



Can we do more than case studies? A scoping review about qualitative research in sport management in the Brazilian context

¿Podemos hacer más que estudios de caso? Una revisión scoping sobre la investigación cualitativa en la gestión deportiva en el contexto brasileño

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Abstract

Introduction: In the past two decades, sport management research in Brazil has progressed, but there are some issues hindering this development. Despite associations and dedicated journals, studies commonly face theoretical and methodological challenges. To date, there has not been an extensive discussion on the development of sport management research in Brazil, particularly those utilizing a qualitative approach.

Objective: The aim of this article was to systematically map the scientific literature on qualitative research in the field of sport management in Brazil.

Methodology: Using Arksey and O'Malley's framework, a scoping review was conducted on articles from major English and Portuguese journals (2000-2022), identifying 115 qualitative studies.

Results: Frequency analysis demonstrated most studies used case studies or the type of qualitative research was not identified. A thematic analysis indicated a concentration and possibilities for expanding research themes, as well as the need to employ contemporary qualitative methods in sport management research within the Brazilian context.

Discussion: The results largely align with studies analyzing qualitative research in sport management in the international context. However, the findings provide insights into future directions for research in sport management within the Brazilian context.

Conclusions: It is observed that qualitative research in sport management in Brazil is tracing a path that demonstrates its youthfulness but with ample room for growth and deepening.

Keywords

Brazil; research methods; scoping review; sport management.

Resumen

Introducción: En las últimas dos décadas, la investigación en gestión deportiva en Brasil ha progresado, pero existen algunos problemas que obstaculizan este desarrollo. A pesar de las asociaciones y revistas especializadas, los estudios comúnmente enfrentan desafíos teóricos y metodológicos. Hasta la fecha, no ha habido una discusión extensa sobre el desarrollo de la investigación en gestión deportiva en Brasil, particularmente aquellas que utilizan un enfoque cualitativo.

Objetivo: El objetivo de este artículo fue mapear sistemáticamente la literatura científica sobre la investigación cualitativa en el campo de la gestión deportiva en Brasil.

Metodología: Utilizando el marco de Arksey y O'Malley, se realizó una revisión scoping de artículos de las principales revistas en inglés y portugués (2000-2022), identificando 115 estudios cualitativos.

Resultados: El análisis de frecuencia mostró que la mayoría de los estudios utilizaban estudios de caso o no especificaban el tipo de investigación cualitativa. Un análisis temático indicó una concentración y posibilidades para expandir los temas de investigación, así como la necesidad de emplear métodos cualitativos actuales en la gestión deportiva en Brasil.

Discusión: Los resultados coinciden en su mayoría con estudios que analizaron la investigación cualitativa en la gestión del deporte en el contexto internacional. Sin embargo, los hallazgos permiten comprender las posibles direcciones futuras para la investigación en la gestión del deporte en el contexto brasileño.

Conclusiones: Se observa que la investigación cualitativa en la gestión deportiva en Brasil está trazando un camino que demuestra su juventud, pero con amplio espacio para el crecimiento y la profundización.

Palabras clave

Brasil; métodos de investigación; revisión scoping; gestión deportiva.

Introduction

The increasing complexity of sports, and consequently its management, has prompted the need for a critical perspective on the research methods used in sport management studies (Skinner et al., 2021). In the journey towards professionalization, it is widely agreed upon that there is a necessity for a systematically organized body of knowledge specific to sport management, underscoring the importance of such research endeavors (Chelladurai, 2018; Nuñez, 2023). Despite the notable progress in research over the past decades, particularly in the development of specific theories within the field, the diversity and relatively recent emergence of this area of study suggest that sport management research is still in a discovery phase (Hammerschmidt et al., 2024).

In Brazil, research in sport management and the appreciation of its practice developed more effectively since the 2000s (Bastos, 2003). The hosting of mega sport events in the last two decades has stimulated the development of the field in terms of practice and research. However, it is perceived that the opportunities were not fully explored, and the events were not effective in terms of sports development for the country (Mazzei & Rocco Jr., 2017). Regarding the development of scientific research, there is still no consolidated maturity in Brazil, mainly concerning theoretical and conceptual issues, as well as methodological deficiencies (Bastos, 2019). The development of sport management as an academic field in Brazil up to the present day, unlike what occurred in the United States of America and Europe, is not related to the massive offering of undergraduate and graduate courses. From a broader perspective, there are no doctoral programs in sport management in Latin America (Cepeda-Carrión et al., 2023), which highlights concerns regarding competencies and academic development in the region (Rondón et al., 2022). Specifically in Brazil, currently there are no undergraduate, master's, or doctoral courses in sport management, but rather disciplines or lines of study mainly within programs in Physical Education or Sport Sciences in public universities (Bastos, 2021). An important point to highlight is that in these master's and doctoral programs, in the aforementioned areas, sport management is addressed within sociocultural study lines, demonstrating that sport management in Brazil still presents a shape more related to sport as a social and cultural phenomenon rather than business.

