



UNIVERSIDADE DA BEIRA INTERIOR  
Ciências Sociais e Humanas

# **Abandono de carreira desportiva de jogadores profissionais de futebol em Portugal**

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# Resumo

No contexto desportivo, a transição de carreira tem sido uma temática vastamente estudada. No entanto, no futebol não se verificam a existência de muitos estudos neste âmbito. Para além do referido, urge a realização de estudos que permitam uma melhor caracterização dos percursos desportivos e avaliação do momento de término de carreira desportiva de um modo contextualizado, em função de modalidades específicas e tendo por base diferentes níveis de análise. Deste modo, este trabalho é composto por três estudos em que procurámos: a) Caracterizar o estado da arte no que respeita ao término da carreira desportiva, em particular no futebol, através da realização de uma revisão sistemática; b) Analisar o término da carreira de jogadores de futebol de elite em Portugal, avaliando a qualidade do abandono e os recursos disponíveis; c) Explorar o processo de término da carreira de jogadores de futebol de elite em Portugal, comparando a qualidade do abandono e os recursos disponíveis nas últimas três décadas. Tendo por base uma amostra de 90 ex-jogadores de futebol de elite foram realizadas entrevistas semi-estruturadas e um questionário que procurou avaliar o processo de término da carreira desportiva. Os resultados mostram a existência de um reduzido número de estudos sobre término de carreira no futebol, sendo que se verificaram traços comuns entre os estudos reportados, mas também algumas diferenças em função do país onde se desenvolveu o estudo. No estudo 2 verificámos que a maioria dos jogadores não detinham mais do que o ensino secundário, tinham uma forte identidade atlética, reformaram-se entre os 36 e os 40 anos de idade, de forma involuntária, sem planeamento prévio para a carreira pós-futebol, contando essencialmente com o apoio psicológico familiar. Já no estudo 3 verificámos que, no geral, as condições de término da carreira mantêm-se semelhantes ao longo dos anos. Neste estudo evidenciou-se a dificuldade sentida no abandono da carreira, explicada sobretudo pela falta de planeamento de transição, apesar do aumento no nível de escolaridade verificado. Face ao exposto é necessário repensar os modelos de desenvolvimento de carreiras desportivas e suporte ao término da carreira desportiva.

## Palavras-chave

Transição de carreira, futebol, qualidade de término, carreira pós-término.



# Abstract

In the sport context, the career transition has been a subject widely studied. However, in football there are not that many studies in this field. In addition to the above, it is urgent to carry out studies that allow a better characterization of the sports courses and evaluation of the moment of sports career termination in a contextualized way, according to specific modalities and based on different levels of analysis. Thus, this work is composed of three studies in which we have tried: a) To characterize the state of the art with regard to the end of a sports career, in particular in football, through a systematic review; b) To analyze the end of the career of elite football players in Portugal, evaluating the quality of the abandonment and the resources available; c) To explore the process of termination of the career of elite football players in Portugal, comparing the quality of the abandonment and the resources available in the last three decades. Based on a sample of 90 former elite football players, semi-structured interviews were conducted and a questionnaire was used to evaluate the process of termination of a sports career. The results show the existence of a small number of studies on career termination in football, and there were common traits among the reported studies, but also some differences depending on the country where the study was developed. In the study 2 we found that most of the players did not have more than secondary education, had a strong athletic identity, retired between the ages of 36 and 40, involuntarily, without previous planning for the post-football career, counting essentially with the psychological support from the family. In study 3, we found that, in general, career termination conditions remain similar over the years. This study evidenced the difficulty experienced in the abandonment of the career, mainly explained by the lack of transition planning, despite the increase in the level of schooling verified. In view of the above, it is necessary to rethink the models of development of sports careers and support to the termination of the sports career.

## Keywords

Career transition, football, quality of termination, post-retirement career.



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# 1. Introdução

## 1.1. Transição de carreira no desporto

O termo carreira desportiva descreve a atividade desportiva voluntária, ao longo de muitos anos, por parte do atleta que objetiva atingir o pico da sua performance em um ou mais acontecimentos desportivos (Alfermann & Stambulova, 2007). Neste sentido, o desenvolvimento de uma carreira desportiva engloba todos os níveis do desporto competitivo, podendo caraterizar-se como uma carreira local, regional, nacional ou internacional; e dependendo do estatuto do atleta, a carreira pode ser considerada como amadora ou profissional (Alfermann & Stambulova, 2007).

No contexto desportivo, a transição de carreira tem sido uma temática vastamente debatida pela comunidade da psicologia do desporto ao longo das últimas décadas (Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, & Côté, 2009). Neste processo, o estudo da transição de carreira no desporto tem sido abordada por diferentes perspetivas e focos na investigação, sendo que se verifica uma preocupação nos modelos conceituais mais atuais uma visão mais holística do processo de transição de carreira com grande ênfase na compreensão dos fatores contextuais que caraterizam esse processo (e.g., Alfermann & Stambulova, 2007; Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavalée, 2004).

## 1.2. Modelos conceituais

Inicialmente, os estudos realizados sobre transição de carreira no desporto centravam-se na compreensão do momento do término da carreira desportiva dado que derivavam de teorias e modelos da tanatologia (fases da morte) e gerontologia social (processo de envelhecimento) (Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, & Côté, 2009). Consequentemente, a transição para uma pós-carreira de atleta era vista como um acontecimento negativo e muitas vezes traumático (Cosh, LeCouteur, Crabb, & Kettler, 2013). No entanto, foram apontadas algumas limitações aos modelos da tanatologia e gerontologia considerando-os cada vez menos adequados para explicar o processo do término de carreira desportiva, nomeadamente o foco no momento único do momento do abandono ao invés de um foco no desenvolvimento da carreira do atleta e a presunção de que o processo do término da carreira é um acontecimento único e negativo (Stambulova et al., 2009). Face ao exposto, mais do que considerar o término da carreira como um momento único tendo por base os modelos anteriores, e sabendo que o término da carreira constitui apenas uma parte da vida dos atletas, surgiram novas perspetivas advogando a necessidade de se considerar a transição e carreira como parte de um processo de desenvolvimento de carreira tendo por base conceitos da psicologia e sociologia (Wylleman et al., 2004).

