipline currently practiced.

Other intrapersonal barriers in our study were age-related, with some respondents reporting that feeling 'too old' and that 'old age' could be reasons to stop participating in competitive sport in the future. As Young¹² states, age-related expectancies influence the decisions to start and to continue to participate in sport. Other studies have focused on the stereotypical negative concept that old age could leave older people deeming it inappropriate to start competitive sport.^{48,54} In the case of senior athletes currently involved in competitive sport, their outstanding athletic performances could lead them to consider themselves as exceptions to the normal and negative connotations of the aging process. Instead, aging could become something to avoid or 'defeat',³ ultimately reinforcing negative stereotypes around this stage of life.¹

Among the psychosocial barriers, interpersonal and contextual aspects were reported infrequently as potential reasons for future disengagement from competitive sport (6.7 %). Our results match those identified in studies of both barriers to undertaking sport participation and concerning limitations during participation: family commitments, particularly related to care responsibilities,^{36,38} and lack of a partner with whom they can train and competes.^{33,40} However, while existing literature identified these as limitations that allowed continued participation, we identified them as factors that could lead to future cessation of sports participation. Our participants also mentioned the influence of the advice or restrictions given by healthcare professionals, particularly physicians, as a barrier to continued participation in competitive sport. Although it has not been explored in studies on competitive sport, this is consistent with other research into the barriers to physical activity in later life, with older people often considering doctors' directives as orders 'of higher authority' and subsequently greatly influencing their actions.⁴¹ A few responses also focused on contextual barriers related to the availability of sport

facilities, the high costs associated with sports practice^{11,19} and policies that tend to overlook senior athlete participation in competitive sports.^{29,42} Overall, these barriers appear to have a greater impact on starting, rather than on continuing, competitive sport.

Finally, the 'death or never' category was given least often (5.3 %), with these participants considering it unimaginable that they might stop their sport, even expressing an intention to continue until death. These results are consistent with those of Gard et al¹ in which many older athletes appeared reluctant to acknowledge barriers to physical activity participation, claiming that the constraints of aging were a figment of people's thinking. Similarly, in the study by Dionigi¹⁰, it was mentioned that some Masters athletes revealed disdain for passive or stereotypical leisure activities and a desire to die on the sporting field rather than to live sedentarily.

The socioecological model used as the conceptual underpinning for this study has helped us to understand the perception senior athletes have of the barriers to future participation in competitive sport. However, it should be noted that the impact of multidimensional factors on initiate sports participation, as addressed in previous researcher, was different from that for maintaining participation. In this latter case, the polarization of responses indicated that physical health had pre-eminence over psychosocial factors, which were considered far less important.

Limitations of the study

The present results should be interpreted with caution in view of the following limitations. First, our sample was gathered using a non-probabilistic procedure, which limits our ability to generalize the results. Participants were also selected based on their availability and capacity to fulfill an online questionnaire. In this regard, it should be noted that participation in competitive sports in late adulthood continues to be shaped by gender and socioeconomic status.¹ Indeed, most participants were men and had high monthly incomes and education levels, indicating a need to capture the experiences of athletes from more diverse backgrounds. Second, it is possible that using self-report data, gathered by a single open-answer question with limited space to

respond, may have led to some barriers not being mentioned. Finally, most research on barriers to competitive sport participation in later life has been performed in the United States, Canada and Australia, with less European representation. Although this study seeks to fill this research gap, our focus on only four European countries precludes the results from being extrapolated to other historical and cultural settings.

Conclusions and implications for future research/recommendations

The documented benefits to well-being and the growth in participation^{13,14,49,55} are sufficient for competitive sports in senior athletes to receive interventions to promote active and healthy aging. Senior athletes who currently compete in sports show exceptional dedication and continued engagement at life stages when most athletes have stopped.³⁰ Thus, we need a better understanding of the potential reasons for disengagement from competitive sports. Despite the limitations of this study, it was evident that the physical dimension and the experiences associated with an athletic body are crucial to European senior athletes.

Our findings indicate a need to minimize potential barriers by implementing programs designed to retain senior athletes in sport for as long as possible. Beyond the strategies endorsed by most social policies, which promote sport as a health measure and focus on recruiting new engagement²⁹, we must also face the challenge of helping those athletes who are currently engaged in competitive sport to overcome the constraints they face, remain active and benefit from continued participation through later life. If we consider only the physiological dimension, seeking to achieve longevity, these highly active senior athletes will get to a point when they can no longer be as active or use their bodies in ways that previously maintained their identities. It will then be key that we identify measures to help these athletes to transition from highly intense to less intense activity as they age, thereby facilitating adaptation to new levels of elite performance.

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5.4 Estudio 4

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What senior athletes think about older people who do not participate in sport.

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'They've just never been involved in it': What senior athletes think about older people who do not participate in sport

Valentina Cannella^{a*}, Rodrigo Serrat^a, Feliciano Villar^a, and Adam Brian Evans^b

^a*Department of Cognition, Development, and Educational Psychology, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain;* ^b*Department of Nutrition, Exercise and Sports, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark*

*Corresponding author: Valentina Cannella, MS, Department of Cognition, Development, and Educational Psychology, University of Barcelona, Passeig de la Vall d'Hebrón 171, 08035 Barcelona, Spain; Telephone number: +34 933125831; E-mail: cannellavalentina@ub.edu

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Abstract

To date, despite the many recognized benefits of participation in sport, many older people do not participate in it. This study explored the opinions about barriers to participating in sport among non-active older people from the perspective of 463 senior athletes ($M = 61.4$, $SD = 5.5$ years) engaged in competitive sports. Participants completed a questionnaire including an incomplete sentence regarding the reason why many older people do not play sports. We analysed their answers using content analysis and performed bivariate analyses to determine possible associations with the sociodemographic and participatory characteristics of the sample. The results highlighted a range of perceived barriers which mostly related to past and present opportunities, and contained significant variations according to age, country of residence, and years participating in sports. These findings contribute to a better understanding of the way in which senior athletes perceive the barriers for the initiation of non-active older people in sports participation which could inform potential measures to promote greater participation in sport as a meaningful leisure activity among this age group.

Introduction

Ageing has traditionally been associated with frailty, physical dependence, and disengagement (Gard et al., 2017). Yet in the last few decades, there has been a considerable shift towards a more positive attitude towards later life. This shift is reflected in the emergence and popularization of concepts such as successful (Rowe & Kahn, 2015), positive (Hill, 2011), active (World Health Organization, 2002), and healthy ageing (World Health Organization, 2015). Despite differences between these terms (e.g., Foster & Walker, 2015), each of these concepts highlights the importance of embracing active, leisured, and healthy lifestyles in later life, as well as supporting older people's continued psychological wellbeing and engagement in wider society (Gibson & Singleton, 2012).

Against this backdrop, activities that were once considered inappropriate for many older people, such as sports that require physical effort (Webb et al., 2017), have received increased focus from policymakers and researchers. Hence, sport has been described as a relatively inexpensive and easily implementable policy option to support the achievement of a variety of social and health goals among older populations (Collins & Kay, 2014). Consequently, the promotion of sport has become an increasingly common strategy for preventing disease and promoting wellbeing across the life course (Eime et al., 2013). Indeed, many studies have argued that the potential benefits of sport participation are not only related to physical dimensions of health (e.g., increasing cardiovascular and musculoskeletal systems) (e.g., Wright & Perricelli, 2008), but also to psychological health (e.g., strengthening self-esteem) and social benefits such as decreasing social isolation and reinforcing social identity (e.g., Appleby & Dieffenbach, 2016; Kim et al., 2020).

Despite this evidence for the benefits of active lifestyles throughout the life-course, participation in sport tends to decrease by greater amounts as people get older. For instance, according to the latest Eurobarometer report on sport and physical activity in the 28 EU member states (European Commission, 2018), the proportion of people that do exercise or play sport

regularly decreases from 62 % among 15-24 years old to 30 % of those aged 55 or over. Moreover, an analysis of the socio-demographic data reveals that sex (being women), education (having left the education system by the age of 15 or earlier), and financial status (having difficulties with payment of their bills) could be associated with a lower rate of sport participation.

Given this trend of decreasing sport participation among older people, a substantial body of research has focused on understanding the factors that hinder participation as people age. The most common reported barriers (e.g., Spiteri et al., 2019) are related to physical health limitations, lack of motivation and/or interest in sport, as well as lack of appropriate sports opportunities for older people (e.g., lack of knowledge and/or access to playing facilities, financial costs). It is important to note that these studies are mostly focused on the experiences of older adults who never partake in any kind of sport (e.g., Jenkin et al., 2018) and/or those who participate in sport not in a competitive way (e.g., Wong et al., 2018).

Hence, another way to understand the potential barriers that hinder sport participation in later life is by adopting the perspective of those older adults who are senior athletes and, therefore, participate on a regular basis. With a growing prevalence across the globe, these older athletes (usually aged more than 55 years) tend to participate in sport with an inherent (although varying) degree of competition. Such participation necessarily distinguishes sporting pursuits from exercise or general physical activity (Dionigi, 2017; Young et al., 2018), and indeed, have often been conceptualized as a form of 'serious leisure' (Bowness, 2020; Dionigi, 2006; Heuser, 2005). Senior athletes seem to possess Stebbins' (1992) six qualities of serious leisure, related to perseverance, significant effort, career development, durable benefits, strong identification, and unique ethos. What's more, and according to numerous studies on serious leisure (e.g., Heo et al., 2012), most athletes persevere through challenges, invest personal effort, and develop fulfilling leisure careers from 'dabblers' to 'devotees' (Stebbins, 2014, p. 37) due to their substantial commitment. Furthermore, senior athletes are considered to demonstrate not only physical but also cognitive mastery, whilst they simultaneously challenge societal expectations regarding what

it means to grow old (Baker et al., 2010), redefining athletic competence as they do so (Tulle, 2008).

Considering this evidence, therefore, understanding senior athletes' views on what prevents their non-active peers from participating in sport could be crucial, because as experts actively engaged in sport at competitive levels, they could provide their views on potential barriers that other older people may confront to become involved, that may or may not be the same as those they have had to face in their sports career trajectories. Namely, since athletes' serious leisure careers have histories in terms of entry, participatory involvement, in some cases, dormancy and resumption and in other cases, withdrawal (Hastings et al., 1995), senior athletes could know first-hand the determinants of these processes, having been likely to have experienced them in the first person or else seen them in other people in their sporting contexts. Following the serious leisure perspective (Heo, Culp, et al., 2013), in finding a unique ethos, senior athletes are included within a unique social world defined by distinctive ideals, norms, values, and guiding beliefs, a sort of 'subculture' related to their specific sporting context. In this sense, they have a key role in the context of their sports since as gatekeepers they somehow constitute a source of primary socialization within the sporting context of reference, an access road for those who want to undertake sport. Thus, their opinions about older non-participating people can be an indicator of potential behaviour towards them, which could ultimately facilitate the inclusion of new members in the different sports contexts.

To our knowledge, to date, only a few studies (Gard et al., 2017; Horton et al., 2018, 2019) have sought to understand older adults participants' perspectives on non-active peers. Specifically, in these qualitative investigations conducted during the 2013 World Master Games a relatively small sample of competitive older athletes (with 16, 17, and 63 study participants respectively) tended to attribute the lack of engagement in sport among other older people to internal or personal characteristics (such as lack of motivation, drive, or willpower), rather than to external factors (such as sociocultural and environmental determinants), despite the significance

of such factors being well established in the literature (e.g., Bonaccorsi et al., 2020). The low levels of sport participation among peers tended to be seen by the older athletes participating in these studies as a sign of laziness, blind conformity to outdated ideas about ageing, or simply unfathomable (Gard et al., 2017). In fact, words such as 'lazy' were used to describe non-exercisers and blame them for their ill health or disease (Horton et al., 2018). These results align with current sport promotion messages drawn upon neoliberal policies that assume that everyone can practice sport (e.g., 'Sport for all' philosophies that underlie many policy approaches) (Gard et al., 2017; Horton et al., 2018, 2019).

To our knowledge, however, no studies have yet explored opinions about barriers for sport participation in later life from the perspective of a large sample of actively engaged older athletes, nor tried to understand the factors associated with these opinions. Sport as serious leisure occurs at a level of the individual with a set of demographic variables, albeit strongly influenced by wider social, cultural, and geographical contexts (Stebbins, 2017). Since sociodemographic and participatory characteristics may be important influences on how athletes perceived the reasons behind the lack of sport participation among non-active peers, exploring these associations could provide a deeper and more nuanced understanding of what prevents older people from participating in sports.