In general, factors such as undergraduate programs, professional associations, and academic journals directly influence the professional status of a field (Chelladurai, 2017). While there are no graduate programs in Brazil, the establishment of an association that fosters discussions in scientific and practical terms occurred in 2009 with the founding of the Brazilian Association of Sport Management (ABRAGESP). From 2011 onwards, the first specific scientific journals in the field were created, enabling Brazilian researchers to publish their investigations in Portuguese. Prior to this, studies were mostly published in generalist journals in the field of Physical Education (Bastos, 2019). The established journals were: *Intercontinental Sport Management Journal (RIGD)* in 2011, *PODIUM Sport, Leisure and Tourism Review* in 2012, and *Journal of Sport Management and Business (RGNE)* in 2016. Despite being an important source for disseminating studies on sport management in the country, these journals have not yet gained international prominence. At the same time, a limited number of Brazilian researchers succeed in publishing their work in well-established international journals, underscoring the challenges facing the advancement of sport management research in Brazil (Bastos, 2019).

Several studies have sought to analyze publications on sport management within the Brazilian context, aiming to comprehend how the field has progressed scientifically. In an analysis of doctoral theses in Brazil, Moraes et al. (2021) stated that 94 theses were produced from 1997 to 2019, and Public Policies (n = 37) and Marketing (n = 11) were the most researched thematic areas. In terms of scientific approaches, qualitative studies were more prevalent (51%), followed by mixed methods (17%), quantitative (3%), and 29% did not provide this information. In another study, Moraes et al. (2019) specifically analyzed qualitative articles published in 2016 in leading sport management journals in both Portuguese and English. The authors observed that the number of qualitative studies in Portuguese-language journals was greater than in English-language ones, justified by sport management being in development in Brazil and qualitative approaches being more suitable for exploratory research (Moraes et al., 2019). Despite these studies, their focus remains limited to doctoral theses or specific years of analysis, lacking a deeper exploration of publications confined to the Brazilian context within a broader timeframe and across a wider range of scientific journals. This highlights the need for a comprehensive analysis to critically assess the development of sport management as a

research field in Brazil, encompassing studies published in both national and international journals (Bastos, 2019).

Regarding the specific field of qualitative research in sport management, it stands out for the idea of analyzing a phenomenon beyond the hypothetico-deductive logic through the lens of the positivist paradigm, allowing for a deeper exploration of questions related to the how and why of a particular social reality (Skinner et al., 2021). While historically the training of sport management researchers has been focused on understanding quantitative methods, there is currently a growing emphasis, as well as a need, for the development of qualitative research, especially with contemporary and innovative methods, in order to broaden the understanding of the different research realities in sport management (Hoeber & Shaw, 2017). Given this scenario, there is a need to analyze the reality of qualitative research in Brazil and thereby indicate paths for the development of new studies and to enhance sport management as an academic field.

To date, no review has analyzed qualitative studies in the Brazilian context. From this perspective, the present study aimed to systematically map the scientific literature on qualitative research in the field of sport management in Brazil. In doing so, we make three key contributions to the literature and address this research gap. First, we provide a systematic mapping of qualitative studies investigating the Brazilian context in the field of sport management, highlighting its development since the year 2000. Second, we analyze the relationships between methods, contexts, and research themes, identifying both well-established aspects and a notable limitation among researchers in diversifying methods. Third, we propose pathways for a broader understanding of sport management in Brazil, aligned with the methods, contexts, and themes identified in this review.

To address the established objective, the following sections of this article present the methods used, outlining the steps of the scoping review, followed by the presentation of results based on the frequency and thematic analysis proposed by the authors. Afterward, future directions for the development of qualitative research in the Brazilian context are presented, along with the conclusions of this review. These conclusions respond to the proposed research questions and identify the study's limitations.

Method

The present study is a scoping review, considered a systematic way to broadly summarize and discern what is known about a particular topic (Sabiston et al., 2022). Scoping review does not aim for an in-depth and exhaustive analysis of the literature, nor a thorough assessment of the quality of the selected material but rather intends to demonstrate the breadth of the topic being addressed (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). An increasing number of studies have employed this method to map specific themes in sports management (e.g., Kunkel et al., 2023; Sant et al., 2024), indicating the growing relevance of using this method. Drawing from the structures used in these studies, the present investigation adopted the framework proposed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), consisting of five stages: a) identification of the research question; b) determination of relevant studies; c) selection of studies; d) charting the data; and e) collating, summarizing, and reporting of the results. In terms of its paradigmatic perspective, the present article was conceived and conducted within a positivist framework. While we recognize that a qualitative research approach often requires an interpretivist perspective, we opted for an analytical and context-independent stance.