De acordo com Alfermann e Stambulova (2007) transição deve ser definida como um acontecimento ou um não acontecimento que resulta numa mudança de perspetiva acerca de si e do mundo, potenciando mudanças no comportamento e nas relações pessoais. No entanto, a transição do término de carreira, apesar de parte de um processo de desenvolvimento, não deve ser vista apenas como um acontecimento ou um não acontecimento (Stambulova et al., 2009), uma vez que a transição, é um processo em si mesmo e não um momento (Erpič, Wylleman, & Zupančič, 2004), que pode demorar, em média, um ano (Stambulova et al., 2009) e é influenciado por quatro grandes grupos de fatores, nomeadamente a situação, o *self* (o eu), o apoio e as estratégias (Erpič et al., 2004).

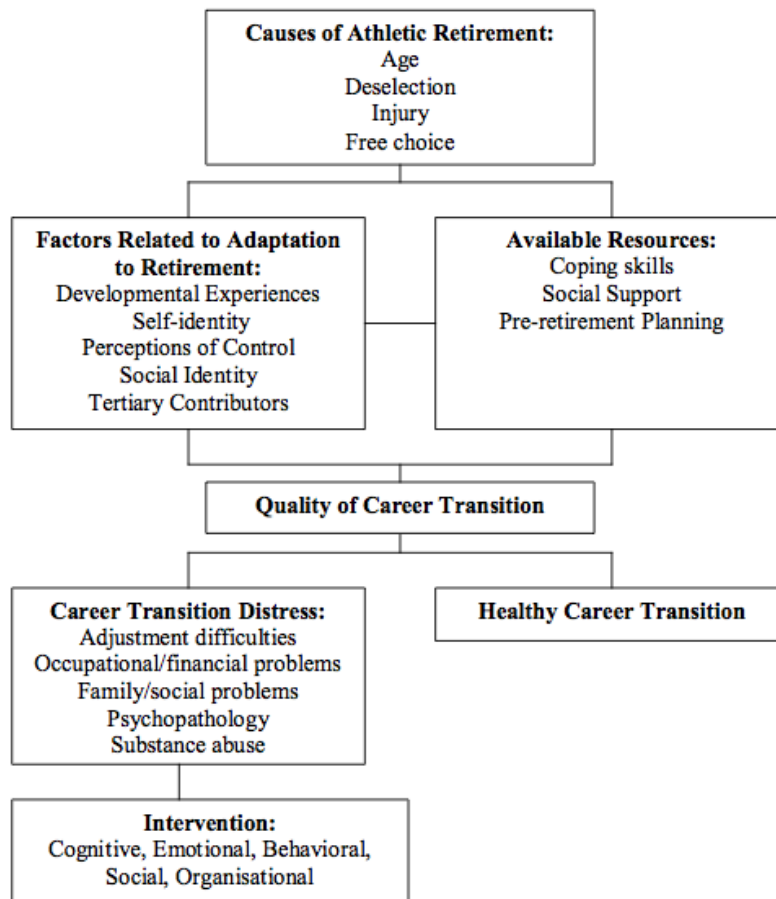
Central aos modelos conceptuais mais recentes (Stambulova, 2003; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) encontra-se a noção de *coping*, i.e., o processo que se baseia nos recursos, internos e externos, de forma a gerir as exigências e os desafios que os atletas encontram ao longo de determinados períodos de desenvolvimento e que implicam a sua continuidade no desporto ou na adaptação à vida pós-desporto (Jones, Mahoney, & Gucciardi, 2014). Desta maneira, a transição na carreira desportiva afigura-se como sendo um processo de *coping*, i.e., de ajustamento às exigências do contexto face os recursos disponíveis, com consequências positivas e negativas. Deste modo, os recursos dos atletas no processo de transição afiguram-se fundamentais do processo de *coping*, quer sejam internos ou externos (e.g., experiências anteriores do atleta, motivação, apoio social e financeiro) (Stambulova et al., 2009).

Recentemente, as investigações relativas ao desenvolvimento e transição na carreira alteraram o foco de estudo, inicialmente exclusivo ao término da carreira, para as transições ocorrentes ao longo da carreira desportiva - abordagem conhecida por *whole career* (Stambulova et al., 2009). Inspirados pelas investigações e debates teóricos, desenvolveram-se vários modelos conceptuais sobre desenvolvimento do talento (e.g., Bloom, 1985; Ericsson, 1996) que potenciam o processo de transições de carreira e nomeadamente de término da carreira, uma vez que permitem desenvolver os recursos internos e externos que potenciam o processo de coping (Stambulova et al., 2009).

Com o foco das investigações direcionado para as transições nas carreiras dos atletas de uma forma mais holística, surge a necessidade de conhecer o papel que os fatores contextuais desempenham no desenvolvimento e transição na carreira desportiva (Stambulova & Ryba, 2014). Recentemente os estudos têm em consideração os fatores macrosociais, como a cultura, o contexto e o desenvolvimento pessoal dos atletas (Alfermann, Stambulova, & Zemaityte, 2004; Dimoula, Torregrosa, Psychountaki, & Fernandez, 2013; Stambulova, Stephan, & Järphag, 2007), enquanto que inicialmente se centravam no papel que os treinadores, pais e colegas desempenhavam no desenvolvimento e transição na carreira desportiva dos atletas (Alfermann, 2000; Wylleman, 2000).

### 1.3. Término da carreira desportiva

No que diz respeito ao término da carreira desportiva, após a primeira investigação sobre esta temática (Mihovilovic, 1968), têm sido variadas as tentativas de desenvolvimento de modelos explicativos do processo de transição de carreira. Taylor & Ogilvie (1994) desenvolveram o primeiro modelo de concetual de adaptação ao término da carreira desportiva (Ver Figura 1).