Hence, the aims of this study were twofold. First, the study explored the opinions about barriers for sports participation in later life perceived by older athletes actively competing in sports. Second, the study explored the possible association of these opinions with sociodemographic and participatory variables.

Method

Participants

An intentional sample of 463 athletes participated in the study. In order to be eligible for participation, individuals were required to be (a) aged 55 years or older, (b) involved in at least

one competitive sport, and (c) participating in competitive sports events. The study included participants coming from four European countries: France ($n = 105$), Italy ($n = 98$), Spain ($n = 180$) and UK ($n = 80$). The participants ranged in age between 55 and 82 years ($M = 61.4$, $SD = 5.5$ years), with men comprising 78.4 % of respondents, consistent with masculinization in competitive sports participation.

Table 5.4.1

Sociodemographic characteristic of the sample

Variable	Total (N=463)
Mean age (SD), years	61.4 (5.5)
Sex (%)	
Male	78.4
Female	21.6
Country of residence (%)	
France	22.6
Italy	21.2
Spain	38.9
United Kingdom	17.3
Educational level (%)	
Primary studies or less	5.4
Secondary	33.6
University	61.0
Income (€/\$/month), (%)	
< 2000	21.3
2001-3000	26.7
> 3001	52.0
Employment (%)	
Employed	58.9
Not employed	41.1
Self-rated health (%)	
Bad or Fair	7.8
Good	55.9
Very good	36.3
Comparative health (%)	
Worse/Similar	18.6
Better	81.4
Type of sport	
Individual	83.2
Team	16.8
Mean years participating, (SD)	28.0 (18.2)
Mean number of events per year, (SD)	11.1 (10.8)

Note. SD = standard deviation

Most participants were employed (58.9 %), and well-educated, with 61 % of them having completed university studies. More than half (52.0 %) reported household monthly incomes exceeding €3,001 and only 2.6 % had incomes less than €1,000. As for the type of sport practiced, senior athletes reported involvement in both individual (83.2 %) and team (16.8 %) sports for an average of 28 years, competing in an average of 11.1 sporting events per year. More than half of the participants (55.9 %) subjectively rated their health as good (out of four categories: bad; fair; good; very good), and more than three-quarters (81.4 %) rated it better when compared health to other people of the same age (out of three categories: worse; similar; better). Table 5.4.1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample.

Instruments

A questionnaire was designed by the authors for the purpose of the study. It was translated into four languages (French, Italian, Spanish and English) and pilot tested by native speakers of each language who did not participate in the final study. The final version consisted of purpose-designed items about competitive sport participation across three main sections: (1) sociodemographic characteristics; (2) participatory characteristics, including type of sport, number of years participating in sport and number of competitive events per year; (3) a series of incomplete sentences, open-ended and multiple-choice questions aimed at gathering senior athletes' experience in competitive sports.

Specifically, data analysed in this article were obtained in response to one of the incomplete sentences in the questionnaire, presented as follows: 'Many older people do not do sport because...'. The use of this kind of question, in preference to a predetermined set of responses, allows reflecting a constructivist approach (Guba et al., 2018) in which we use participants' micro-narratives as a tool to understand how they perceived the lack of sport participation among non-active older people according to their personal sporting experiences. There was no space limit for the number of ideas participants could record. The translations of the responses were carried out by members of the research team with a proficiency level in the four

languages of the study. Only 5 questionnaires did not include a response to the question that was the focus of this study, and consequently, these were discarded from the analysis. The final sample, therefore, comprised 458 participants.

Procedure

To foster a wider distribution of the questionnaire, two versions (on paper and web-based) were created. Both versions were distributed at the 2019 European Master Games celebrated in Turin (Italy), where the first author asked athletes from four countries (France, Italy, Spain and UK) to complete the questionnaire during their relaxation time in different sports facilities. The selection of the countries was made according to the domain of these languages by the researcher who applied the questionnaires. The first author also contacted sport federations of the same disciplines included in the Master Games in the above-mentioned countries by email to request their assistance in distributing the web-based questionnaire among their affiliates. Both questionnaire versions included information about the purpose and voluntary nature of the study, instructions for answering the survey, and contact details for the research team. The process was approved by the ethics committee of the University of (blinded for review) (No. blinded for review). Given that the participants preceded from two ways (those attending the European Master Games and those affiliated to the sports federations), statistical techniques were used to compare the parameters of the sociodemographic variables of the two samples. Since the results did not show significant differences, the samples were considered equivalent to one another.

Data analysis

The responses were analysed initially using content analysis, and then bivariate analyses were performed to explore the possible associations between these opinions and the sociodemographic characteristics of participants.

A content analysis of participants' answers was conducted, following a multi-stage process as described by authors such as Krippendorff (2013) and Neuendorf (2019), and with the

help of ATLAS.ti version 8 qualitative analysis software. In the first stage, ideas or units of meaning were isolated from answers. In the second stage, these units of meaning were condensed into first-order categories and second-order categories based on the repetition of ideas or similarity of meaning among units. The process was conducted independently by two researchers (the first and third authors) to enhance reliability. Once they had created a category system, in the third stage, the researchers compared the first-order and second-order categories that each of them had identified and discussed their differences until a consensus was reached. In the final stage, an independent researcher who had not been involved in the previous process (the second author) categorized a randomly selected section (around 30 %) of units of meaning in accordance with the final version of the system. His categorization and the initial categorization of the first-ordered categories were compared to calculate the kappa index of interobserver agreement. This index was calculated to be .89, which suggested that the category system was very reliable (Landis & Koch, 1977).

Additionally, a series of bivariate analyses were performed to determine if the four first-order categories identified in the content analysis process were associated with the sociodemographic and participatory characteristics of the sample. Namely, different chi-square tests were applied for the categorical variables (sex, country of residence, educational level, income, employment situation, general self-rated health, comparative health, and type of sport); and different Student's t-tests were performed for the continuous variables (age, years participating, and number of events per year). In all chi-squares and Student's t-tests, we crossed the presence of the category (yes or no) by the sociodemographic and participatory variables.

Results

Content analysis

We divided participants' answers to the incomplete sentence: 'Many older people do not do sport because...' into four first-order categories: 'opportunities', 'non-participant older adults'

attitudes', 'non-participant older adults' beliefs', and 'physical conditions'. These categories were further divided into second-order categories. Some participants mentioned several types of barriers, so their answers were coded into more than one first or second-order category. A minority of answers (2.0 %) did not fit into these first-order categories and hence were classified in the category 'other'. Table 5.4.2 provides a summary of these first-order and second-order categories, with the frequencies and percentages of ideas' occurrence.

Table 5.4.2

First-order and second-order categories created from the content analysis of the incomplete sentence: "Many older people do not do sport because..."

Categories	Freq. (%)
Opportunities	183 (40.0)
Past circumstances	136 (29.7)
Present circumstances	62 (13.5)
Non-participant older adults' attitudes	139 (30.3)
Will and Motivation	87 (19.0)
Laziness	49 (10.7)
Fear	11 (2.4)
Non-participant older adults' beliefs	127 (27.7)
Sport-related	65 (14.2)
Age-related	66 (14.4)
Physical conditions	108 (23.6)
Health	78 (17.0)
Capacity	33 (7.2)
Others	9 (2.0)

Note. The sum of second-order category values may sometimes be greater than the corresponding first-order category values because some participants' answers included more than one idea and, therefore, were coded into more than one second-order category. Similarly, one specific response may include more than one first-order category.

Opportunities

The most frequently mentioned first-order category (40 %) was related to externally driven factors that were considered to reduce opportunities to participate in sport throughout life. An initial second-order category (29.7 %) highlighted 'past circumstances' as reasons to discourage older people from practicing sport. For example, some participants mentioned the lack

of habit acquired during earlier stages of life as a potential barrier in the present. An example of such a statement included: 'They [non-participant older adults] have never practiced it [sport] regularly when they were younger' (man, age 64 years, France). Furthermore, for other respondents the lack of lifelong education about sport and sports culture were identified as reasons that may influence the participation in sport among older people: 'The culture of sport (practiced) in Italy is missing' (man, age 58 years, Italy).

An additional second-order category named 'present circumstances' (13.5 %) addressed a perceived lack of advantageous circumstances/possibilities for older people. In fact, the most mentioned barriers were the lack of spare time (due to work or family commitments); peers with whom to do sport; facilities; and economic availability. Some participants especially qualified the lack of age-appropriate opportunities as a barrier that prevent older people from participating in sport: 'The facilities available are not always suitable for older people so young people swimming or jumping in when you are trying to swim lengths' (woman, age 55 years, United Kingdom).

Non-participant older adults' attitudes

The second-most frequently mentioned first-order category (30.3 %), named 'non-participant older adults' attitudes', referred to a set of behavioural predispositions and emotional states that non-participant older adults were assumed by participants to hold in relation to sport participation in old age. Specifically, ideas were further divided into three second-order categories. The first one with 19.0 % of ideas' occurrence, named 'will and motivation', included participants' ideas related to the lack of will and/or motivation for the involvement in sport among older adults. For instance, some respondents expressed how: 'They don't want to do it' (man, age 69 years, France); 'They feel they are not motivated to do sport' (man, age 56 years, Spain).

An additional second-order category, with 10.7 % of mentions, was related to the concept of 'laziness' as a common reason for not participating in sport among older people, as stated by many participants: 'They are too lazy' (women, age 63 years, Italy).

The final second-order subcategory within this theme, 'fear' (2.4 %), was related to the feeling of fear and/or inadequacy that participants considered could prevent older people from participating in sport: 'They feel fear' (man, age 59 years, Spain); 'They are embarrassed about their appearance' (woman, age 63 years, UK).

Non-participant older adults' beliefs

The third first-order category, with 27.7 % of mentions, was named 'non-participant older adults' beliefs' and referred to a set of cognitive information that older adults presumably have about sports participation and old age. It included respondents' perceptions that non-participants' beliefs were so restrictive to the extent that they could explain their reluctance to participate in sport in later life. This category was broken down as follows. The first second-order category, 'sport-related' beliefs (14.2 %), included beliefs related to misconceptions about sport. Specifically, some participants alluded to the lack of knowledge about the benefits of sport among older people as a reason for not taking part. For example: 'Because they don't imagine how much good it could do for their health' (man, age 77 years, Italy). Respondents also considered misconceptions about the intensity and effort that sport requires to be a deterrent aspect for the involvement, presumably assumed by their non-active peers. For example, one participant suggested that: 'They find it [sport] too physically demanding' (woman, age 59 years, United Kingdom).

The next second-order category, 'age-related' beliefs (14.4 %), referred to a negative and stereotyped vision of old age, assumed by non-participant older people, that could act as a barrier for them to participate in sport. For example, one participant stated: 'They are programmed to believe that you are not able to exercise when you get older' (woman, age 68 years, United Kingdom). Likewise, another respondent emphasizes the role of society in maintaining the stereotypical image of older people: 'Society makes them believe that at their age they cannot' (man, age 55 years, Spain). Finally, other participants reported the ageist idea that sport is an

activity aimed exclusively at young people: 'They believe that sport is for young people' (man, age 57 years, Italy).

Physical conditions

The least-often mentioned first-order category (23.6 %), included participants' responses that identified physical parameters as potential barriers for older people to participate in sport. Responses included in it were divided into two second-order categories: 'health' and 'capacity' related barriers. The first second-order category (17.0 %) referred to the lack of good health conditions as a potential reason for not participating in sport among older people. Indeed, several participants suggested that many older people (other than themselves) may not be of strong enough health to play sports. Examples included 'Their state of health does not allow them to practice a sport' (man, age 67 years, France), or the rather brutal statement that 'They are fat and unfit' (man, age 61 years, United Kingdom).

The next second-order category, 'capacity' (7.2 %), included responses in which participants mentioned the lack of physical capacity and/or the feeling of incapacity. For example, some older athletes suggested that: 'They are physically incapable' (man, age 78 years, United Kingdom). Others in turn alluded to the self-perception that non-participant older people might have about their physical abilities: 'They feel unable to do it [sport]' (man, age 58 years, Italy).

Statistical Analyses

Bivariate analyses were performed to explore the possible association between the first-order categories ('opportunities', 'non-participant older adults' attitudes', 'non-participant older adults' beliefs', and 'physical conditions') and the sociodemographic and participatory characteristics of the sample (see Table 5.4.3).