Identification of research questions

The research questions guide the authors in conducting the proposed study, so they should not be overly limiting in scope but should aim to be broad enough to generate comprehensive coverage and identify relevant literature on the topic (Dowling et al., 2018). Thus, the questions that guided this investigation were: a) What is the overall landscape of qualitative research in sport management conducted in the Brazilian context? b) What are the main types of research, data collection, and data analysis methods used in qualitative research in sport management in Brazil? c) What are the pathways for the future of qualitative research in sport management in Brazil?

Determination of relevant studies

To ensure the selection of studies that addressed the research questions, the adopted strategy involved a manual search in the main sport management journals in Brazil (Intercontinental Journal of Sport Management - RIGD, PODIUM Sport, Leisure and Tourism Review, Journal of Sport Management and Business - RGNE) and the top five international journals widely referenced in sport management review studies (Journal of Sport Management – JSM; Sport Management Review – SMR; European Sport Management Quarterly – ESMQ; International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship – IJSMS; Sport Marketing Quarterly - SMQ). Additionally, six other national journals were included in this review due to their publication history in sport management (Motriz, Journal of Physical Education – JPE, Movimento, Revista Brasileira de Educação Física e Esportes - RBEFE, Pensar a Prática, and Motrivivência).

The procedures adopted in the article search involved using the following keywords in national journals: "management", "sport management", "administration", and "sport administration". In international journals, in addition to the terms, the term "Brazil" was included to delimit studies related to the Brazilian context. Initially, the titles and abstracts of the studies were examined by a university professor with a Ph.D. in Physical Education, a Ph.D. student in Physical Education, and an undergraduate student in Physical Education. The following inclusion criteria were considered for the selection of studies: articles focusing on the study of sport management in the Brazilian context, published between 2000 and 2022 in the previously indicated journals, in either English or Portuguese. It is important to note that articles addressing primarily historical aspects, without discussing management as their central focus, were not eligible. An example of this includes studies examining the history of a public policy without considering practical elements and implications for management. These procedures allowed access to 10.471 studies, of which 373 addressed sport management in the Brazilian context.

Selection of studies

In order to select studies that employed a qualitative approach, a second analysis was conducted by the three researchers mentioned earlier. Given that the initial selection did not aim to differentiate between studies with qualitative and quantitative approaches, the selection process identified 122 articles that explicitly stated the use of a qualitative approach. Of these, seven studies were excluded from the selection after reading the methods section, as they were review studies where it was not possible to observe a focus on the qualitative approach, data collection, and analysis. Finally, 115 articles were selected for analysis.

Charting the data

The data mapping stage was conducted to extract relevant information from the selected articles for the construction of an expanded analysis of the proposed theme. To achieve this, the following data were collected and organized through coding: authors, year of publication, title, abstract, theme (e.g., consumer behavior, public policies), journal, objective, context (e.g., clubs, government), study design, data collection, data analysis, and keywords. This information was selected as it was deemed crucial to addressing the research questions developed for this study. Each coding category was defined through discussions among the authors, and data extraction was performed by the first author of the study. Any uncertainties were resolved through discussions involving all authors. Specifically, regarding the theme category, the classifications were determined a priori by the authors, based on the thematic areas established by the Brazilian Conference of Sport Management. This approach facilitated the creation of categories that reflect the landscape of research in Brazil, considering that this conference, established in 2005, is the country's leading scientific event in the field. The data organization was carried out using Microsoft Excel.

Collating, summarizing, and reporting of the results

Following the strategies used by previous studies in the field of sport management (Dowling et al., 2018; Inoue et al., 2015), the last stage of the proposed structure for a scoping review was organized through a frequency and thematic analysis of the collected information. Regarding the frequency analysis, which aims to descriptively list the data, information on the following variables was presented: year of publication, theme, journal, context, sport discipline, study design, data collection, data analysis, and

Among the selected journals, PODIUM and RGNE were the two with the highest number of studies, as shown in Table 1. Starting their activities in 2012 and 2016, respectively, these two journals have a scope focused on sport management in Brazil, which justifies the increase in publications from 2012 onwards. When considering international journals, articles were found only in IJSMS and SMR, indicating a low number of investigations in the Brazilian context being published in journals with greater visibility worldwide. Although the nationality of the authors was not analyzed, a low number of studies from the Brazilian context in international journals may be related to the difficulty Brazilian researchers face in publishing in journals with higher international impact (Bastos, 2019).