**Figura 1** - Modelo conceitual de adaptação ao abandono da carreira desportiva proposto por Taylor & Ogilvie (1994).

O modelo proposto teve por objetivo permitir relatar toda a experiência vivida pelo atleta ao longo do processo. Este modelo apresenta-se esquematizado em cinco níveis. No primeiro nível são expostas as causas que originam a transição, tendo sido identificados quatro fatores (i.e., idade, dispensa, lesão e livre escolha). No segundo nível, observamos os fatores relacionados com a adaptação à transição (i.e., experiências de desenvolvimento, autoidentidade, perceções de controlo, identidade social e contribuições de terceiros) e os recursos disponíveis (i.e., competências de *coping*, apoio social e pré-planeamento da transição). Ao resultado da negociação dos fatores referidos no segundo nível, Taylor & Ogilvie (1994) designaram como

qualidade de adaptação à transição (terceiro nível), que poderia levar, ou não, a uma transição de carreira saudável (quarto nível), tendo sido identificados cinco fatores, i.e., dificuldades de adaptação, problemas ocupacionais e financeiros, problemas sociais e familiares, psicopatologias e abuso de substâncias. No caso de ocorrer uma transição de carreira não saudável, o modelo sugere uma intervenção (quinto nível) dado que diminuiria o risco de os atletas experienciarem algum tipo de dificuldade durante processo (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994).

### **1.3.1. Motivos para o término da carreira desportiva**

Tendo por base os modelos anteriores, têm sido vários os estudos desenvolvidos no sentido de identificar os motivos de abandono da carreira desportiva, a qualidade do término da carreira, os fatores que influenciam a qualidade do término ou as estratégias de *coping* utilizadas neste processo (Park et al., 2013). De acordo com a literatura, são muitas as razões que levam ao término da carreira desportiva, no entanto, as razões também podem ser específicas dadas as características individuais do atleta (Park et al., 2013). Os fatores mais comuns na literatura são a idade, dispensa, lesão e livre escolha (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994), contudo as causas podem ser complexas e multidimensionais (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000). Existem outros fatores apontados que não são tão comuns, tais como o trabalho, família, problemas com treinadores, falta de motivação e de sucesso, políticas desportivas, diminuição da performance e do prazer pelo desporto e dificuldades financeiras (Jordana, Torregrosa, Ramis, & Latinjak, 2017; Park et al., 2013; Stambulova & Ryba, 2014). Os fatores influenciadores do término da carreira desportiva podem ser definidos por atléticos (e.g., consecução dos objetivos desportivos e lesões) e não atléticos (e.g., casamento e nova carreira) como sugerido por Erpič et al. (2004). Tendo em conta a perceção de controlo sobre a tomada de decisão relativa ao término da carreira desportiva por parte dos atletas, alguns investigadores categorizaram as razões como sendo voluntárias (incluem as razões atléticas e não atléticas) ou involuntárias (incluem a lesão e dispensa) (Alfermann, 2000; Wylleman et al., 2004). Recentemente, num estudo dirigido por Roberts, Mullen, Evans, & Hall (2015) os participantes revelaram como principais causas para o término de carreira as pressões contratuais, visto que o término da carreira por razões contratuais revelava-se uma saída da instabilidade emocional que os contratos contínuos de um ano provocavam, e a falta de comunicação existente entre o clube e o atleta relativamente ao seu futuro. Alfermann et al. (2004) sugerem-nos que as razões por detrás do término da carreira são determinantes na adaptação à fase pós-término da carreira desportiva. Tendo por base esta ideia, num estudo levado a cabo com 62 atletas australianos de elite, Martin e colaboradores (2014) verificaram uma diminuição da identidade atlética à medida que os atletas se aproximavam do término da carreira. Estes autores encontraram ainda uma relação positiva entre o término voluntário e a satisfação com a vida após o término da carreira, concluindo que um término involuntário está associado a maiores dificuldades na adaptação à nova vida dos ex-atletas.



O término da carreira desportiva é um tema que não tem necessariamente de ser encarado como uma transição traumática na vida dos atletas (Young, Pearce, Kane, & Pain, 2006), visto que a qualidade da transição de carreira pode ser influenciada por diversos fatores (Schlossberg, 1981; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995; Stambulova, 2010; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). Coakley (2005) sugere-nos que no processo de transição existe a interação de fatores emocionais, psicossociais, comportamentais e cognitivos que afetam tanto o indivíduo como o meio em que este se envolve e, como tal, o processo é multidimensional.

### **1.3.2. Fatores que potenciam a adaptação ao término da carreira desportiva**

Recentemente, Park et al. (2013) realizaram uma revisão sistemática envolvendo os estudos sobre transição de carreira desportiva. Um dos aspetos analisados por Park et al., foi a correlação entre os fatores de nível psicológico e a qualidade da transição de carreira desportiva reportada, sendo identificadas quinze variáveis psicológicas que incluíam a identidade atlética, o planeamento pré-término de carreira, estratégias de *coping*, apoio psicossocial, perceção de controlo, entre outros.

Um dos fatores que influenciam a adaptação ao pós-término da carreira desportiva é a identidade atlética que se refere à forma como os atletas se percebem no domínio desportivo e está relacionado com o papel do atleta, valores percebidos e a rede social durante a carreira desportiva (Cosh et al., 2013). O termo *identity foreclosure* foi usado por Marcia (1966) com o intuito de descrever o afastamento da adoção de identidades alternativas como consequência do elevado comprometimento a um papel específico, o que é comum no seio dos atletas dado que investem na sua carreira desportiva em detrimento de outras alternativas. Os atletas que investiram desproporcionalmente na sua carreira desportiva são caracterizados como “unidimensionais” por terem excluído outros domínios da sua identidade atlética e, consequentemente, poderão ter dificuldades em investir em outras atividades que lhes proporcione o mesmo nível de gratificação egoística e satisfação (McPherson, 1980). Deste modo, os atletas com uma forte identidade atlética experienciam maiores dificuldades no processo de transição ao sentirem emoções negativas, sentimentos de perda, isolamento e receio da incerteza relativamente ao futuro, levando a períodos mais longos para equilibrar a sua identidade (Torregrosa et al., 2015). Ao invés, a maioria dos atletas que seguiram carreiras duais, quando analisados os fatores de planeamento do término, término voluntário, múltiplas identidades pessoais, disponibilidade de apoio social e estratégias de coping (Torregrosa et al., 2015). O desenvolvimento de carreiras duais parece deste modo constituir-se como uma estratégia de desenvolvimento de carreira e de *coping* no momento do término da carreira.

De forma interessante, as conquistas e a concretização dos objetivos desportivos, durante a carreira desportiva, influenciam positivamente a adaptação à vida pós-término da carreira desportiva (Erpič et al., 2004; Martin et al., 2014). Os atletas que conquistaram mais títulos ou

que alcançaram níveis superiores de prática demonstram uma identidade mais equilibrada, elevada autoestima e com menores dificuldades ocupacionais quando comparados com os atletas que não atingiram os seus objetivos desportivos (Erpič et al., 2004).