Table 5.4.3*Percentages, means, standard deviations, and associations between the first-order categories and the sociodemographic and participatory characteristics*

	Opportunities		Non-participant older adults' attitudes		Non-participant older adults' beliefs		Physical conditions	
		Test statistic		Test statistic		Test statistic		Test statistic
Age (M, (SD)) ^a	61.3 (5.4)	0.278	61.4 (5.2)	-0.046	61.2 (5.3)	0.528	62.6 (5.9)	-2.755**
Sex (%) ^b		0.935		3.005		2.801		0.609
Male	30.4		25.2		20.4		17.9	
Female	9.6		5.1		7.3		5.7	
Country of residence (%) ^b		7.097		8.051*		6.241		23.619***
France	6.6		6.7		6.1		5.9	
Italy	8.5		7.2		3.9		6.6	
Spain	17.9		13.3		11.6		4.8	
United Kingdom	7.0		3.1		6.1		6.3	
Educational level (%) ^b		1.720		0.102		1.009		0.889
Primary or less	2.9		1.8		1.1		1.2	
Secondary	12.7		10.3		9.8		7.0	
University	24.4		18.2		16.8		15.4	
Income (%) ^b		0.277		1.045		0.268		0.736
< 2000	8.1		7.4		6.4		4.8	
2001-3000	10.7		7.8		7.5		5.9	
> 3001	21.2		15.1		13.8		12.9	
Employment (%) ^b		0.276		0.003		0.225		2.970
Employed	23.8		17.7		16.6		12.0	
Not employed	16.2		12.6		11.1		11.6	
Self-rated health (%) ^b		5.747		1.738		1.925		0.878
Bad or Fair	3.7		1.7		2.2		1.8	
Good	23.8		17.9		14.4		13.3	

Very good	12.5		10.7		11.1		8.5	
Comparative health (%) ^b		0.000		0.043		3.111		0.743
Worse/Similar	7.4		5.5		3.7		3.7	
Better	32.6		24.8		24.0		19.9	
Type of sport (%) ^b		2.192		0.522		0.533		0.583
Individual	31.9		25.7		23.6		19.0	
Team	8.1		4.6		4.1		4.6	
Years participating (M, (SD)) ^a	29.7 (18.1)	-1.602	24.9 (18.2)	2.451*	28.9 (18.3)	-0.657	31.9 (17.6)	-2.587*
Number of events (M, (SD)) ^a	10.2 (9.0)	1.432	11.3 (9.6)	-0.235	11.4 (10.2)	-0.304	12.1 (12.3)	-1.120
Total (N=458)	40.0		30.3		27.7		23.6	

Note. Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

^aDifferences tested with Student's t-tests

^bAssociations tested with chi-square tests

Chi-square tests, applied for categorical variables, showed significant associations between the country of residence and the category 'non-participant older adults' attitudes' ($\chi^2 = 8.05, p = .045$), with participants from Spain (13.3 %) more likely to mention these barriers than those from Italy (7.2 %), France (6.7 %) or the UK (3.1 %). Results also revealed a significant association between the country of residence and the category 'physical conditions' ($\chi^2 = 23.62, p = .000$), with participants coming from Italy (6.6 %) and from the UK (6.3 %) tending to cite more often these barriers rather than those from France (5.9 %) and Spain (4.8 %).

Student's t-tests performed for the continuous variables showed significant variations between the participants' age and the category 'physical conditions' ($t(456) = -2.76, p = .006$). Specifically, older participants ($M = 62.6, SD = 5.9$) reported more often this barrier than younger participants ($M = 60.9, SD = 5.3$). Results showed also significant variations between the years participating in sports and the categories 'non-participant older adults' attitudes' ($t(456) = 2.45, p = .015$). Particularly, athletes who participated for fewer years ($M = 24.9, SD = 18.2$) tended to mention more often this category than others who participated for more years ($M = 29.4, SD = 18.1$). Finally, results revealed a significant variation between years participating in sport and the category 'physical conditions' ($t(456) = -2.59, p = .010$) with participants with more years participating in sport ($M = 31.9, SD = 17.6$) mentioning more often this barrier than those with fewer years participating in it ($M = 28.8, SD = 18.2$).

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the opinions about barriers that senior athletes perceive in relation to the lack of sport participation among their non-active peers. Furthermore, this study explored how these opinions might relate to individual and participatory characteristics of senior athletes.

Opinions about lack of sport participation in later life

'Opportunities' were the most frequently mentioned barriers, which included two second-order categories focused on past or present circumstances. In line with studies focused on the development of serious leisure careers, these results recall the concept of 'objective contingencies' (Hastings et al., 1995, p.103), which include structural opportunities (e.g., availability of programs, facilities, and resources) and unfavourable social conditions (e.g., occupational and familial demands). These contingencies shape participation by enabling or dissipating individuals' ability to pursue a serious leisure career, such as sport. Our participants identified 'past circumstances' (i.e., lack of habit/education and sports culture) as possible hindrances for older adults' uptake of sport. This is in line with other studies (e.g., Harada, 1994; Jenkin et al., 2018; Langley & Knight, 1999) which highlight that past participation in sport, especially in childhood, adolescence, or early adulthood, is a determinant of current participation among older adults. Furthermore, our participants also reported 'present circumstances' as barriers to older adults' participation in sport. These perspectives are consistent with other research on barriers to maintaining sport participation among older athletes actively involved in it (e.g., Appleby & Dieffenbach, 2016). In fact, some of the specific barriers related to 'present circumstances' that our participants mentioned, such as lack of time or companionship, probably arose from their own experience of practicing sports. These barriers also hold similarities with previous studies showing that having more leisure time (e.g., Cardenas et al., 2009; Jenkin et al., 2021) and companionship (e.g., Wong et al., 2018a) might be enablers of sport adherence in later life. Moreover, financial affordability was also mentioned as a contextual barrier for sports participation in later life. Here, we can consider that although our participants can be a somewhat 'privileged' group due to their possession of the financial resources needed to participate regularly in costly activities (e.g., Masters Sports events), they were simultaneously aware of structural barriers to participation and that sport activity participation is not accessible to every older person.

Our participants' consistent reference to external barriers that might limit some older people's access to sport is a novel result that differs notably from other studies (Gard et al., 2017; Horton et al., 2018, 2019). In this previous research, older athletes tended to attribute their non-active peers' lack of participation in sports to internal (or personal) characteristics rather than external or structural factors. Indeed, such conception is suggestive of the application of neoliberal policies which attribute to individuals the full responsibility for their wellbeing, underestimating, therefore, the numerous contextual factors that influence an individual's ability to participate in sport in later life (van Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010). Conversely, our results highlight the importance that older athletes attribute to these contextual factors, highlighting the widely held belief that older adults could start participating in sports if appropriate participation opportunities (and support) are provided.

Although to a lesser extent than in these studies, we also found participants focused upon individual agency, frequently referring to perceptually internally driven barriers such as 'non-participating older adults' attitudes', preventing their participation in sport. These findings are consistent with what Hastings et al. (1995) named 'subjective contingencies' that could shape the individual's history of involvement in a serious leisure career (p.103). Our participants were quite judgmental in terms of why others do not get involved in sport, proposing a lack of will and motivation, as well as laziness, as the principal main barriers among the 'non-participant older adults' attitudes' category. Motivational factors are commonly reported in studies focused on sport participation among inactive older adults (e.g., Buman et al., 2010), which is consistent with the perspective of the senior athletes who participated in the present study. Further, by mentioning expressly 'to be lazy' as a reason for the lack of involvement in sport in later life, our participants tended to express a degree of moral authority that they believed their engagement in competitive sport granted them, demonizing passive leisure or sedentary behaviour (Dionigi, 2017). This was also observed in other studies focused upon older athletes, who often perceived themselves as 'an exception to the rule' (Dionigi, 2006; Gard et al., 2017; Horton et al., 2018,

2019). One of the characteristics that define these competitive athletes is the personal effort they invest in their sports activity, which clearly contrasts with the idea that non-participants suffer from laziness and lack of will and/or motivation. Hence, according to Heo et al. (2012), whilst people outside the serious leisure realm may not fully understand the challenges of their involvement, serious leisure participants might develop cohesiveness and in-group favouritism. These specific results resonate with neoliberal assumptions which place individualized, rational choices at the forefront as a central element for sports participation in later life (e.g., 'they don't want to do it [sport]') and focus on the virtues of activity over passivity (e.g., 'they are lazy'). These assumptions can result in the marginalization and stigmatization of those who not only cannot but also do not want to engage in these activities, such as sport (Horton et al., 2019; Pike, 2011).

More than a quarter of mentions also referred to the idea that the lack of participation in sport among older people could be related to their negative beliefs' about both ageing and sports (i.e., 'older adults aren't able to participate in competitive sport'), beliefs which participants presumed could, in turn, be internalized by non-active peers. This observation is in line with previous studies suggesting that older people themselves internalize the traditional view of sport as an activity mainly aimed at young people (e.g., 'sport is not appropriate or even dangerous for older people') (Dionigi et al., 2010), which in turn could influence their decisions to participate, or not, in sport as serious leisure (Grant, 2001). Participants in our study seemed to distance themselves from these stereotypes. As actively engaged older adults, they were dismissive of the idea that exertion and physical fatigue were risky to older people's health, and yet many believed that other older adults were perhaps unaware of this. This position is again suggestive of the presumption that older people who participate in sports might stigmatize those who do not as uneducated or simply as lacking knowledge about the benefits of participation.

Finally, perceptions of inactive older adults' relatively poor 'physical conditions' were mentioned by our participants, with a specific emphasis on health and capacity-related aspects as

possible deterrents for participation in sport among older people. Indeed, health is the most frequently reported determinant for older adults' participation in sport in some studies (e.g., Jenkin et al., 2018), both in terms of a positive outcome of sport participation and as a limitation towards participation in it. Evidence suggests positive associations between the level of involvement in serious leisure, such as sport, and health (Heo, Stebbins, et al., 2013), presenting the senior athletes as the physical elite and 'best preserved' of their age cohorts (Baker et al., 2010, p.6). Hence, if we consider the centrality of the corporeal dimension in senior athletes' life, we can understand why they identified poor health and the lack of physical capacity as a reason for the lack of sport involvement among older people (and perhaps it is surprising that we did not find it among the most cited categories).

Association with sociodemographic and participatory characteristics

Through the bivariate analysis, we found significant variations in perceived barriers to non-participating older adults in sport according to sociodemographic (age and country of residence) and participatory (years participating) variables in the categories 'non-participant older adults' attitudes' and 'physical conditions'. Specifically, in relation to the significant variations between the participants' age and years of sport participation and the category 'physical conditions', results showed a greater tendency to mention this category among the older athletes and those participating in sport for more years. It should be noted that older athletes with a biography of long-term participation in sport tend to experience consciously the body changes in their ageing according to some studies (e.g., Phoenix & Smith, 2011). Hence, it could be understood why our oldest athletes participating for more years in sport were more likely to mention a perceived lack of health and physical capacity as potential barriers for other older adults' non-participation in sports.

Moreover, the association between the countries of residence and the categories 'non-participant older adults' attitudes' and 'physical conditions' depended on the culture of the participants' country of residence. Specifically, Spanish participants were more likely to identify

internal characteristics (such as 'non-participant older adults' attitudes'), and Italian participants were more likely to attribute the lack of involvement in sports to more objective reasons (such as the lack of 'physical conditions'). Broadly put, our findings highlight some cultural nuances embedded in our participants' diverse geographic contexts whose sports and ageing policies could be slightly different (Lefèvre et al., 2020). Although in the four countries in this study the promotion of a sports culture focuses on far-reaching European sports policies such as the 'European Sport for All Charter' (Council of Europe, 1975), as well as the active and healthy ageing frameworks (World Health Organization, 2002, 2015) for the promotion of active lifestyles, the different implementations of strategies associated with these policies in the specific environmental contexts may have influenced how sports participation in old age is perceived. Although observations go beyond our study's objectives, further research may be necessary to gain a greater understanding of such socio-cultural and policy-based nuances.

Finally, since the backgrounds of our participants suggest they possess certain privileges (particularly having the opportunity and ability to undertake a physically active lifestyle and the resources to regularly participate in a costly and time-intensive endeavour such as competitive sports), one might assume that their opinions about the barriers for sport participation in later life might lack empathetic recognition of potential structural barriers. However, as our results indicate, the lack of significant variations in the other categories, such as 'opportunities' and 'non-participant older adults' beliefs', may reflect the more general universal characteristics of the barriers to sport participation in later life identified by our participants.