Table 1. Frequency of articles according to the journal, theme, context, and sport

Journal	n	Theme	n	Context	n	Sport	n
IJSMS	1	Communication and Media	3	Club	32	Basketball	1
JPE	2	Consumer Behavior	8	Confederation / Federation	12	Beach volleyball	1
Motrivivência	8	Economics and Finance	4	Diverse	9	Diverse	8
Motriz	1	Law and Ethics	5	Fitness enters	7	eSport	1
Movimento	5	Public Policies	19	Government	15	Fitness	9
Pensar a Prática	7	Sport Events	12	Nonspecified	33	American football	1
PODIUM	33	Sport Facilities	2	Private companies	1	Gymnastics	1
RBEFE	7	Sport Manager	6	SESI	1	Judo	2
RGNE	32	Sports Marketing and Sponsorship	19	Third Sector	1	Motorsport	3
RIGD	17	Strategy, Governance, and Corporate Social Responsibility	30	University / School	4	Nonspecified	42
SMR	2	Sport Tourism	1			Running	4
		Teaching and Training in Sports Management	6			Rugby	3
						Football	30
						Surf	2
						Swimming	3
						Tenis	1
						Volleyball	3

Table 2. Frequency of articles according to research method, data collection, and data analysis.

Research method	n	Data collection	n	Data analysis	n
Case study	41	Bibliography and documents	3	Discourse analysis	4
Ethnography	1	Documents	30	Content analysis	44
Phenomenology	3	Documents and audiovisual materials	1	Network analysis	1
Nonspecified	68	Interviews	34	Ideographic and nomothetic analysis	1
Netnography	1	Interviews and documents	11	Thematic analysis	3
Action research	1	Interviews and focal group	1	Categorization	4
		Interviews and audiovisual materials	1	Categorization and descriptive statistics	1
		Interviews and observation	1	Collective subject discourse	2
		Focal group	1	Descriptive statistics	4
		Audiovisual materials	5	Descriptive statistics and content analysis	3
		Observation	1	Nonspecified	48
		Questionnaires and interviews	6		
		Questionnaires	2		
		Triangulation	16		

When analyzing the themes, we observed a higher number in Strategy, Governance, and Corporate Social Responsibility ($n = 30$), followed by Sports Marketing and Sponsorship ($n = 19$) and Public Policies ($n = 19$). The higher frequency of studies in the first category mentioned reflects the relevance of the organizational context in the field of sport management in Brazil. According to Bastos and Mazzei (2020), this area seeks to theoretically delve into and operate in the field of sport organizations, which are central elements for the discussion of their concepts, studies, and practices. On the other hand, Bastos and Mazzei (2012) have already pointed out the relevance of sport marketing as one of the main research topics in Brazil, as well as in the USA, and indicated the trend of growth in studies in the areas of public policies, manager training, and sports facility management. Recently, Pedroso et al. (2023) indicated that the three themes most investigated in sport management in Brazil are Consumer Behavior, Public Policies, and Corporate Social Responsibility. Therefore, it seems consistent to indicate that qualitative research has been approaching the study of the identified themes in the field of sport management in general in Brazil.

Regarding the context and sport disciplines, clubs ($n = 32$) and football ($n = 30$) stand out as the most prominent. As discussed, sport clubs have developed as the main entities for sports practice in Brazil (Bastos et al., 2006; DaCosta, 2004). So, the professional management of these organizations has become

a point of relevance for the field in Brazil, especially when the clubs focused on professional football activities. However, it is important to note that 33 articles did not specify the type of organization in which the study was conducted, and 42 investigations did not detail the sports discipline being discussed or addressed sports in a general manner.

In terms of research type, data collection, and analysis, Table 2 presents the frequency of articles according to each classification. As pointed out by Shaw and Hoerber (2016), there is little variety in qualitative studies regarding the research method, so that the case study, semi-structured interviews, and data analysis through some coding techniques have been the most used approach in research of this nature in sport management. This information was also highlighted by Moraes et al. (2019). In the mapping of the present article, essentially the same pattern was observed. The case study appeared as the most common research type in the analyzed studies ($n = 41$), as well as interviews ($n = 34$) and content analysis ($n = 44$) by Bardin (2011). In some studies, authors presented a combination of data collection methods, not restricting themselves to just one approach. It is worth noting that many studies adopted a data triangulation strategy ($n = 16$). Although the use of data triangulation can refer to a strategy for validating collected information (Creswell, 2014), in this mapping, it refers to the use of various data sources to address the proposed objective. As Denzin and Lincoln (2006) point out, the use of multiple sources reflects researchers' attempt to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the investigated phenomenon. These sources are precisely those listed individually or in pairs (e.g., Documents, Interviews, Bibliography, etc.).