Por outro lado, a perceção de controlo é um fator que influencia a forma como os atletas respondem ao término de carreira (McPherson, 1980; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). O término de carreira involuntário demonstra-se uma situação ameaçadora e associada a sentimentos negativos (e.g., Alfermann, 2000; Hatamleh, 2013; McPherson, 1980; Werthner & Orlick, 1986), podendo levar a problemas psicológicos, e.g., falta de autocontrolo, falta de autorrespeito, sentimento de ansiedade e depressão (e.g., Alfermann & Gross, 1997; Crook & Robertson, 1991; Hatamleh, 2013; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982). Por outro lado, a perceção de controlo sobre o término de carreira estimula a saúde mental, aumenta os níveis de autoeficácia e consequentemente facilita o processo de transição para uma vida pós-desporto (Alfermann et al., 2004).

### **1.3.3. Recursos que potenciam a adaptação ao término da carreira desportiva**

A qualidade de adaptação ao término da carreira, por parte dos atletas, depende dos recursos disponíveis de forma a ultrapassar as barreiras emocionais, cognitivas e comportamentais que possam surgir (Taylor & Lavalley, 2010). Folkman & Lazarus (1980) sugerem-nos que *coping* se define como os esforços cognitivos e comportamentais que um individuo realiza de forma a lidar com as exigências e os conflitos externos e internos. Os recursos de *coping* incluem as habilidades em lidar com as dificuldades, apoio social e o planeamento pré-término da carreira (Alfermann et al., 2004; Lavalley, 2000; Stambulova et al., 2007; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). Enquanto que alguns investigadores reportaram algumas consequências da falta de recursos de coping dos atletas (e.g., o consumo abusivo de álcool, aumento do consumo de tabaco e desleixo da sua imagem pessoal) (Erpič et al., 2004; Koukouris, 1991; Mihovilovic, 1968), outros constataram que a existência de uma ocupação, realização de exercício/treino, apoio social, a descoberta de novos interesses depois do término da carreira são as estratégias de coping mais eficazes nos primeiros meses (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Roberts et al., 2015; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). Aparentemente, os atletas com mais recursos de *coping* tendem a experienciar menos dificuldades, no processo de transição, do que os atletas com poucas capacidades de *coping* (Murphy, 1995; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990).

De acordo com Stambulova (2003), a transição de carreira refere-se a um processo de *coping* em que o atleta necessita encontrar um equilíbrio entre os recursos e as barreiras de forma a realizar uma transição eficaz. Os recursos e as barreiras podem ser fatores internos e externos que facilitam ou inibem a eficácia do processo de *coping*. Alguns dos recursos dizem respeito aos seus atributos, conhecimento, traços de personalidade, apoio social e motivação. Relativamente às barreiras, que apresentam um efeito negativo no processo de coping, são

mencionadas a falta de atributos individuais, falta de apoio social e financeiro (Stambulova, 2003). Nesta perspetiva, o processo de *coping* afigura-se como o elemento chave do processo de abandono de onde divergem duas possíveis consequências: (1) transição bem-sucedida, i.e., quando o atleta consegue desenvolver ou restaurar rapidamente todos os recursos de forma a gerir as barreiras e lidar com as exigências da transição; e (2) transição-crise, i.e., que ocorre quando o atleta não consegue lidar com as exigências e as barreiras da transição sozinho.

De modo semelhante aos processos de *coping*, a rede de apoio social tem sido sugerida como um fator facilitador do processo de transição de carreira desportiva (e.g., Roberts et al., 2015; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). No estudo realizado por Coakley (2005), os participantes revelaram que o apoio foi um componente influenciador da experiência da qualidade da transição de carreira desportiva. Os intervenientes constituintes da rede de apoio informal foram as esposas, apoio familiar, os agentes, os psicólogos e os amigos. Um dos apoios informais destacado foi o dos agentes, que são dos indivíduos, normalmente não familiares, mais importantes na vida de um atleta profissional e muitas vezes com uma enorme influência (Coakley, 2005). Apesar da reduzida investigação relativa ao apoio social, ressaltam os relatos de sentimento de abandono, falta de contactos sociais e de dificuldades em construir novas relações fora do contexto desportivo após o término da carreira (Botterill, 1988; Mihovilovic, 1968). A disponibilidade de redes de apoio sociais (amigos, família e colegas de profissão) tem-se revelado influente na adaptação ao término da carreira (Alfermann, 2000; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Stambulova, 1994). De acordo com a investigação realizada por Werthner & Orlick (1986) os participantes revelaram que o apoio obtido por parte dos seus familiares e amigos foi um fator positivo no seu processo de transição. Este apoio, pode deste modo assumir um papel determinante no planeamento e preparação da vida pós-término de carreira desportiva do seu atleta, assim como apoiar-lo no processo de transição da carreira desportiva (Coakley, 2005).

É nesta perspetiva que se considera que os problemas verificados ao nível do pós-carreira devem-se em grande medida à falta de preparação que a grande maioria dos atletas revela relativamente ao momento do término e ao pós-término da carreira desportiva (Dimoula et al., 2013; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Stambulova & Ryba, 2014). Dado que o término de carreira é um processo marcante na transição de carreira desportiva (Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouquereau, 2006; Torregrosa, Boixadós, & Cruz, 2004) os atletas devem preparar e planear o pós-término da carreira desportiva (Coakley, 2005; Stambulova et al., 2009). As investigações têm demonstrado que o planeamento para uma carreira pós-desporto permite uma transição mais eficaz e saudável (Alfermann et al., 2004; Coakley, 2005; Torregrosa et al., 2015) e está relacionada com mais reações emocionais positivas do que negativas relativamente ao término da carreira desportiva e a uma maior satisfação na vida (Alfermann et al., 2004). Algumas consequências do término da carreira desportiva reportados em alguns estudos incluem crises de identidade, desorientação, receio pela incerteza do futuro e frustração, contudo as dificuldades da adaptação ao pós-término da carreira também se deve às mudanças associadas

na vida do atleta, e.g., estilo de vida e mudança de carreira (Koukouris, 1991; Lally, 2007; Lavalley, Gordon, & Grove, 1997).