Study limitations and conclusions

The results of this study should be treated with caution since there are some limitations. The purposive sample of participants limits the generalizability of our findings. Moreover, the concise nature of the incomplete sentence of the questionnaire precluded us from having explanatory power on why our participants identified such barriers for sports participation in later

life. Our data represent the perspectives of older people who are already active participants in competitive sports, and their responses are somewhat hypothetical concerning the 'real' reasons other older adults might not participate. Moreover, the relationships found through bivariate analyses were not being controlled by the influence of other variables, and therefore a multivariate study would be necessary to unravel the influence of the rest of the variables.

Nevertheless, they do indicate much about the extent to which active older adults might stigmatize non-active older adults in relation to sports participation. Since not all older adults are the same, this study attempted to understand this heterogeneity and stigmatization within groups of older people. Furthermore, due to this heterogeneity, the decrease in the participation rate is not uniform or equal in all cases. Hence, an intriguing future research direction could be the comparison of the stories of less active or inactive older people with those of senior athletes.

Despite these limitations, the current study provides insight into the lack of sports participation among non-active older people from the valuable perspectives of a fairly large sample of those actively engaged in sport. The exploration of senior athletes' opinions could lead to the design of interventions aimed at promoting sport participation. Especially, since lifelong sports education is a strong predictor of sport participation in later life (Jones et al., 2018), supporting early interventions to socialize in sport could pay off in later sporting participation in old age. Furthermore, the implementation of psychoeducational programs to inform older adults about the benefits of sport not only in terms of physical health but also psycho-social could be crucial to moving away from seeing the promotion of sport merely as a health measure which in turn could foster the promotion of physically active leisure services relating to sport (Dionigi, 2006; Gard et al., 2017). As outlined by Evans & Sleaf (2012), there is a need to move from interventions based on prescriptive physical activity/sports programs to greater involvement and consultation of older people's preferences in terms of leisure activities. Recognizing that there are different ways to grow old and different types of physically active leisure pursuits, sport should be just another opportunity for older people to enjoy later life.

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CAPÍTULO VI: DISCUSIÓN

6.1 Discusión general

El objetivo general de esta tesis fue explorar las variables psicosociales asociadas con la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior. Este objetivo general se concretó en cuatro objetivos específicos: (1) explorar y organizar el conocimiento existente sobre las variables psicosociales de la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida; (2) explorar las motivaciones para la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior y la influencia de las variables intrapersonales, interpersonales y contextuales; (3) explorar las barreras para su posible retención en la participación deportiva competitiva y la influencia de las variables intrapersonales, interpersonales y contextuales; (4) explorar sus opiniones sobre las barreras para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva y la influencia de las variables intrapersonales, interpersonales y contextuales en estas opiniones.

Para alcanzar estos objetivos se llevaron a cabo cuatro estudios empíricos. En el Estudio 1 se realizó una revisión de alcance para analizar el estado general de conocimiento sobre la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida desde una perspectiva psicosocial. Para los Estudios 2, 3 y 4 se seleccionó una muestra de 463 atletas senior activamente involucrados en diferentes disciplinas deportivas competitivas y procedentes de cuatro países europeos (Francia, Italia, España y Reino Unido). En estos estudios se identificaron las motivaciones de estos atletas para participar (Estudio 2), las barreras para su propia retención en la participación deportiva competitiva (Estudio 3) y sus opiniones acerca de las barreras para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva (Estudio 4). Además, se exploraron las posibles asociaciones entre las variables sociodemográficas y participativas de la muestra con las motivaciones, barreras y opiniones identificadas.

A continuación, se discuten y relacionan los hallazgos más importantes de estos estudios.

6.1.1 Variables psicosociales de la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida: aportaciones de la revisión de alcance

En el Estudio 1, la revisión de alcance permitió mapear la literatura existente sobre la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida desde una perspectiva psicosocial, evidenciar lagunas de conocimiento y proponer nuevas direcciones para la investigación.

En primer lugar, cabe destacar el interés creciente por el tema en cuestión determinado por un aumento significativo de las publicaciones, sobre todo a partir del año 2012. Esto puede ser debido a que en la mayoría de los estudios revisados la muestra fue reclutada en eventos competitivos internacionales (por ejemplo, los *World Masters Games*) que, tal y como se señaló en el Capítulo II de la presente tesis, en los últimos años han registrado una mayor participación de atletas mayores de 55 años (Weir et al., 2010). No obstante, pese a este moderado aumento de interés hacia el fenómeno, la investigación está todavía en una fase inicial y presenta algunas lagunas que se han clasificado como conceptuales, metodológicas y relacionadas con la diversidad.

Con respecto a las lagunas conceptuales, la interpretación de los resultados de la revisión en base al modelo socioecológico (McLeroy et al., 1988; Sallis et al., 2008; Stokols, 1992), revela que los aspectos intrapersonales e interpersonales han dominado la investigación de los aspectos psicosociales relacionados con la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida. Entre los estudios centrados en los aspectos intrapersonales, destacaron aquellos enfocados en los factores motivacionales (e.g., Dionigi et al., 2011; Gill et al., 1996). En estos estudios, la competitividad, entendida tanto en términos de comparación con otros atletas como de desafío personal, se enfatizó como un factor motivacional determinante para la participación de los atletas senior en eventos competitivos (Buzzelli & Draper, 2020; Dionigi et al., 2010). En algunos estudios, este tipo de participación se describió como una oportunidad para redefinir lo que

significa ser un atleta mayor competitivo (Dionigi & O'Flynn, 2007), y desafiar los estereotipos negativos tradicionales que asocian el envejecimiento a un proceso caracterizado por el declive y la participación deportiva en esta etapa de la vida a pura diversión (e.g., Dionigi et al., 2013; Pike, 2012).

Asimismo, en la revisión se destacó una menor atención a los aspectos emocionales y de personalidad de los atletas senior (Bardhoshi et al., 2016; Hoar et al., 2012). Considerando que la segunda mitad de la vida se caracteriza por muchos cambios y transiciones vitales (por ejemplo, la jubilación; Walsh et al., 2019) podría resultar útil explorar las estrategias de afrontamiento de estos atletas en situaciones estresantes, así como los factores de personalidad que podrían actuar como protectores. Finalmente, en otros estudios, las razones para participar en deportes competitivos coincidieron con los beneficios informados por los atletas senior (Heo et al., 2012), con especial énfasis en la mejora del estado de salud (Chan & Lee, 2020). Aunque el concepto de salud es multidimensional y abarca los aspectos físicos, emocionales, cognitivos y sociales (Eberst, 1984), cabe señalar que los aspectos cognitivos (por ejemplo, en términos de estimulación de las funciones ejecutivas, mnésicas y atencionales) recibieron poca atención (Williams et al., 2011). Asimismo, en cuanto a la dimensión física de la salud, en algunos estudios revisados el miedo al dolor, las caídas y las lesiones, se identificaron como barreras para la participación deportiva competitiva (e.g., Kirby & Kluge, 2013).

En cuanto a los estudios centrados en los aspectos interpersonales, la mayoría señalaron la importancia de la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida para ampliar las redes sociales (e.g., Casper & Jeon, 2018), fortalecer los lazos con otros atletas (e.g., Kim et al., 2020) e instaurar amistades basadas en un interés común y tan central como el deporte (e.g., Cardenas et al., 2009b, 2009a; Lyons & Dionigi, 2007). En esta línea, algunos artículos (e.g., Wong et al., 2018) destacaron el apoyo social brindado por otras personas significativas (familiares, amigos, entrenadores, compañeros de equipo y seguidores), mientras que otros (e.g., Liechty et

al., 2017) señalaron el orgullo por el estatus social y el reconocimiento de los demás que los atletas senior suelen obtener a través de su participación deportiva competitiva.

En cuanto al dominio comunitario del modelo socioecológico en la revisión se identificaron pocos estudios. Entre ellos, algunos enfatizaron los aspectos organizacionales/ambientales como facilitadores para la participación (por ejemplo, el acceso a las instalaciones deportivas; West et al., 2019). Otros estudios sugirieron que un sentido de comunidad (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) definido en términos de pertenencia, influencia, satisfacción de necesidades y conexión emocional compartida, juega un papel importante en el mantenimiento de la participación deportiva competitiva (Lyons & Dionigi, 2007).

La misma escasez de investigación se evidenció con respecto a la dimensión política. Como fue ampliamente expuesto en los Capítulos I y II de la presente tesis, en algunos de los estudios revisados se destaca que aunque los gobiernos de muchos países hayan promovido una forma activa y saludable de envejecer (World Health Organization, 2002, 2015) y promulgado políticas de participación deportiva inclusivas (p. ej., la *Carta Europea del Deporte para Todos*) (Council of Europe, 2021), la mayoría de políticas que abordan temas de deporte siguen orientadas a niños, adolescentes y adultos jóvenes (Eime et al., 2013). Asimismo, otros estudios incidieron en la insuficiencia de políticas para el reclutamiento y la retención de mujeres mayores en los deportes (e.g., Naar et al., 2017; Wong et al., 2018).

Con respecto a las lagunas metodológicas, la revisión ha destacado un uso predominante de diseños de tipo transversal, que debido a su naturaleza no permiten captar los cambios que experimentan los atletas en el tiempo. En este sentido, se ha observado que las carreras deportivas de los atletas no son uniformes, sino que tienden a evolucionar y pasar por transiciones críticas, como se ha argumentado anteriormente. En un intento de clasificación, Dionigi (Dionigi, 2015a) distinguió tres categorías de atletas: (1) los que continúan practicando deporte a lo largo de su vida (*continuers*) para los cuales resulta crucial una alfabetización física y

deportiva temprana (Jones et al., 2018); (2) los que, tras un periodo de descanso, reinician la práctica deportiva (*rekindlers*); (3) los que inician la práctica de la competición en deportes en la edad adulta, generalmente después de la jubilación (*late starters*). En este sentido, podría resultar útil la realización de estudios con diseños de tipo longitudinal con el objetivo de ahondar en las trayectorias deportivas de estos atletas.

Por último, en cuanto a las lagunas relacionadas con la diversidad, a través de los estudios revisados se hizo patente que en función de las características personales (edad, sexo y tipo de deporte) así como del contexto socio-geográfico en el que viven los atletas, la forma de participación deportiva puede variar. Como se ha argumentado en el Capítulo I de esta tesis, los procesos de envejecimiento muestran una gran variabilidad interindividual (Evans & Nistrup, 2020; Kolb, 2014). Sin embargo, la mayoría de los estudios revisados se centraron en un rango de edad indiscriminado de atletas (de 50 a 101 años), sin valorar los aspectos diferenciales (por ejemplo, en términos de motivaciones y barreras) entre atletas de diferentes edades. Además, pocos estudios (Helsen et al., 2020) analizaron la variable sexo como factor diferencial en la participación de los atletas en comparaciones que fueran más allá del rendimiento deportivo (por ejemplo, en términos de motivaciones y barreras para participar). Finalmente, en muy pocos artículos (Medic et al., 2009) se encontraron comparaciones entre los tipos de disciplinas deportivas (por ejemplo, individuales o de equipo). En este sentido, cabe destacar que la naturaleza social de los deportes de equipo fomenta un comportamiento prosocial y un sentido de comunidad entre los atletas determinante para su adherencia deportiva a largo plazo (Kirby & Kluge, 2021; West et al., 2019; Wong et al., 2018).

Finalmente, con respecto al contexto socio-geográfico, la revisión evidenció que la mayoría de los estudios se realizaron con muestras de atletas procedentes de Estados Unidos, Canadá y Australia. Así pues, otras naciones y regiones del mundo estaban claramente subrepresentadas, o incluso ausentes. Asimismo, no se detectaron estudios comparativos transnacionales, útiles para

comprender posibles diferencias (por ejemplo, en términos de implementaciones de las políticas en materia de envejecimiento y deporte) en la participación deportiva competitiva en contextos culturales, ambientales y geográficos diversos (Cancela et al., 2021).

En general, los resultados del Estudio 1 han facilitado una comprensión más completa y sistematizada del estado de arte del fenómeno objeto de estudio en esta tesis. Así, con el intento de abordar algunas de las lagunas identificadas, se han desarrollado los Estudios 2, 3 y 4, cuyos resultados se discutirán a continuación, haciendo referencia a los principales hallazgos del Estudio 1.