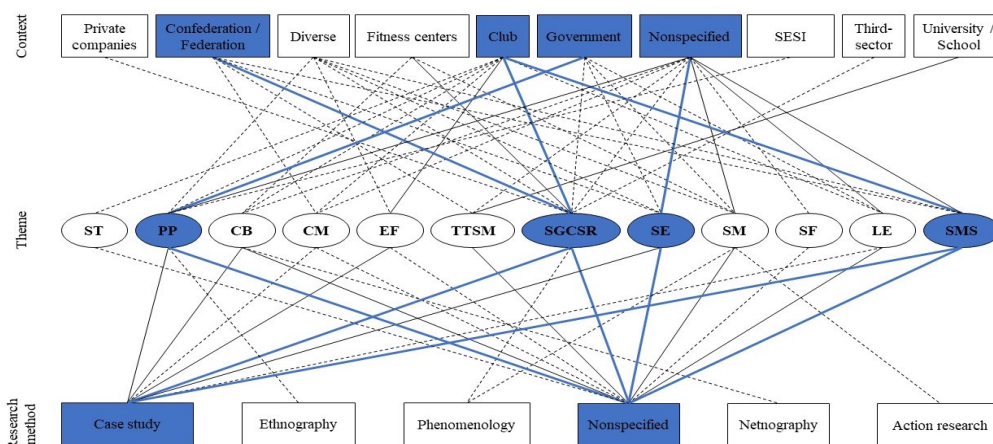
Regarding the frequencies in Table 2, it is important to note that there was a high number of articles with methods considered unspecified ($n = 68$). These articles only categorized the research as qualitative but did not clearly specify the type according to a variety of possibilities as can be seen in Creswell (2014) (i.e., case study, narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography). The data analysis method was also not specified in many studies ($n = 48$).

Thematic Analysis

Concentration and possibilities for expanding the addressed themes

The choice of a qualitative research approach does not stem from the selection of the theme, but from how we aim to understand the investigated phenomenon. The range of themes mapped in this research demonstrates that the use of qualitative research can occur in different areas within sport management. However, it seems that there is a need for more studies in themes with low frequency, such as Communication and Media and Teaching and Training in Sport Management, to name a few examples. There is a concentration of studies in a few areas, indicating the possibility of investigations in other themes (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Relationship among theme, context and research method in qualitative research in sport management in Brazil.



Note: CM = Communication and Media; CB = Consumer Behavior; EF = Economics and Finance; LE = Law and Ethics; PP = Public Policies; SE = Sport Events; SF = Sport Facilities; SM = Sport Manager; SMS = Sports Marketing and Sponsorship; SGCSR = Strategy, Governance, and Corporate Social Responsibility; ST = Sport Tourism; TTSM = Teaching and Training in Sports Management. Solid blue bold lines indicate a connection with ≥ 7 articles, regular black lines a moderate connection with $3 \leq$ articles ≤ 6 and dashed black lines weak connection with ≤ 2 articles between context and theme, and theme and research method. See the definition of the contexts in Appendix A.

We can observe in Figure 3 that the most studied contexts depict how sports have developed in Brazil. On one hand, the Brazilian government, especially between the 1940s and 1980s, exerted a certain degree of control over sports practice in the country. On the other hand, it has been an important player in sports financing since the early 2000s, particularly in the realms of educational and high-performance sports (Camargo et al., 2020; Mezzadri et al., 2014). Given this relevance, one might expect that aspects related to Public Policies in the Brazilian government would be investigated more frequently. In parallel, the roles of Confederations and Federations are crucial in the organization of sport in the country, as they are national and state entities responsible for sport administration, just below the Olympic and Paralympic Committee in the National Sport System. Analyzing aspects related to Strategy, Governance, and Corporate Social Responsibility in these organizations allows for a better understanding of management best practices and consequently the development of sport in the country. Similarly, clubs are sport practice entities linked to Federations, considered units for the development of sports in Brazil, especially due to Brazilians' fondness for football (Holanda, 2014). Like in Confederations and Federations, studies have focused on analyzing issues of Strategy, Governance, and Corporate Social Responsibility, driven by the concern to adopt more professional practices in these organizations. Furthermore, considering the growth of the sport industry in the country, sport clubs are the main entities for the analysis of aspects related to sport marketing and sponsorship, particularly concerning consumer loyalty concerns.