Na mesma linha dos fatores anteriores, a continuidade do envolvimento no desporto tem sido um fator apontado como influenciador da qualidade no processo da transição de carreira desportiva (Dvorak, Valkova, & Belka, 2011; Gordon & Lavalley, 2004). Após o término da carreira competitiva, um elevado número de atletas continua envolvido no desporto como forma de dar continuidade à sua carreira profissional (Torregrosa et al., 2004; Young et al., 2006). As transições de carreira de atleta para treinador têm se revelado comuns, possivelmente por se considerar uma transição simples, positiva e livre de problemas (Allison & Meyer, 1988). Apesar da sua popularidade, este tipo de transição, aparentemente, não tem sido um tema muito debatido e aprofundado, como podemos verificar pela escassez de literatura. Aparentemente, apenas um grupo de investigadores (Shachar et al., 2004) realizou um estudo quantitativo em que colocaram em hipótese se as dificuldades de adaptação, entre ex-atletas, teriam sido menores para quem continuou envolvido no desporto como treinador do que quem escolheu carreiras não ligadas ao desporto. Os resultados do estudo não confirmaram a veracidade da hipótese, visto que não se registaram diferenças nos dois grupos a nível emocional e social. Shachar et al., 2004 forneceram possíveis explicações para os resultados obtidos: (1) a discrepância entre o número de participantes dos dois grupos; (2) a escala utilizada poderia não ter sido uma escala psicométrica adequada; (3) fatores associados às dificuldades de adaptação, e.g., abandono involuntário, tensões com os treinadores e realização de objetivos não foram testados; (4) o período decorrido entre o término de carreira e a decisão da carreira a seguir não foram examinados; (5) as dificuldades na transição do término da carreira desportiva poderiam não estar relacionadas com a escolha da carreira pós-término de carreira desportiva; e (6) questões culturais associadas, dado que o estudo decorreu em Israel. Dadas as limitações e considerações do estudo, não se pode retirar conclusões definitivas relativamente à qualidade das transições de atleta para treinador.

#### **1.4. A influência do contexto no término da carreira desportiva**

Ao longo dos anos, vários têm sido as tentativas para uma melhor compreensão da influência do contexto social na qualidade do desenvolvimento e término da carreira desportiva (Henriksen, Stambulova, & Roessler, 2010). De acordo com o Modelo Ecológico de Desenvolvimento Humano (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), o desenvolvimento humano é limitado por três sub-sistemas diferentes em interação. O micro-sistema, como unidade do sistema, está relacionado com os papéis sociais, as relações interpessoais e as experiências desenvolvidas por um indivíduo num determinado ambiente (por exemplo, família, clube, equipa, treinador, tipo de tarefas de treino ou as instalações do clube). O meso-sistema compreende a relação entre dois subsistemas (por exemplo, família, clube, escola) e pode estar relacionado com as atividades sociais, o apoio da comunidade e os valores que lhe estão associados e que são partilhados e desenvolvidos pelos participantes. Por último, o macro-sistema pode ser descrito

como o contexto sociocultural (por exemplo, a cultura desportiva nacional) que envolve o desenvolvimento da identidade individual (Araújo et al., 2010). Este modelo permite perceber que o término da carreira atlética é influenciado pelos sistemas de nível micro, meso e macro nos quais os atletas se encontram envolvidos. Neste contexto, ao nível do macro-sistema, a pesquisa tem também procurado compreender a influência do contexto sociocultural ou da cultura desportiva nacional de cada país no processo do término de carreira dos atletas (Henriksen, Stambulova, & Roessler, 2010).

Neste sentido, Alfermann e colegas (2004), levaram a cabo um estudo onde pretendiam analisar e comparar o término da carreira de atletas em três países diferentes, nomeadamente, a Alemanha, a Lituânia e a Rússia. Os resultados revelaram algumas diferenças, mas também semelhanças, no processo de término da carreira e na adaptação pós-carreira atlética entre os atletas destes três países. De um modo geral, este processo mostrou-se mais semelhante entre atletas da Lituânia e da Rússia (por exemplo, nos motivos mais frequentes do término relacionados com o desporto, menor planeamento do término e maior tempo de adaptação ao pós-carreira), e com mais diferenças entre estes e os atletas da Alemanha (motivos mais frequentes do término relacionados com emprego, maior planeamento e tempo de adaptação mais curto). Stambulova et al. (2007) seguiram a mesma linha de pesquisa, num estudo com atletas da França e da Suécia, concluindo que os atletas destes países apresentavam um padrão semelhante no que se refere ao planeamento do término, às estratégias de coping utilizadas e fatores relacionados, mas apresentavam diferenças no que concerne, por exemplo, aos motivos do término, à dificuldade em iniciar uma nova carreira ou à identidade atlética. Recentemente, Dimoula et al. (2013) comparam o término da carreira atlética de gregos e espanhóis e as semelhanças encontradas entre atletas de elite destes países, nomeadamente no término voluntário da carreira, na falta de planeamento de término de carreira, na alta identidade atlética e na realocação no desporto, permitiu descrever este processo numa perspetiva sul europeia. Apesar dos avanços na investigação no processo de término da carreira atlética ao nível da contextualização do processo de transição de carreira, os estudos realizados encontram-se particularmente focados ao nível do macro-sistema de Bronfenbrenner, subsistindo a necessidade de uma abordagem sociocultural focada nas mudanças ao nível meso e micro num país específico. No entanto, em Portugal, não conhecemos nenhum estudo que analise o término da carreira atlética de modo a permitir uma melhor compreensão sobre os fatores que constroem a sua qualidade ou as estratégias adotadas no decorrer deste processo. Deste modo, urge a realização de estudos que permitam uma melhor caracterização dos percursos desportivos e avaliação do momento de termos de carreira desportiva de um modo contextualizado, em função de modalidades específicas e tendo por base diferentes níveis de análise, nomeadamente tendo em consideração a proposta dos diferentes sub-sistemas que compõe o Modelo Ecológico de Desenvolvimento Humano.