6.1.2 Motivaciones para la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior

En el Estudio 2 se han examinado las motivaciones de los atletas senior para participar en deportes competitivos y sus posibles asociaciones con las características sociodemográficas y participativas de la muestra. A pesar de que en el Estudio 1 se señaló la prevalencia en la literatura de estudios sobre los factores motivacionales que subyacen a la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida, ninguno ha explorado las motivaciones en una muestra relativamente grande de atletas procedentes de diferentes países europeos, a través de un instrumento (una escala tipo Likert diseñada *ad hoc*) que incluye aspectos específicos de este tipo de participación. Es decir, que contemple la salud en su multidimensionalidad (incluyendo los aspectos cognitivos) y que comprenda ítems relativos a la competitividad que, como se ha destacado en el Estudio 1, constituye un factor crucial para participar en el deporte entre atletas senior (Buzzelli & Draper, 2020; Dionigi et al., 2010). Además, en línea con cuanto señalado en el Capítulo III, pocos estudios (Cardenas et al., 2009a; de Pero et al., 2009) han comparado las motivaciones obtenidas con las características sociodemográficas y participativas de la muestra. Los principales motivos para la participación deportiva competitiva de los atletas que participaron al estudio se relacionaron con los factores físicos y emocionales. “Sentirse más saludable” fue la

razón que obtuvo la puntuación más elevada de la escala, de acuerdo con los resultados de otros estudios (León-Guereño et al., 2021), que identificaron los beneficios para la salud como una razón especialmente importante para los atletas senior, en una etapa de la vida en la que muchas capacidades pueden verse mermadas por los cambios asociados con el proceso de envejecimiento (Gayman et al., 2017; Jenkin et al., 2017). Además, entre las motivaciones relacionadas con aspectos emocionales, los participantes consideraron la práctica del deporte como una herramienta válida para mejorar el estado de ánimo y reducir la tensión y el estrés. Estos resultados sugieren la necesidad de una mayor profundización de estos temas, ya que como se ha destacado en el Estudio 1, hay poca investigación sobre los aspectos emocionales (por ejemplo, las capacidades de afrontamiento ante situaciones estresantes) vinculados a este tipo de participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida (Hoar et al., 2012).

Sorprendentemente, las motivaciones menos relevantes para participar en el deporte se relacionaron con aspectos interpersonales y de competitividad. Nuestros participantes afirmaron que no estaban particularmente motivados por obtener reconocimiento social por su participación deportiva o recompensas tangibles (por ejemplo, recibir trofeos y medallas). Estos resultados contrastan con aquellos encontrados en algunos estudios revisados en el Estudio 1 (Dionigi et al., 2011) en los que los atletas mayores valoraban y disfrutaban el resultado de la competición, como ganar medallas, alcanzar récords mundiales y obtener reconocimiento. Esto podría deberse a que los atletas senior que participaron al estudio podrían haber interiorizado la opinión comúnmente aceptada de que el objetivo principal de su participación deportiva competitiva debería ser divertirse en lugar de competir para ganar. De hecho, en esta misma línea se puede interpretar que entre las motivaciones menos relevantes se encontrase también “competir para vencer a alguien a quien nunca antes habías vencido”. Aunque este resultado parece contrastar con aquellos encontrados en el Estudio 1 que destacan la competitividad como razón para participar en el deporte entre atletas mayores, cabe matizar que la dimensión de

competición no se limita a competir con otros, sino que incluye también elementos de superación y desafío personal ("Tener algunos objetivos por los que luchar" y "Competir conmigo mismo") que son precisamente los que los participantes puntuaron más alto (Appleby & Dieffenbach, 2016; Heo et al., 2013).

De acuerdo con una de las lagunas identificadas en el Estudio 1, ciertas características personales y de participación (como la edad, el sexo y el tipo de deporte) pueden ser factores determinantes para la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida, aunque no se hayan abordado en muchas investigaciones. En efecto, en este Estudio 2 las asociaciones entre las motivaciones para participar y estas variables resultaron ser significativas, junto con otras (estado de salud comparativo y número de eventos deportivos por año).

Con respecto a la variable sexo, los resultados de este Estudio 2 mostraron que las atletas calificaron las motivaciones relacionadas con la competitividad significativamente más importantes que sus contrapartes masculinas. En los pocos estudios que reportaron diferencias en los motivos de participación entre mujeres y hombres, las atletas mayores generalmente tendían a mencionar en mayor medida temas de salud y relaciones interpersonales que los hombres, que en cambio reportaban más motivaciones vinculadas a temas de competición y logros (Kolt et al., 2004). Por lo tanto, aunque los resultados obtenidos en el Estudio 2 puedan resultar contrastantes, hay que considerar que la participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida puede derivar directamente de hábitos deportivos en edades más jóvenes (Smith & Storandt, 1997). En esta línea, es probable que las atletas senior que participaron al estudio hayan tenido que superar mayores barreras sociales para la participación deportiva en su juventud, lo que puede haber determinado el desarrollo de un estilo motivacional similar a los atletas hombres, o incluso una orientación aún más competitiva.

En cuanto a la variable edad, se encontraron puntuaciones más altas relacionadas con motivaciones emocionales (en términos de regulación emocional y manejo del estrés) entre los

atletas más jóvenes (con edades comprendidas entre los 55 y 58 años) en comparación con el resto de los participantes de edades superiores. Estos hallazgos podrían explicarse si tenemos en cuenta la peculiaridad de este rango de edad. Tal y como señalado en el Estudio 1, es probable que los roles típicos de la mediana edad (Walsh et al., 2019) podrían estar implicando un estrés a los participantes, que el deporte les ayuda a manejar.

Otra diferencia significativa se encontró en relación con la variable estado de salud comparativo. Es decir, los participantes que calificaron su estado de salud mejor que otras personas mayores tendieron a obtener puntajes más altos en las motivaciones cognitivas (mejorar el control, la atención y la memoria) y físicas (prevenir enfermedades). Aunque no haya estudios previos sobre el tema, estos resultados podrían explicarse considerando la centralidad de la salud en estos atletas, que la perciben superior al resto de personas mayores y su tendencia a cuidarla a través del deporte.

En cuanto a las características participativas, se encontró que los atletas senior que practicaban deportes individuales tendían a puntuar significativamente más altas las motivaciones relacionadas con la competitividad que aquellos que practicaban un deporte de equipo. Aunque no se haya explorado en muestras de atletas senior, estos resultados son consistentes con aquellos encontrados en estudios enfocados en atletas jóvenes (Devin et al., 2015). Los deportes individuales se relacionan con la autosuficiencia y la independencia, mientras que los deportes de equipo promueven el trabajo en equipo y la confianza en los demás, que en última estancia podría conllevar una menor competitividad, de acuerdo con los resultados encontrados.

Finalmente, los atletas senior que participaban en más de 11 eventos deportivos por año mostraron puntajes más altos en las motivaciones relacionadas con la competitividad que aquellos que participaban en un número inferior de eventos. Aunque, también en este caso no existen otros estudios previos que analicen esta variable, se puede entender que las personas más propensas a participar en estos eventos que representan ocasiones únicas para competir con

otras personas de un rango de edad similar (Weir et al., 2010), presenten mayores motivaciones vinculadas a la competitividad.

6.1.3 Barreras para la retención de la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior

En el Estudio 3 se analizaron las barreras para una potencial retención de la participación deportiva competitiva de los atletas senior y sus posibles asociaciones con las características sociodemográficas y participativas de la muestra. Como se señaló en el Capítulo III de esta tesis, la mayoría de los estudios se han enfocado en las barreras para el reclutamiento de personas mayores en el deporte y no han abarcado las razones que pueden determinar el cese de la práctica deportiva en personas que, en cambio, se entrenan y compiten sistemáticamente, como los atletas senior.

Los resultados del Estudio 3 indicaron una clara importancia otorgada a la dimensión física de la salud. Tal y como se encontró en los Estudios 1 y 2, la salud juega un rol especial en la comprensión de la participación deportiva en la vejez. Algunos de los estudios analizados en la revisión de alcance (e.g., Jenkin et al., 2017), apuntan a una doble funcionalidad del concepto de salud. Por un lado, la salud actúa como importante factor motivacional. Y en efecto, como hemos señalado en el Estudio 2, la principal razón de los atletas senior para participar en el deporte competitivo fue precisamente vinculada al “sentirse saludable”. Por otro lado, de acuerdo con los resultados obtenidos en este Estudio 3, la salud puede actuar como barrera si la participación deportiva se ve limitada o suspendida por su ausencia.

En particular, los atletas senior que participaron al estudio comentaron la posibilidad de verse obligados a dejar de participar en los deportes competitivos debido al riesgo de lesiones especialmente inherentes a la práctica deportiva de alta intensidad (Bowness, 2020b). En consonancia con estudios previos, estas preocupaciones podrían entenderse en el contexto de la centralidad que los atletas senior otorgan a la funcionalidad de sus cuerpos, dado que es más

difícil recuperarse de las lesiones a medida que las personas envejecen (Dunsky & Netz, 2012). Aunque la dimensión corporal sea relevante para la identidad de cualquier persona, ésta tiene un significado especial para los atletas senior, quienes a menudo construyen y mantienen sus identidades en torno a la posesión de un cuerpo libre de dolor, físicamente apto y en buena forma (Tulle, 2008). Por ello, para estos atletas las preocupaciones por los cambios físicos vinculados al proceso de envejecimiento biológico pueden ser más intensas que las de las personas que no desempeñan una actividad deportiva competitiva.

Con una frecuencia considerablemente menor, los participantes mencionaron también aspectos intrapersonales, interpersonales y contextuales como barreras para una potencial desvinculación del deporte en el futuro. Entre las barreras intrapersonales, la pérdida de interés o motivación se mencionó como una posible razón para dejar de competir en el futuro. En concordancia con las estrategias de adaptación comunes en el envejecimiento (comentadas en el Capítulo I de esta tesis), algunos participantes aludieron a un posible cambio de actividad o deporte. Otras barreras intrapersonales se relacionaron con las expectativas en función de la edad (por ejemplo, “sentirse demasiado mayores”), que como apuntan Young y colaboradores (2018), pueden incidir en la decisión de iniciar o continuar a participar en el deporte. Como se comentó anteriormente, los estereotipos negativos sobre la participación deportiva y el envejecimiento han tenido mucho peso en las creencias colectivas, hasta el punto de ser interiorizados por las mismas personas mayores que acaban considerando inadecuado participar en el deporte (Dionigi & O’Flynn, 2007; West et al., 2019). Así pues, el envejecimiento podría convertirse en algo que se debe evitar (Grant, 2001), reforzando en última instancia los estereotipos negativos en torno a las últimas décadas de la vida (Gard et al., 2017) (para más detalles ver Capítulos I y II).

Entre las barreras vinculadas a los aspectos interpersonales, los resultados de este Estudio 3 coinciden con aquellos identificados en estudios sobre barreras para iniciarse en el deporte (también comentados en el Estudio 1). Así, los compromisos familiares, especialmente

relacionados con las responsabilidades de cuidado (Dionigi et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2018) y la falta de compañeros/as con quienes entrenar y competir (Cardenas et al., 2009b; Kirby & Kluge, 2013), destacaron entre las barreras interpersonales. Además, los consejos o restricciones de los profesionales de la salud, en particular los médicos, también se percibieron como potenciales factores que en el futuro podrían determinar el cese de la participación deportiva entre estos atletas senior. Aunque este tema no se haya explorado en estudios sobre deportes competitivos, estos resultados son consistentes con otras investigaciones sobre las barreras para la actividad física en la vejez, en las que las personas mayores llegan a considerar las directivas de los médicos como órdenes "de una autoridad superior" con un claro impacto en sus decisiones y acciones.

En cuanto a las barreras vinculadas a los aspectos contextuales, y en línea con aspectos comentados en el Estudio 1, los atletas senior que participaron al estudio mencionaron la importancia de disponer de instalaciones deportivas, así como la problemática de los altos costes asociados con la participación deportiva (Hall & Ferreira, 2012; Heo et al., 2013) y la poca inclusividad de las políticas deportivas hacia la participación competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida (Jenkin et al., 2017, 2018). Es preciso matizar que estas barreras parecen tener un mayor impacto para iniciarse en el deporte que para seguir practicándolo.