The complexity of sport has expanded the range of themes to be studied in sport management, and the recognition of new topics may generate a demand for more qualitative studies. In a brief comparison with the themes of two major international conferences in the field (European Association for Sport Management Conference and North American Society for Sport Management Conference) and the mapping of the present research, the lack of studies in areas more directed towards the sociocultural understanding of the sport phenomenon within management is evident, such as diversity, sexuality, family, etc., as well as in the relationship between sport management and public health and physical activity management. The low number of investigations on diversity, for example, is also a fact in the international context. Delia et al. (2022) pointed out the need for an increase in understanding diversity in studies on sport consumers. The authors justify that this may not occur due to three factors: 1) researchers seeking contexts and populations that are more easily accessible; 2) the study design not focusing on the issue of diversity and this information not being commented on when characterizing the sample; 3) researchers not seeing it as a duty to investigate minority groups if they are not interested. Qualitative investigations can be a path to understanding and interpreting diversity in sport management not only from the perspective of sport consumers but also within organizations, for example.

In parallel, in recent years, literature in sport management has sought to understand how different forms of sport consumption and services are related to the well-being of consumers. An example of this is the relationship between being a sport spectator and the population's health (Berg et al., 2022). The theoretical foundation behind this movement is based on the Transformative Sport Service Research (TSSR). Historically, the management of organizations has been analyzed from the strategic and operational perspective of organizations, focusing on achieving goals related to profit, sport performance, and consumer retention. In contrast, TSSR seeks to create a body of knowledge to explore how individual and collective well-being can be improved through a set of services offered in the sport industry (Inoue et al., 2020). New perspectives such as these expand the possibilities for qualitative research and deepen the understanding of sport management.

The absence of identification and low variety of types of qualitative research

In the analysis of the studies, there was a tendency among the authors to characterize the research as qualitative based on its concept rather than the type utilized. It was common to observe in studies with unspecified approaches, researchers overly emphasizing the type of research as descriptive and exploratory, and then immediately conceptualizing qualitative research. This is not exclusive to research in the Brazilian context. It is common to observe studies where there is no indication of the research design and paradigm, as if only the use of interviews, for example, constituted qualitative research (Hoerber, 2023). Such characterization does not present qualitative research with all its possibilities and nuances, failing to highlight the chosen research type. This does not mean that qualitative research is not descriptive, for example, as it can be understood in a broad sense as a type of



investigation that produces descriptive data, such as people's words and observed attitudes (Taylor & Bogdan, 1987). However, it seems that the cartesian, step-by-step logic of writing the methods section is more concerned with presenting the concept of qualitative research and the chosen type than justifying this choice in a more profound manner.

The activity of qualitative research is situated, and the researcher is an agent located in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2006). Thus, the way the researcher interprets the world, their epistemological perspective, are important elements in this type of research. Although was not the focus of this investigation, only three studies clearly stated in their methods section the adopted paradigm for conducting the study, two being Interpretivist and one Constructivist. Basically, a research paradigm is a set of propositions that seek to explain how the world is perceived by the researcher (Edwards & Skinner, 2009). Therefore, the expression of an epistemological perspective may bring more clarity to what Denzin and Lincoln (2006) believe to be the role of the qualitative researcher, highlighting the socially constructed nature of reality, the proximity of the relationship between the researcher and the studied subject, as well as the situational limitations that influence the studies. On the other hand, it is also true that the academic environment driven by the market can hinder the adoption of more interpretive or social justice paradigms (Shaw & Hoerber, 2016).

As presenting a wide range of possibilities, it is fundamental in qualitative research to have methodological coherence that aligns ontological and epistemological assumptions with the methods used (Poucher et al., 2019). Within this perspective, the possibility of adopting a greater variety of research types may be driven by an initial concern about understanding interpretive paradigms and social justice in research, for example. In an international context, there is a movement for researchers to take qualitative research to new frontiers and adopt contemporary research methods (Singer et al., 2019; Sveinson et al., 2021). It is from this perspective that we believe there is a need for the adoption of other qualitative approaches in the Brazilian reality, ranging from some better known but underutilized approaches to more contemporary possibilities, beyond the predominant use of the case study.

In a straightforward manner, other approaches that can be applied in the Brazilian context within the field of sport management based on international experiences include: ethnography (e.g., Collins & Heere, 2018), Netnography (e.g., Abeza et al., 2017), autoethnography (e.g., Kodama et al., 2013), etc.), action research (e.g., Feddersen et al., 2021), grounded theory (e.g., Mills et al., 2023), phenomenology (e.g., Hemme et al., 2021), critical discourse analysis (e.g., Sveinson et al., 2021) and narrative inquiry (e.g., Stride et al., 2016). Furthermore, it is relevant to consider the points established by Shaw and Hoerber (2016), who deem it crucial to conduct qualitative investigations under proper supervision by researchers, granting autonomy and freedom for students to pursue their own methods and mature as future scholars. Other important elements relate to the necessity of a movement towards greater openness to qualitative research by editorial boards of journals and funding agencies, as well as strengthening the teaching of the subject, particularly regarding the time allocated for curricular components addressing this topic in undergraduate and graduate courses. Lastly, it involves the use and strengthening of qualitative approaches in the studies themselves, aiming to explore new possibilities for investigation (Shaw & Hoerber, 2016).