## 2. Objetivos

Tendo por base o exposto anteriormente, este trabalho teve como propósito desenvolver o conhecimento no que respeita à caracterização do perfil de abandono de ex-jogadores de futebol profissional em Portugal, à qualidade e aos recursos disponíveis no momento do término da carreira desportiva. Desta forma, foram objetivos da presente investigação:

- Caracterizar o estado da arte no que respeita ao término da carreira desportiva, em particular no futebol, através da realização de uma revisão sistemática.
- Analisar o término da carreira de jogadores de futebol de elite em Portugal, avaliando a qualidade do abandono e os recursos disponíveis.
- Explorar o processo de termos da carreira de jogadores de futebol de elite em Portugal, comparando a qualidade do abandono e os recursos disponíveis nas últimas três décadas.

Para tal, este trabalho foi organizado por capítulos da seguinte forma:

O capítulo 1 é composto por uma introdução geral onde foi realizado o enquadramento do trabalho e o capítulo 2 pela presente apresentação dos objetivos que se pretenderam alcançar. No capítulo 3 é apresentada uma revisão sistemática (estudo 1) que visou sintetizar todos os resultados provenientes dos trabalhos de investigação no âmbito da transição de carreira relacionados com o término da carreira em jogadores de futebol. Este trabalho permitiu sustentar o desenvolvimento dos estudos dos capítulos seguintes. Nos capítulos 4 e 5 são apresentados os dois estudos observacionais realizados durante o processo de investigação. Nomeadamente, no capítulo 4 foi avaliado o abandono da carreira de jogadores de futebol de elite em Portugal, avaliando a qualidade do abandono e os recursos disponíveis, enquanto no capítulo 5 foi explorado o processo de abandono da carreira de jogadores de futebol de elite em Portugal, comparando a qualidade do abandono e os recursos disponíveis nas últimas três décadas tendo por base o Modelo Ecológico de Desenvolvimento Humano. No capítulo 6 é apresentada uma discussão geral dos resultados obtidos tendo por base os resultados da revisão sistemática e os dois estudos realizados e no capítulo 7 são apresentadas as conclusões desta tese.





### 3. Sport Career termination in football players: systematic review

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### **3.1. Abstract**

This article aimed to characterize the termination of the sports career in football players. A systematic literature search was performed according to the PRISMA method. From all the publications, eight were selected that fulfilled all the inclusion criteria. The results revealed that, in general, the former football players finish their career between the ages of 31 and 35, reported a career span between eight and eleven years, and secondary education level. Regarding the quality of career termination, it was reported that voluntary termination was mainly due to age and associated with psychological and social problems. Few data were reported regarding the available resources, highlighting, however, coping strategies through support from family and friends, and players maintain a career linked to sports. Only one study revealed the existence of a program to support the termination of a sports career.

**Keywords:** career transition, football, transition strategies.

## 3.2. Introduction

The sports career is, as proposed by Alfermann and Stambulova (2007), a concept that describes the practice of voluntary sporting activity, over several years, with the aim to potentiate the performance in one or more sporting events. In this sense, a sports career refers to the set of sports development stages of a sportsman and can be classified, according to the level of practice achieved (i. e., local, regional, national or international level) or according to the achieved status by the athlete (i. e., amateur or professional) (Alfermann & Stambulova, 2007).

In the sporting context, there has been a growing interest in the understanding of the moments of transition that mark it, as well as the factors that influence it and determine its success (Jordana, Torregrosa, Ramis, & Latinjak, 2017; Park, Lavalley, & Tod, 2013). Initially, the studies carried out on career transition in sport focused only on the end of the sports career, based on thanatology (stages of death) and social gerontology (aging processes) theories and models (Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, & Côté, 2009). Consequently, the moment of leaving the sport and the transition to the post-career was classified as a negative and often traumatic event (Cosh, LeCouteur, Crabb, & Kettler, 2013). Some limitations were pointed out to the models of thanatology and gerontology considering them less adequate to explain the process of leaving the sports career. In general, these models were considered limited due to the vision of the process of career development and regarding the assumption that the process of ending the career was a negative event (Stambulova et al., 2009). The difficulty in applying these models is thus due to the fact that the end of the career is only part of the sports development and life of players (Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavalley, 2004).

According to Alfermann and Stambulova (2007) transition can be defined as an event or a non-event that results in a change of perspective about oneself and the world, potentiating changes in behavior and personal relationships. In spite of the initial acceptance of this definition, this perspective was subsequently called into question because it summarized the process of transition to a moment between stages, that is, an event or a non-event depending on the type of transition observed (sporting or personal) (Erpič, Wylleman, & Zupančič, 2004; Stambulova et al., 2009). In this way, the sports career is defined as a process in which several career transitions of sporting or non-sporting events occur (Alfermann & Stambulova, 2007; Park et al., 2013; Wylleman et al., 2004) that mark its development. Transitions are themselves processes that can take an average of one year and are influenced by four major groups of factors, namely the situation, the self, the existing support and coping strategies developed (Erpič et al., 2004). Wylleman, Reints, and De Knop (2013) also suggest that the grouping of all forms of transition, whether athletic or non-athletic, can be divided into two categories: (1) normative transitions, i.e. transitions occurring both in the sports career and in personal life, and (2) non-normative transitions, i.e., transitions that are not expected, which includes non-events.

Given the above, the analysis and understanding of the sports career transitions require the emergence of an holistic approach that considers the contextual factors on the process of understanding of career transition and specially termination (Stambulova & Ryba, 2014). Thus, recent studies have focused their attention on the analysis of macrosocial factors, such as the culture, context or personal development of athletes (Alfermann, Stambulova, & Zemaityte, 2004; Dimoula, Torregrosa, Psychountaki, & Fernandez, 2013; Stambulova, Stephan, & Jäphag, 2007), rather than only on more micro-level context factors such as the role of coaches, parents, and colleagues in understanding and analyzing athletes' sports career (Alfermann, 2000; Wylleman, 2000).

### **3.2.1. Abandoning the Sports Career**

One of the most studied career transitions in sport is the termination of a sports career. Some concerning data have shown that the theme of career development and post-sport career transition are still taboo for many sports and for many sportsmen and women (Jones & Denison, 2017; Jordana et al., 2017). For example, Park et al. (2013) show clear evidence that there is a deficit in supporting sportsmen in order to reflect and discuss the end of their careers and post-sport life, when athletes lose their competitive focus. Some studies also report that few elite athletes have shown interest in sharing their concerns about the post-term career. This is considered to be a characteristic of the sporting career of Southern Europe's sportsmen (Dimoula et al., 2013).