Finalmente, cabe destacar la presencia de participantes que consideraron inimaginable dejar de participar en su deporte competitivo, expresando incluso la intención de continuar haciéndolo hasta la muerte. Estos resultados, aunque parezcan tendencialmente extremos, van en línea con otros estudios (Dionigi, 2017; Gard et al., 2017) en los que los atletas revelaron desdén por las actividades de ocio pasivas típicamente asociadas a las últimas décadas de la vida y expresaron el deseo de morir en el campo deportivo en lugar de vivir de forma sedentaria. Aquí, de nuevo se percibe una forma de negación del envejecimiento asociado a la dependencia, que, en última estancia, acaba reforzando los estereotipos negativos asociados a este proceso vital.

Por último, tras la exploración de las posibles asociaciones de estas barreras con las características sociodemográficas y participativas de la muestra, no se encontraron resultados significativos, lo cual podría sugerir el carácter universal de estas barreras.

6.1.4 Opiniones de atletas senior sobre las barreras para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva

En el último estudio incluido en el compendio de esta tesis (Estudio 4) se exploraron las opiniones de los atletas senior sobre las barreras de iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva. Asimismo, se investigaron las posibles relaciones de estas opiniones con las características sociodemográficas y participativas de la muestra.

Las oportunidades, tanto pasadas como presentes, fueron las barreras mencionadas con más frecuencia. Entre las primeras, los atletas senior indicaron la falta de hábitos, educación y cultura deportiva como posibles obstáculos para la iniciación a la participación deportiva de las personas mayores. Como se señaló en el Estudio 1 sobre la importancia de la alfabetización deportiva temprana (Jones et al., 2018), y en línea con otras investigaciones (Harada, 1994; Jenkin et al., 2018; Langley & Knight, 1996) la participación deportiva en la infancia, la adolescencia o la adultez joven, es un factor determinante para la implicación en el deporte a partir de la segunda mitad de la vida. Así pues, los atletas senior que participaron al estudio parecieron ser conscientes de esto.

Con respecto a las oportunidades presentes (falta de tiempo, compañía y recursos económicos), se encontraron resultados muy similares a aquellos obtenidos en el Estudio 3 sobre las barreras de retención en la participación deportiva competitiva de los atletas senior. Sin embargo, cabe precisar que el foco en los dos estudios fue claramente diferente: en el Estudio 3 se analizaron las barreras para la posible retención de la participación deportiva competitiva de los atletas senior, mientras que en este Estudio 4 se exploraron las opiniones de estos atletas senior acerca de las barreras para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva. Además,

mientras que en el Estudio 3 estas barreras fueron residuales, en este Estudio 4 obtuvieron la máxima frecuencia. Algunas de las barreras mencionadas, como la falta de tiempo (Cardenas et al., 2009a; Jenkin et al., 2021) o compañía (Wong et al., 2018), es plausible que surgieran de la propia experiencia de practicar deportes de los atletas senior que participaron al estudio. Además, fue sorprendente constatar que los atletas senior reconociesen que no disponer de recursos económicos puede constituir una barrera para otras personas mayores. Pues, su perfil podría considerarse un tanto “privilegiado” por poseer los recursos financieros necesarios para participar regularmente en actividades costosas (por ejemplo, los eventos deportivos competitivos) y por ello se podría suponer que estos atletas carecieran de un reconocimiento empático de las posibles barreras estructurales. No obstante, no se encontraron variaciones significativas en función de la variable “ingresos mensuales” de la muestra.

En general, estos resultados que resaltaron la importancia que los atletas senior atribuyen a los factores externos o contextuales, se podrían considerar novedosos y en contraste con aquellos obtenidos en otros estudios similares (Gard et al., 2017; Horton et al., 2018, 2019), comentados en el Capítulo III de esta tesis. Aquí, los atletas mayores tendían a atribuir la falta de participación deportiva de personas mayores no activas a las características internas (o personales), en línea con las políticas neoliberales que atribuyen a los individuos la plena responsabilidad de su bienestar, subestimando los numerosos factores contextuales que influyen en la capacidad de un individuo para participar en el deporte en la segunda mitad de la vida (van Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010).

Sin embargo, aunque con menor frecuencia, en este Estudio 4 también se mencionaron barreras internas, en términos de actitudes de las personas mayores no-participantes (falta de voluntad o motivación, pereza). Por un lado, la identificación de la falta de motivación es consistente con los resultados de estudios enfocados en la participación deportiva entre personas mayores inactivas (Buman et al., 2010). Además, de manera similar, en el Estudio 3 los atletas senior mencionaron la

pérdida de interés o motivación como posible barrera para su propia retención en la participación deportiva competitiva en el futuro. Por otro lado, al mencionar expresamente "ser perezoso" como razón que justifica la falta de participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida, parece que los atletas senior tendían a expresar un grado de autoridad moral, percibiéndose a sí mismos como una excepción a la regla y demonizando el sedentarismo (Dionigi, 2006b, 2017; Gard et al., 2017; Horton et al., 2018, 2019). Estos resultados, de nuevo, resuenan con los supuestos neoliberales que se centran en las virtudes de la actividad sobre la pasividad, con la consecuente posible estigmatización de aquellas personas que no solo no pueden, sino que tampoco quieren participar en ciertas actividades, como el deporte (Horton et al., 2019; Pike, 2011).

Entre las barreras internas, los atletas senior también comentaron la idea de que la falta de participación deportiva entre las personas mayores podría estar relacionada con sus creencias negativas sobre el envejecimiento y el deporte, concibiendo este último como una actividad dirigida principalmente a los jóvenes e ignorando los beneficios que puede aportar en las últimas décadas de la vida (Dionigi et al., 2010). Según los atletas senior, la internalización de estas creencias podría influir en las decisiones de no participar en el deporte entre las personas mayores (Grant, 2001). Estos resultados dejan entrever que los atletas senior, como adultos altamente comprometidos en sus deportes, parecen distanciarse de los estereotipos negativos. Sin embargo, la cuestión no queda del todo clara ya que estos mismos participantes en el Estudio 3 comentaron (aunque con menor frecuencia) que ideas como "sentirse demasiado mayores" podrían incidir en la decisión de cesar su participación deportiva competitiva en el futuro.

Finalmente, los atletas senior mencionaron las condiciones físicas como posibles disuasivos para la participación en el deporte entre las personas mayores. Como se ha visto anteriormente, tanto las principales motivaciones para participar (Estudio 1) como las principales barreras para la retención (Estudio 3) estaban vinculadas a temas de salud física. Por lo tanto, si consideramos la

centralidad de la dimensión corporal en la vida de los atletas senior, quizás sorprenda que las condiciones físicas no se encuentren entre las barreras más citadas también en este Estudio 4.

Los resultados mostraron además que las opiniones que tienen los atletas senior sobre las barreras para la iniciación en la participación deportiva de otras personas mayores varían en relación con algunas características demográficas (edad y país de residencia) y participativa (años de participación) de la muestra. Específicamente, se encontró una mayor tendencia a mencionar las condiciones físicas entre los atletas de mayor edad y aquellos que participaban en el deporte desde hace más años. Según algunos estudios (Phoenix & Smith, 2011), los atletas mayores con una larga trayectoria de participación deportiva tienden a experimentar de forma más consciente los cambios corporales producidos por el proceso de envejecimiento, lo cual podría explicar su mayor sensibilidad al tema de la salud física con respecto a los atletas más jóvenes o con menor trayectoria. Además, los atletas españoles fueron más propensos a mencionar las actitudes de las personas mayores no-participantes mientras que los atletas italianos fueron más propensos a atribuir la falta de participación deportiva a razones más objetivas (como la falta de condiciones físicas). En términos generales, estos hallazgos destacan algunos matices culturales integrados en los diversos contextos geográficos de los participantes (Francia, Italia, España, y Reino Unido). A pesar de que en estos cuatro países la promoción de la cultura deportiva se centra en políticas europeas de gran alcance, como la *Carta Europea del Deporte para Todos* (Council of Europe, 2021), así como los marcos de envejecimiento activo y saludable (World Health Organization, 2002, 2015), las diferentes implementaciones de estas políticas en los contextos ambientales específicos pueden haber influido en cómo se percibe la participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida (Lefèvre et al., 2020). Aunque las observaciones van más allá de los objetivos del Estudio 4, es posible que se necesite más investigación para una mayor comprensión de tales matices socioculturales.

6.2 Implicaciones teóricas, políticas y prácticas

La presente tesis doctoral tiene implicaciones tanto para el ámbito de la investigación como de las políticas y de las intervenciones prácticas.

Los resultados derivados del Estudio 1 aportan un mayor conocimiento en el ámbito académico sobre un fenómeno hasta el momento poco investigado, es decir, cómo los atletas senior responden a los cambios asociados al proceso de envejecimiento a través de la participación deportiva competitiva. La exploración de los determinantes psicosociales vinculados a esta participación a través del modelo socioecológico ha puesto en evidencia la importancia de contemplar todos los dominios del modelo, para asegurar un enfoque holístico que marque su comprensión. Por ello, tomados en conjunto, los resultados de este estudio sugieren la necesidad de una aproximación multifacética a este fenómeno, que contemple el individuo no sólo en términos personales, sino también como parte de un contexto cultural más amplio que influye en su comportamiento.

En cuanto a las implicaciones políticas, los conocimientos derivados de la presente tesis doctoral podrían beneficiar tanto el ámbito de las políticas de envejecimiento como de aquellas vinculadas a temas de deporte. En primer lugar, como se ha señalado anteriormente (ver Capítulo II), pese a las ambiciones de filosofías como la de *Deporte para Todos* (Council of Europe, 2021), la mayoría de las políticas deportivas se centran principalmente en jóvenes. Por ello, el foco de esta tesis sobre atletas senior, permite visibilizar un fenómeno, la participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida, en creciente expansión y por ende digno de mayor atención e inclusión. Por otro lado, las políticas existentes sobre la materia tienen un carácter prescriptivo y tienden a promover el deporte como una medida de salud (Evans & Sleep, 2012; Gard et al., 2017). De aquí la necesidad de alejarse de esta concepción y fomentar políticas basadas en la consulta de preferencias de las personas, para que el deporte se viva como una forma activa de envejecer, elegible entre otras, y cuya práctica resulte significativa.

Finalmente, las implicaciones prácticas que derivan de la presente tesis son relativas al desarrollo de programas deportivos e intervenciones comunitarias diferenciadoras e individualizadas que dejen atrás y permitan superar el concepto de *“one size fits alls”* (de São José et al., 2017). Aunque la mayoría de los programas existentes se centre en la captación de nuevos participantes que podrían estar considerando iniciarse al deporte por primera vez o que podrían animarse a retomar la práctica deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida, las implicaciones de los estudios de esta tesis hacen especialmente hincapié en aquellas personas que ya participan en deportes.

En particular, los resultados derivados del Estudio 2 nos ha permitido comprender la multidimensionalidad de las motivaciones que subyacen la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior (en términos de aspectos interpersonales, físicos, cognitivos y vinculados a la competitividad). Para favorecer una mayor retención en el deporte de estos atletas y aumentar el compromiso deportivo en edades más avanzadas, se podrían diseñar programas que, en línea con los diferentes motivos, ofrezcan diferentes actividades y enfoques al deporte.

Además, entre los hallazgos del Estudio 2, se ha evidenciado la presencia de diferentes motivaciones para participar en deportes en función de la variable sexo, estando las mujeres más motivadas por temas de competitividad. Dado el creciente interés para la promoción del deporte entre las mujeres (Kirby & Kluge, 2013, 2021), estos resultados podrían usarse para guiar el desarrollo de programas que fomenten oportunidades deportivas competitivas para las mujeres atletas, que a su vez podrían representar modelos a seguir para otras mujeres mayores.

A través del Estudio 3 se ha podido profundizar sobre las razones potenciales para la desconexión de los deportes competitivos entre los atletas senior, quedando patente la centralidad de la dimensión física. Para retener a estos atletas senior en su participación deportiva competitiva durante el mayor tiempo posible, se reitera por tanto la necesidad de minimizar las barreras potenciales mediante la implementación de programas específicos particularmente atentos a la importancia del mantenimiento de los cuerpos atléticos. Asimismo, considerando un posible

declive fisiológico que pueda repercutir en la participación deportiva, será clave la identificación de medidas para ayudar a estos atletas a realizar la transición a una actividad con un menor grado de intensidad a medida que envejecen, facilitando así la adaptación a nuevos niveles de rendimiento deportivo.