Low variety and clarity in data collection and analysis

As a final point, it is important to further elaborate on something previously noted. It becomes evident in this mapping two points regarding the analysis of data from the selected studies: 1) the lack of detail in the way the collected information was analyzed; 2) the establishment of content analysis (Bardin, 2011) as the standard procedure. A significant portion of the selected studies did not clearly specify the methods used for data analysis, often reporting only that the data were analyzed following a transcription stage. This approach provides limited insight into how the authors extracted and interpreted the relevant information from the data. Qualitative research is often criticized for being biased by the authors' positions, subjective (in the pejorative sense), anecdotal, and unreliable due to these factors (Shaw & Hoerber, 2016). The lack of clarification on how the data were analyzed may reinforce this idea, which is a point of concern for researchers.

Regardless of the chosen method of analysis, it must be consistent with the established objectives. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative analysis methods generally follow three general

procedures: 1) data reduction; 2) data display; 3) conclusion drawing. From a broader perspective, Creswell (2014) considers that the process of data collection, analysis, and report writing does not occur distinctly, but rather interrelated and often concomitant. Thus, this process unfolds as a spiral, a movement in analytical circles, rather than a linear process. This spiral unfolds in several stages, including: a) data organization; b) memos and material reading; c) description, classification, and interpretation of data into codes and themes; d) data interpretation; and e) data representation and visualization. Building on this general understanding, each type of research and chosen method of data analysis will present specificities to be further explored by researchers.

Considering the data collection methods, the mapping observed a high adoption of documents and interviews. Although not specified in Table 3, most interviews were semi-structured procedures. In general, the findings are in line with the main methods of collecting information in qualitative research in sport management, as stated by Edwards and Skinner (2009): 1) fieldwork; 2) observation; 3) interview; and 4) document analysis and other materials.

Future research

We believe that the information contained in Figure 3 can guide new possibilities for qualitative research in the field of sport management in Brazil. We do not think that the number of studies in already extensively investigated areas should decrease, but the increase in the observation of new contexts is essential for a more robust understanding of sport management as an academic field. Brazil is the second country in the number of fitness centers worldwide and the third-largest market in Latin America (Bastos, 2021), demonstrating the relevance of expanding research in this context for a deeper understanding of the sports industry, historically dominated by football. Another path is to deepen the understanding of management of the SESI (an organizations of the "S" System) and the third sector. As organizations of public interest that provide relevant services to society, understanding topics related to strategy, governance, corporate social responsibility, the sport manager, as well as their relationship with public policies, will enable an updated knowledge of organizations that are not necessarily sports-related but offer services related to this phenomenon. Based on these possibilities, we developed some questions that may help researchers in future projects:

- How can knowledge about consumer behavior in different sports contexts - particularly in clubs, fitness centers, third-sector organizations, and the S System - be deepened using ethnography or phenomenology?
- What new insights into aspects of media and communication, consumer behavior, sports marketing and sponsorship, considering the extensive use of social media in sport, can emerge through the application of netnography?
- How can new concepts in the study of public policies be conceived through more contemporary research approaches, such as grounded theory?
- How can we deepen the understanding of the education and training of sport manager across various professional contexts using action research?
- How can case studies help expand our understanding of sport tourism associated with urban centers involved in sporting events?
- How can case studies deepen the understanding of aspects of strategy, governance, and corporate social responsibility in less explored contexts, such as the S System and the third sector?
- How can ethnographic studies explore the relationship between local sports culture and adherence to traditional and emerging sports in Brazil?
- How can the use of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence or big data analysis, complement or interact with qualitative methods in sports management?
- How can phenomenological studies depict the experiences of inclusion or exclusion of marginalized groups in Brazilian sports, such as women, Indigenous peoples, and individuals with disabilities?

The previous questions reflect possible relationships between the method, context, and theme of analysis, given their relevance to the sport management scenario in Brazil. Indeed, new research themes may emerge as sport management research develops in the country, including aspects such as sustainability, for instance. Furthermore, we emphasize the importance of researchers declaring their epistemological stance in the methods section, as this understanding should guide the depth and boundaries of the research.

Finally, the academic field of sport management in Brazil will be able to gain broader and deeper contours once researchers are able to present a more robust conception of qualitative studies, as well as using more contemporary methods. Research in sports management still maintains a neutral and apolitical character, indicating the need for greater discussions on more sensitive topics such as race, gender, and class (Skinner et al., 2021). In addition to the types of research mentioned in the subsection "The absence of identification and low variety of types of qualitative research", Skinner et al. (2021) point out social network theory, race and critical race studies, whiteness studies, disability studies, participant authored audiovisual stories, and visual sociology as considerations for future qualitative research projects.