In general, the results show that the moment of sport career termination is associated to a moment of crisis, in the face of experiences and reports (Coakley, 2005). This difficulty can be explained in part by the lack of preparation and awareness that the vast majority of sportspeople reveal to face this moment (Dimoula et al., 2013; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Stambulova & Ryba, 2014). In particular, the great sporting identity and difficulty in reconciling dual careers seems to be one of the preponderant factors for the difficulty in facing the moment of the post-career (Cosh et al., 2013; Martin, Fogarty, & Albion, 2014). Some of the consequences of post-career sports retreat reported include identity crises, disorientation, fear of future uncertainty and frustration, difficulties in adapting to a new life and new lifestyle (D'Angelo, Reverberi, Gazzaroli, & Gozzoli, 2017; Jordana et al., 2017; Torregrosa, Ramis, Pallarés, Azócar, & Selva, 2015).

According to the literature, the reasons that lead to the end of a sports career are many and of different orders, and may even be due to individual characteristics of the sportsman (Park et al., 2013; Torregrosa et al., 2015). In general, the factors influencing the end of the sports career can be classified as voluntary or involuntary, and voluntary termination facilitates adaptation to the new life after termination (Stambulova et al., 2009; Wylleman et al., 2004).

### 3.2.2. Post-Sports Career Quality

The most common factors referred in the literature that constraint post-sports career quality were age, service dismissal, injury and free choice (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) or causes of a more complex and multidimensional nature (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000). There are also other factors reported in several studies but are not so common to report, such as work, family, problems with coaches, lack of motivation and success, poor sports policies, decreased performance, loss of pleasure by sport and financial difficulties (Jordana et al., 2017; Park et al., 2013; Stambulova & Ryba, 2014).

Given the perceived control over decision-making regarding the end of athletic career by athletes, some researchers categorized the reasons as being voluntary (including athletic and non-athletic reasons) or involuntary (including injury and dismissal) (Alfermann et al., 2004). While voluntary termination has been associated with a smoother transition and easy adjustment to a post-career life, involuntary termination has been associated with difficulties in the process of neglect that include negative emotions and difficulty adapting to new life (Dimoula et al., 2013; Stambulova et al., 2009). For example, in a study led by Roberts, Mullen, Evans, and Hall (2015) the participants revealed that the pressures in the last years of contract are the main causes for career termination and post-career difficulties. Precarious one-year contracts are enablers of emotional instability, as well as the lack of communication between the club and the sportsman regarding his future. In this perspective, to understand difficulties in the sports post-career, two dimensions must be considered: factors related to the career transition and available resources during this transition (Park et al., 2013).

Regarding factors related to the career transition, Park et al. (2013) identified fifteen associated variables that included athletic identity, pre-term career planning, coping strategies, psychosocial support, control perception, among others. For example, the level of athletic identity (i.e., how athletes perceive themselves in the sports domain, related to the athlete's role, perceived values and social network built during a sports career) (Cosh et al., 2013) shows a very strong correlation with the level of difficulties experienced in the post-career process. Athletes with a high level of athletic identity, very focused on their sporting activity throughout their career, feel negative emotions, feelings of loss, need for isolation and fear of uncertainty about the future, leading to long periods to balance their identity in comparison with sportsmen who develop, for example, dual careers (Torregrosa et al., 2015). In opposition to this, the accomplishments and fulfillment of sports goals during a sports career positively influence the adaptation to the post-term life of the sports career (Erpič et al., 2004; Martin et al., 2014).

Regarding available resources, the social support network has been suggested as a facilitator of the transition and post-career process (Roberts et al., 2015). In the study leaded by Coakley (2005), the participants revealed that the felted support was an influential component of the

quality experience of the sports career transition. The actors that constituted the informal support network (i.e., wives, family support, agents, psychologists and friends) were facilitating factors for the process of adaptation to new life and perceived quality of life in this process (Park et al., 2013). One of the highlighted informal supports was the one coming from the agents, who are usually unfamiliar individuals, important in the life of a professional athlete and often with a great influence on their balance and in the planning and preparation of the transition process of the sports career (Coakley, 2005).

However, still regarding available resources, since the end of a sports career is a landmark process (Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouquereau, 2006; Torregrosa, Boixadós, Valiente, & Cruz, 2004), the preparation of a new life allows a more efficient and healthy transition (Stambulova & Ryba, 2014; Torregrosa et al., 2015).

### **3.2.3. Abandoning the Sports Career in Soccer**

Despite the results that generally characterize the termination of the sports career, recent studies have referred to the need to contextualize the development and termination of the sports career (Alfermann et al., 2004; Dimoula et al., 2013; Stambulova et al., 2007). In this context, few studies in soccer report the factors related to the transition of sports career and the resources available at the time of transition in different countries. Thus, for a better understanding of the processes inherent to the termination of the sports career, we need to understand the assumption of this process in a more contextualized way (Wylleman et al., 2013). Given the above, if we want a better understanding of the termination of practice in a specific sport, we will have to evaluate exactly what are the characteristics of termination in this sports context.

In this article, a systematic review on career transition and termination of sports practice in soccer players was carried out, trying to identify the characteristics of ex-players at the moment of termination, the quality of the termination and the resources available at the moment of termination (Park et al., 2013).