Con los resultados del Estudio 4 se han podido conocer las opiniones de los atletas senior sobre las barreras para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva. Su comprensión del fenómeno podría servir para diseñar intervenciones dirigidas a promover el deporte entre las personas mayores menos activas. En particular, destaca la importancia que los atletas atribuyen a los factores externos (por ejemplo, la falta de educación y cultura deportiva), como obstáculos para la participación de otras personas mayores. Así, dado que la educación deportiva en edades tempranas es un fuerte predictor de la participación deportiva en la segunda mitad de la vida (Jones et al., 2018), apoyar intervenciones para socializar en el deporte a lo largo del ciclo vital podría dar sus frutos en las diferentes etapas de vida. Asimismo, estos atletas también mencionaron algunos factores internos (como las creencias erróneas sobre envejecimiento y deporte) como potenciales barreras para la participación deportiva de otras personas mayores. En este sentido, la implementación de programas psicoeducativos para informar sobre los beneficios de la participación en actividades deportivas en la edad adulta y en la vejez también podría ser útil para contrarrestar la internalización de algunos estereotipos (por ejemplo, el deporte es para jóvenes) y fomentar así la promoción de formas saludables de envejecer.

6.3 Limitaciones y líneas futuras de investigación

La presente tesis presenta unas limitaciones que es conveniente tener en cuenta para la interpretación de los hallazgos alcanzados. Las limitaciones específicas de cada estudio incluido en el compendio de esta tesis se han discutido en sus correspondientes apartados. Por ello, a continuación, se mencionan sólo aquellas relativas a la tesis en su conjunto y se avanzan propuestas para abordarlas en futuras investigaciones.

La principal limitación de esta tesis está relacionada con el muestreo de los Estudios 2, 3 y 4. Su selección se ha realizado de manera intencional y mediante un procedimiento no probabilístico, lo que limita la generalización de los resultados. De hecho, los participantes fueron seleccionados en función de su capacidad para completar un cuestionario en línea, así como su disponibilidad durante la participación en un evento deportivo competitivo (los *European Masters Games 2019*). Esto ha podido determinar el perfil de la muestra, siendo la mayoría hombres, con altos niveles educativos y altos ingresos mensuales. Dicho perfil corresponde al descrito en estudios previos (Baker, Fraser-Thomas, et al., 2010; Bowness, 2020a; Federico et al., 2013) que consideran el sexo, el nivel educativo y el estatus socioeconómico como determinantes para la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida. Por tanto, los resultados encontrados en los Estudios 2, 3 y 4 se deben interpretar a la luz de la posición privilegiada de los participantes. En este sentido, se sugiere la realización de futuras investigaciones que incluyan otras estrategias de acceso a muestras de personas más heterogéneas para capturar, así, las experiencias de deportistas con procedencias y antecedentes diversos.

Asimismo, relacionada con el tipo de muestra de participantes, la segunda limitación de esta tesis se refiere a otros aspectos vinculados a la diversidad de la muestra. Como señalado en el Estudio 1 de esta tesis, la mayoría de las investigaciones sobre la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida se han realizado en los Estados Unidos, Canadá y Australia, con escasa representación europea. En los Estudios 2, 3 y 4, el enfoque en cuatro países europeos (Francia,

Italia, España y Reino Unido), aunque aborde esta laguna, lo hace de una manera tan solo parcial, lo que impide que los resultados se puedan extrapolar a otros entornos geográficos. En esta línea, se sugiere la realización de estudios adicionales para ampliar la cobertura geográfica de la recopilación de datos a otros países de Europa, así como realizar comparaciones transnacionales (e.g., Cancela et al., 2021) para una mejor comprensión de la influencia del contexto histórico, social, cultural y político en el fenómeno de la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida.

Por otro lado, los Estudios 2, 3 y 4 de la presente tesis presentan condicionantes metodológicos que se deben tener en cuenta para su valoración. Para la recogida de datos se empleó un cuestionario autoadministrado diseñado *ah hoc* que incluía una escala tipo Likert sobre las motivaciones para participar (Estudio 2), una pregunta abierta (Estudio 3) y una frase incompleta (Estudio 4). Esto ha permitido a que una amplia cantidad de participantes pudiese aportar una extensa cantidad de datos. Sin embargo, la restricción de las opciones de respuesta en la escala, así como las limitaciones de espacio para las otras respuestas han limitado su poder explicativo, impidiendo que los participantes pudieran aportar argumentaciones más detalladas. Como ampliamente se ha argumentado en la presente tesis, el fenómeno de los atletas senior que compiten en deportes subyace a una interacción compleja y simultánea de una variedad de factores (Dionigi, 2006b). Dado que es importante realizar una investigación que aborde de manera más comprensiva esta naturaleza multidimensional, una forma útil de avanzar en futuras investigaciones podría ser el uso de métodos de recogida de datos adicionales (como entrevistas en profundidad) para una comprensión más profunda de los significados de la experiencia de la participación deportiva a medida que se envejece.

Vinculada a estas cuestiones metodológicas, una última limitación que cabe señalar es la naturaleza correlacional de los estudios, que no permite extraer conclusiones fiables sobre las direcciones de causalidad. Además, su carácter transversal impide aislar los posibles efectos de

cohorte en los resultados obtenidos. Por tanto, por un lado, se podrían realizar estudios transversales, pero en los que se incorpore claramente una perspectiva del ciclo vital, preguntando por ejemplo de forma retroactiva sobre las trayectorias de participación deportiva y los cambios en estas trayectorias a lo largo de la vida. Por otro lado, se sugiere la realización de estudios de tipo longitudinal que permitan explorar las diversas trayectorias de las carreras deportivas de estos atletas senior (Dionigi, 2015a) y distinguir los efectos de cohorte y de edad en los resultados.

CAPÍTULO VII: CONCLUSIONES

A continuación, se resumen los principales hallazgos de la tesis en relación a cada uno de los objetivos planteados. Para cumplir con los requerimientos para la obtención de la Mención internacional del título de Doctor, las conclusiones se han sintetizado en dos párrafos, en castellano y en inglés respectivamente.

7.1 Principales conclusiones

Objetivo 1: Explorar y organizar el conocimiento existente sobre las variables psicosociales de la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida.

1.1 Identificar y clasificar los estudios relativos a las dimensiones intrapersonal, interpersonal, contextual y política de la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida.

1.2 Señalar lagunas de conocimiento y proponer futuras líneas de investigación.

Conclusiones

- La investigación psicosocial que aborda el fenómeno objeto de estudio ha crecido moderadamente en la última década, siendo los estudios que abordan los aspectos intrapersonales e interpersonales más frecuentes que aquellos relativos a aspectos comunitarios y de políticas.
- Entre las lagunas conceptuales se destaca la poca atención en la literatura de los aspectos cognitivos, emocionales y de personalidad vinculados a la participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida.
- Entre las lagunas metodológicas se destaca la casi total ausencia de estudios longitudinales que podrían facilitar la exploración de las trayectorias deportivas de los atletas senior y los cambios asociados a las transiciones vitales.

- En cuanto a las lagunas relativas a los aspectos de diversidad, se destaca que en la mayoría de estudios sobre participación deportiva competitiva en la segunda mitad de la vida hay una tendencia a centrarse en un rango de edad indiscriminado (de 50 a 101 años); raramente se analiza la variable sexo como factor diferencial de los aspectos psicosociales de la participación; existe poca comparación entre los tipos de deportes en función de su naturaleza individual o de equipo; hay una clara subrepresentación de alguna nación y escasez de comparaciones transnacionales.

Objetivo 2: Explorar las motivaciones para la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior.

2.1 Identificar los tipos de motivaciones principales para la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior.

2.2 Determinar la influencia de las variables intrapersonales, interpersonales y contextuales en las motivaciones para la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior.

Conclusiones

- Las principales motivaciones para participar se relacionan con aspectos de salud (“sentirse más saludable) y aspectos emocionales (“mejorar el estado de ánimo” y “reducir la tensión y el estrés”).
- Algunas motivaciones para participar se relacionan significativamente con las características sociodemográficas (sexo, edad, estado de salud comparativo) y participativas (tipo de deporte, número de eventos competitivos por año) de la muestra.
- Los resultados sugieren que estos factores motivacionales deben ser considerados a la hora de diseñar programas para el reclutamiento de personas mayores en el deporte y el mantenimiento de aquellas que compiten en sus disciplinas deportivas.

Objetivo 3: Explorar las barreras para la retención de la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior.

3.1 Identificar los tipos de barreras principales para la retención de la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior.

3.2 Determinar la influencia de las variables intrapersonales, interpersonales y contextuales en las barreras para la retención de la participación deportiva competitiva de atletas senior.

Conclusiones

- Los determinantes físicos son las principales barreras que podrían determinar el cese de la participación deportiva competitiva de los atletas senior en el futuro. En particular, los participantes hacen hincapié en la aparición de posibles enfermedades y lesiones derivadas de la misma práctica deportiva.
- Aunque con menor frecuencia, los participantes mencionan otras barreras para su potencial retención en la participación deportiva competitiva, vinculadas a: aspectos intrapersonales (pérdida de interés o motivación; expectativas negativas vinculadas a la edad); aspectos interpersonales (compromisos familiares; falta de compañeros con quién practicar deporte; consejos o restricciones de profesionales de la salud); aspectos contextuales (falta de instalaciones adecuadas; elevados costes); aspectos políticos (poca atención para atletas senior).
- Los resultados sugieren el diseño de programas específicos particularmente atentos a la importancia de la dimensión física de los atletas senior, para retenerlos en el deporte durante el mayor tiempo posible.

Objetivo 4: Explorar las opiniones de atletas senior sobre las barreras para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva.

4.1 Identificar los tipos de barreras que los atletas senior perciben como obstáculos para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva.

4.2 Determinar la influencia de las variables intrapersonales, interpersonales y contextuales en las opiniones de los atletas senior sobre las barreras para la iniciación de otras personas mayores en la participación deportiva.

Conclusiones

- Los atletas senior hacen mayor referencia a barreras externas que limitan el acceso a la participación deportiva de otras personas mayores. En particular, destacan: las oportunidades pasadas (falta de hábitos, educación y cultura deportiva); y las oportunidades presentes (falta de tiempo, compañeros y recursos económicos).
- Aunque con menor frecuencia, los atletas senior mencionan barreras internas. Esto es: barreras relacionadas con las actitudes (falta de voluntad y motivación, pereza); barreras relacionadas con las creencias erróneas sobre envejecimiento y deporte (“el deporte es para los jóvenes”); y barreras relacionadas con las condiciones físicas (salud y capacidad).
- Algunas de las opiniones se relacionaron significativamente con las características sociodemográficas (edad, país de residencia) y participativas (número de años de participación deportiva) de la muestra.
- Estos resultados sugieren la importancia de fomentar intervenciones para socializar en el deporte en edades tempranas, así como programas psicoeducativos para informar sobre los beneficios de la participación deportiva a medida que se envejece.

7.2 Main conclusions

The main findings of the thesis about each of the proposed objectives are summarized below.

Objective 1: Explore and organize existing knowledge on the psychosocial variables of competitive sport participation in the second half of life.

1.1 Identify and classify the studies related to the intrapersonal, interpersonal, contextual, and political dimensions of competitive sport participation in the second half of life.

1.2 Point out knowledge gaps and propose future lines of research.

Conclusions

- Psychosocial research addressing the phenomenon studied in this thesis has increased moderately in the last decade, with studies that address intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects being more frequent than those relating to community and policy.
- Among the conceptual gaps, the scant attention in the existing literature to cognitive, emotional, and personality aspects linked to competitive sport participation in the second half of life stands out.
- Among the methodological gaps, the nearly complete lack of longitudinal studies that could facilitate the exploration of senior athletes' sports trajectories and the changes associated with life transitions is considerable.
- Regarding the gaps related to diversity, it is worth noting that in most studies on competitive sport participation in the second half of life, there is a tendency to focus on an indiscriminate age range (from 50 to 101 years); the sex variable is rarely analyzed as a differential factor of the psychosocial aspects of participation; there is little comparison between types of sports based on their individual or team nature; there is a distinct underrepresentation of some nations and a paucity of cross-national comparisons.

Objective 2: Explore the motivations for competitive sport participation among senior athletes.

2.1 Identify the main types of motivation for competitive sport participation among senior athletes.

2.2 Determine the influence of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual variables on the motivations for competitive sport participation among senior athletes.