Conclusions

The advancement of qualitative research in sport management is a frequently debated topic in the international context. However, it requires further exploration within the Brazilian context, particularly to establish and consolidate it as an academic field. In response to the research questions, we observed the following: a) overall, the qualitative approach has been widely applied to the study of sport management in the Brazilian context, with a notable increase since 2012. Most studies were published in *PODIUM* and *RGNE*, focusing on themes such as strategy, governance, and corporate social responsibility within sport clubs; b) the majority of studies did not specify a research design, but among those that did, most employed case studies, collected data through interviews, and, when specified, used content analysis as data analysis; c) future studies should consider exploring under-researched themes in the Brazilian context (e.g., sport tourism and facility management) and adopting new research methodologies (e.g., netnography and action research) to better understand the diverse Brazilian sport environments. In terms of practical implications, we believe that the information summarized can help other researchers consider new ways to conducting qualitative research in the Brazilian context. Specifically, they should consider the elements outlined in the future research section. These elements will foster new debates and provide valuable insights for both academic and practical domains of sport management.

The findings of this mapping do not differ significantly from international discussions, which point to the excessive use of case studies and a need for deeper methodological coherence and the use of more contemporary types of qualitative research. Therefore, it is observed that qualitative research in sport management in Brazil is tracing a path that demonstrates its youthfulness but with ample room for growth and deepening. Navigating this path is important and necessary to highlight the relevance of sport management and to enhance the development of sport in the country.

In terms of limitations, three are particularly relevant. Although we conducted a search in the primary scientific journals in sport management at both national and international levels, the omission of searches in certain databases may have restricted access to studies published in other journals that were not included. While there is a perceived difficulty in the presence of Brazilian authors in articles published in internationally well-known journals (Bastos, 2019), the selection was made from the top five journals. This implies that there are other journals where studies in the Brazilian context are present. One possible solution could be to include additional databases in the search process, such as *Web of Science* or *Scopus*, in new literature reviews. The second concerns the temporal scope for the inclusion of articles. Although we understand that sport management as an academic field in Brazil developed more effectively with publications from the 2000s onwards, studies published before this period may provide new insights into how qualitative research began its development in Brazil in the field of sport management. Therefore, future reviews may extend this time frame. The third limitation concerns the lack of consideration of the results of each study as an element of analysis. The proposed review focused on general aspects of the publications, with a specific emphasis on qualitative methods.



Given that analyzing the results of each study by thematic area could provide valuable insights into the importance of qualitative approaches, we highlight the need for future investigations to adopt specific methods and frameworks tailored to this type of analysis (Paul et al., 2023).

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Appendix A. Definition of the research contexts.

Context	Definition	Source
Club	Nonprofit or pro-fit organizations that offer sports programs and services to members and compete in different sports at the national and/or international level. (e.g., Clube de Regatas Flamengo).	Bastos and Mazzei (2020); Kunkel and Biscaia (2020)
Confederation / Federation	Confederations are national governing organizations that seek to develop and support both grassroots sports and high-performance sports (e.g., Confederação Brasileira de Futebol). Federations have the same characteristics as Confederations, but at the state level (e.g., Federação Paulista de Futebol).	Bastos and Mazzei (2020)
Diverse	A study that aimed to analyze a theme in different contexts.	Authors
Fitness centers	Commercial sports practice organizations that offer programs and services related to the fitness market (e.g., SmartFit).	Bastos and Mazzei (2020)
Government	Public sector sports organizations at the federal, state, or municipal level responsible for developing policies and providing facilities and services for sports practice and physical activities (e.g., Ministério do Esporte).	Bastos and Mazzei (2020)
Nonspecified	Unspecified context.	Authors
Private companies	Professional or commercial sports organizations involved in sports practice or administration that offer sports programs and services - but are not involved in the fitness market - sports facilities, entertainment, etc., as well as manufacturers and retailers of sports goods, media, and corporations.	Bastos and Mazzei (2020)
SESI	An organization that is part of the "S" System and is a private entity, maintained and administered by the Brazilian industry, with the purpose of providing social services in healthcare, education, leisure, culture, nutrition, and citizenship promotion, aiming to improve the quality of life of workers in the industry, transportation, communication, and fishing sectors, as well as their dependents.	Campos (2004)
Third sector	The Third Sector is defined as the set of organisms, organizations, or institutions endowed with autonomy and self-administration, whose main function and objective are to act alongside civil society aiming at its improvement.	Campos (2004)
University / School	Organizations with both economic and social purposes, managed by either the public or private sector, whether for-profit or nonprofit, affiliated with educational and university sports.	Bastos and Mazzei (2020)

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