Conclusions

- The main motivations for participating are related to health ("to feel healthier") and emotional aspects ("to improve mood" and "to reduce tension and stress").
- Some motivations to participate are significantly related to the sociodemographic (sex, age, comparative state of health) and participatory (type of sport, number of competitive events per year) characteristics of the sample.
- The results suggest that these motivational factors should be considered in the design of programs addressed both to the recruitment of older people in sports and to the retention of those who already compete in their sports disciplines.

Objective 3: Explore barriers to the retention of competitive sport participation among senior athletes.

3.1 Identify the main types of barriers to the retention of competitive sport participation among senior athletes.

3.2 Determine the influence of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual variables on the barriers to retaining senior athletes in competitive sport participation.

Conclusions

- Physical determinants are the main barriers that could lead senior athletes to terminate their competitive sport participation in the future. Specifically, the participants emphasize the potential occurrence of illnesses and injuries derived from the sport practice itself.
- Although less frequently, the participants mentioned other barriers to their potential retention in competitive sport participation, linked to: intrapersonal aspects (loss of interest and/or motivation; negative age-related expectations); interpersonal aspects (family commitments; lack of partners with whom to practice sports; advice and/or restrictions from health professionals); contextual aspects (lack of adequate facilities; high costs); political aspects (poor support for senior athletes).
- The results point to the need to design specific programs that are particularly mindful of the importance of senior athletes' physical dimension, in order to retain them in the sport for as long as possible.

Objective 4: Explore the opinions of senior athletes on the barriers to the initiation of other older people in sports participation.

4.1 Identify the types of barriers that senior athletes perceive as obstacles to the initiation of other older people in sport participation.

4.2 Determine the influence of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual variables on the opinions of senior athletes concerning the barriers to the initiation of other older people in sports participation.

Conclusions

- Senior athletes refer more to external barriers that limit access to sports participation for other older people. Particularly noteworthy are past opportunities (lack of habits,

education, and sports culture) and present opportunities (lack of time, partners, and financial resources).

- Although less frequently, senior athletes mention internal barriers. That is: barriers related to attitudes (lack of will and motivation; laziness); barriers related to erroneous beliefs about aging and sport (“sport is for young people”); and barriers related to physical conditions (health and capacity).
- Some of the opinions were significantly related to the sociodemographic (age, country of residence) and participatory (number of years of sports participation) characteristics of the sample.
- These results suggest the importance of fostering interventions to socialize in sports at an early age, as well as psychoeducational programs to provide information about the benefits of sports participation as people age.

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ANEXO I: CUESTIONARIO DE RECOGIDA DE DATOS



El Grupo de Investigación en Gerontología de la Universidad de Barcelona está realizando un estudio con el objetivo de indagar sobre la participación en deportes competitivos de atletas mayores de 55 años. Esto implica conocer algunas opiniones de personas como usted a través de un cuestionario.

Le pedimos que responda a las siguientes preguntas con la mayor sinceridad y procurando que no quede ninguna sin responder. No hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas, lo que cuenta es su experiencia. Sus respuestas serán confidenciales y la información que nos proporcione será utilizada exclusivamente para fines relacionados con la investigación.

La investigadora Valentina Cannella queda a su disposición para cualquier duda o pregunta que pueda surgirle. Puede contactar vía telefónica (+34933125831) o vía correo electrónico (cannellavalentina@ub.edu).

¡Muchas gracias por su colaboración!



(Marque con una cruz)

He sido informado/a de los objetivos de este estudio y de la forma en la que se tratará la información que proporcione en este cuestionario, y **acepto participar** voluntariamente en el mismo.

Confirmando que se me ha entregado copia de la presente hoja informativa.

Lugar: _____

Fecha: ___/___/___

Si desea recibir un breve informe sobre los principales resultados del proyecto de investigación, apunte su dirección de correo electrónico:

Sexo: Hombre Mujer

Edad: _____ años

País de nacimiento: _____

País de residencia: _____

Estado civil:

- Soltero/a
- Casado/a (o viviendo en pareja)
- Separado/a o Divorciado/a
- Viudo/a

Hijos: _____ (Especifique número)

Nietos: _____ (Especifique número)

Bisnietos: _____ (Especifique número)

¿Qué estudios ha completado?

- Sin estudios completados
- Básicos (estudios primarios)
- Secundarios (bachillerato, formación profesional)
- Universitarios (diplomatura, licenciatura, postgrado, máster o doctorado)

¿Cuál es su situación laboral en la actualidad?

- Trabajador/a
- Prejubilado/a - Jubilado/a
- Desempleado/a
- Amo/a de casa

CONTINÚA EN LA SIGUENTE PÁGINA →

¿Con quién vive actualmente?

- Solo/a
 Con pareja
 Con pareja e hijo/a/s
 Con hijo/a/s
 Otros (*Especificar:* _____)

¿Cuáles son los ingresos mensuales de su unidad familiar?

- Menos de 1000 €/€ mensuales
 Entre 1000 €/€ y 2000 €/€ mensuales
 Entre 2000 €/€ y 3000 €/€ mensuales
 Más de 3000 €/€ mensuales

¿Cómo diría Ud. que es su estado de salud?

- Muy malo
 Malo
 Regular
 Bueno
 Excelente

En comparación de la mayoría de personas de su edad, su estado de salud es:

- Peor
 Similar
 Mejor

En la actualidad... (Indique la frecuencia con la que realiza las siguientes actividades)

	<i>Nunca</i>	<i>Diariamente</i>	<i>Semanalmente</i>	<i>Mensualmente</i>	<i>Alguna vez al año</i>
Cuido de algún familiar dependiente	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cuido de algún nieto/a	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participo en asociaciones políticas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participo en organizaciones religiosas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participo en actividades de voluntariado	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participo en actividades formativas (cursos, ...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participo en actividades culturales (museos, teatros, viajes...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Lea las siguientes frases y complételas con lo primero que le venga a la mente:

- Muchas personas mayores no practican ningún tipo de deporte porque... _____

- Los atletas más jóvenes piensan que los atletas mayores... _____

CONTINÚA EN LA SIGUENTE PÁGINA →

En las siguientes preguntas conteste pensando siempre en
SU DEPORTE HABITUAL, aquel que practica ACTUALMENTE

En la actualidad ¿Cuál es su especialidad deportiva preferente?

¿Desde hace cuántos años practica esta especialidad deportiva? _____ años

¿Está federado? Sí No

¿Cuántos días entrena a la semana? _____ día/s a la semana

El día que entrena ¿Cuánto tiempo (en minutos) le suele dedicar? _____ minutos por día

¿Dónde entrena habitualmente? (Puede marcar más de una respuesta)

- En el entorno natural (campo, mar, etc.)
 En espacios del entorno urbano (parque, calle, etc.)
 En instalaciones deportivas (pista de atletismo, piscina, etc.)
 Otros (Especificar: _____)

¿Con quién entrena habitualmente? (Puede marcar más de una respuesta)

- En solitario
 Con mis compañeros/as
 Con algún familiar (Especificar grado de parentesco: _____)
 Otros (Especificar: _____)

¿Qué estrategia utiliza habitualmente en su práctica deportiva para minimizar el riesgo de lesiones?

¿Cómo se siente Ud. cuando no puede practicar su deporte habitual?

¿A qué edad empezó a participar en eventos competitivos en su especialidad deportiva? _____ años

¿En cuántos eventos competitivos participa al año?
_____ eventos al año

¿En qué tipo de eventos competitivos participa?
(Puede marcar más de una respuesta)

- Locales
 Regionales
 Nacionales
 Internacionales

Indique, por favor, cuánta inversión económica le supone la práctica de su especialidad deportiva:

	<i>Ninguna</i>	<i>Poca</i>	<i>Bastante</i>	<i>Mucha</i>
Indumentaria deportiva (ropa, calzado, ...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Material y accesorios deportivos (bicicletas, raquetas, ...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instalaciones deportivas (abonos, transportes, ...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pago a profesionales (entrenadores, fisioterapeutas, ...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Lea las siguientes frases y complételas con lo primero que le venga a la mente:

- El mayor beneficio que me aporta el deporte es... _____

- En los próximos años, en mi práctica deportiva me gustaría... _____

En el último año ¿Se ha sentido discriminado negativamente por su edad mientras practicaba su deporte?

- Sí No

Si es afirmativo ¿Puede explicar brevemente su experiencia?

Del 1 al 10 indique cuán importante es para Ud. practicar su deporte en la actualidad: (Marque con una X)

<i>Nada importante</i>									<i>Muy importante</i>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

CONTINÚA EN LA SIGUIENTE PÁGINA →

En relación a cuando era más joven ¿Cómo han cambiado los siguientes aspectos relativos a su práctica deportiva?

	<i>Ha disminuido</i>	<i>Es igual</i>	<i>Ha aumentado</i>
Rendimiento físico	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Número de lesiones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gravedad de lesiones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disfrute durante la práctica	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dedicación de tiempo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grado de implicación/interés	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ganancia de premios, trofeos, medallas...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Si en algún momento del futuro decidiera dejar de practicar su deporte habitual ¿Cuál cree que podría (o podrían) ser el/los motivo/s?

En su familia ¿Hay alguna otra persona que practica o haya practicado deporte competitivo? (Puede marcar más de una respuesta)

- Madre
 Padre
 Cónyuge
 Hijo/a/s
 Nadie más practica deporte competitivo
 Otros (Especificar: _____)

En su práctica deportiva actual, indique el grado de apoyo que recibe de parte de su:

	<i>Ninguno</i>	<i>Poco</i>	<i>Bastante</i>	<i>Mucho</i>
Familia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Amigos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Compañeros de práctica deportiva	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Entrenador/a	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Si tuviera que identificar algún aspecto negativo en la práctica de su deporte habitual ¿Cuál sería?

CONTINÚA EN LA SIGUENTE PÁGINA →

¿Por qué practica su deporte? Indique su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones:

		<i>Muy en desacuerdo</i>	<i>Más bien en desacuerdo</i>	<i>Más bien de acuerdo</i>	<i>Muy de acuerdo</i>
1	Para retrasar el envejecimiento de mi cuerpo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Para prevenir enfermedades	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Para sentirme más sano/a	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Para tener más amistades	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Para que las relaciones con mi familia sean mejores	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Para que mi familia o amigos estén orgullosos de mí	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Para conseguir reconocimiento de la gente	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Para mejorar mi estado de ánimo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Para liberar la tensión y el estrés	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Para sentirme orgulloso/a de mí mismo/a	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Para sentirme más atractivo/a físicamente	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Para sentir que controlo mi cuerpo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Para mejorar mi memoria	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Para mejorar mi atención	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	Para mejorar mis marcas actuales	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	Para competir conmigo mismo/a	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	Para tener unas metas por las que esforzarme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	Para competir con otros atletas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	Para ganar a alguien a quien nunca he ganado antes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	Para recibir medallas y trofeos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

¿Cuáles son los principales factores que actualmente dificultan la práctica de su actividad deportiva? (Puede marcar más de una respuesta)

- Salud
- Economía
- Carga familiar
- Falta de tiempo
- Falta de instalaciones deportivas adecuadas cercanas
- Falta de compañeros con quién practicar
- Ninguno
- Otros (Especificar: _____)

CONTINÚA EN LA SIGUENTE PÁGINA →

Por favor, indique su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones:

	<i>Muy en desacuerdo</i>	<i>En desacuerdo</i>	<i>Ligeramente en desacuerdo</i>	<i>Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo</i>	<i>Ligeramente de acuerdo</i>	<i>De acuerdo</i>	<i>Muy de acuerdo</i>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 En la mayoría de los aspectos mi vida es como yo quiero que sea	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Las circunstancias de mi vida son muy buenas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Estoy satisfecho con mi vida	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Hasta ahora he conseguido de la vida las cosas que considero importantes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Si pudiera vivir mi vida otra vez no cambiaría casi nada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

De aquí a 5 años ¿Prevé que cambiará la dedicación a su deporte habitual?

- Dejaré de practicarlo
- Dedicaré **menos** tiempo que ahora
- Dedicaré **el mismo** tiempo que ahora
- Dedicaré **más** tiempo que ahora

El presente estudio cuenta con una segunda fase en la que se realizarán entrevistas (telefónicas, via Skype o presenciales) a atletas como usted para conocer, en más profundidad, su implicación con el deporte.

Si está interesado en participar en esta segunda fase, indíquenos por favor su correo electrónico y/o teléfono y contactaremos con usted:

Correo electrónico: _____

Número de teléfono: _____

¡MUCHAS GRACIAS POR SU COLABORACIÓN!