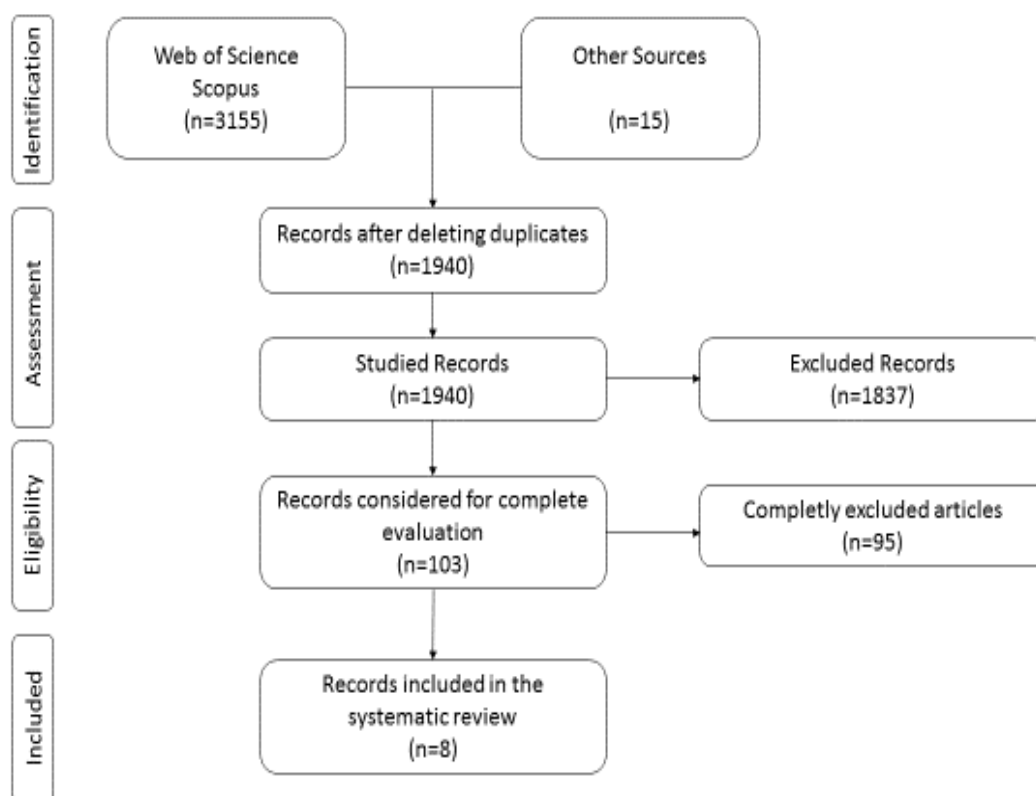
### **3.3. Methods**

A systematic literature search was conducted according to the PRISMA method (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & Group, 2009). In order to ensure the quality of the articles, a search was made in the Web of Science and Scopus database between January 2000 and July 2018 using the keywords "career termination", "sport termination", "soccer" and "football". A search with the same key words in Google Scholar was also conducted to find more scientific studies in this field, published in peer-reviewed scientific journals not indexed in previous databases. They are only considered empirical studies for analysis. To select the articles for analysis, the following criteria were considered: (1) they contained qualitative or quantitative data on termination of sports practice through interviews, semi-structured interviews or

questionnaires; (2) the sample consisted exclusively of former soccer players; (3) were written in English, Portuguese or Spanish. All the studies were analyzed by two authors to identify if the articles met the defined criteria. There was a 100% agreement between the analysis of the articles.

### 3.4. Results

Of the electronic search, 3,155 publications were identified. From all the publications identified, eight publications were selected that fulfilled all the defined inclusion criteria (Figure 2). Table 1 presents a summary of the studies identified in the scope of the termination of sports practice in soccer. The characteristics of the sample, the quality of the termination and the resources available at the time of termination were identified and recorded according to previous studies (Park et al., 2013).



**Figure 2** - Flowchart of the procedures used to search for scientific articles

#### 3.4.1. Sample Characteristics

Based on the results obtained (Table 1), we find that the footballers finish their sports career between the ages of 31 and 35 (Agresta, Brandão, & Barros Neto, 2008; Drawer & Fuller, 2002; Goutteborge, Aoki, & Kerkhoffs, 2016; Rintaugu, Mwisukha, & Monyeki, 2016). However, recently Sanders and Stevinson (2017) reported an average age of 25.3 ( $\pm$  5.2) years for career



termination, which may indicate an earlier termination age for professional footballers. Following the same trend, and despite the small number of studies that reported the duration of the sports career, while Gouttebarga et al. (2016); and Rintaugu et al. (2016) reported a career span of 8 to 11 years, Sanders and Stevinson (2017) reported an average career span of about 6.7 ( $\pm 3.7$ ) years. Regarding the level of education, the studies report a predominance of high school education. All studies were based on the analysis of professional soccer players.

### **3.4.2. Quality of Termination**

Regarding factors related to the quality of career transition, studies in Brazil (Agresta et al., 2008), Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (Curran, 2015) and Kenya (Rintaugu et al., 2016), have identified a predominance of voluntary termination of the career in former players (Agresta et al., 2008; Curran, 2015; Rintaugu et al., 2016), opposing to what happened with former players from the United Kingdom, Italy and also with players from 11 countries, that essentially revealed involuntary termination (D'Angelo et al., 2017). The most pointed out reasons by ex-players who had a voluntary termination were age and lack of motivation and incentives to continue, while the motives most pointed out by former players who had an involuntary termination were injuries and age.

In general, previous studies have revealed a strong athletic identity and, for this reason, despite the voluntary or involuntary withdrawal, there is a great prevalence of post-career difficulties associated with mental disorders, depression and sadness (Agresta et al., 2008; D'Angelo et al., 2017). Problems related to alcohol and nutrition (Gouttebarga et al., 2016; Gouttebarga, Frings-Dresen, & Sluiter, 2015), financial problems (Curran, 2015) and difficulties in finding work (Rintaugu et al., 2016) were also stated. Sanders and Stevinson (2017) also reported an interesting association between players who retired their sports career due to injury and problems associated with mental disorders compared to former players who retired for other reasons.

### **3.4.3. Available Resources**

In relation to the resources available during the withdrawal of the sports career, few were the data reported during the studies. We can, however, mention that as a predominant coping strategy support from family and friends and it has been found that the majority of former soccer players maintain a career linked to sport, such as coaches, leaders or observers (Curran, 2015; D'Angelo et al., 2017; Drawer & Fuller, 2002; Rintaugu et al., 2016). The existence of a timely preparation of the sporting career was only evaluated in D'Angelo et al. (2017). In none of the reported studies were identified any post-sport support programs, there is only one reference to a social support program in the case of former Italian soccer players (D'Angelo et al., 2017).

**Table 1** - Studies of career termination in football identified with the identification of the country, sample characteristics., quality of termination and available resources.

Author (year)	Country	Sample characteristics	Quality of termination	Available resources
Drawer & Fuller (2002)	United Kingdom	Age of termination- 32.5 ± 5.2 Career Duration - no information Education Level - no information Level - professional soccer players N= 185	Kind of termination - Involuntary Causes -injuries Identity - no information Difficulty - no information	Coping Strategies - no information Pre-termination planning - no information Support programs - Professional Footballers' Association (however, inadequate to the needs) Major occupations after termination - Occupations in sport (coach, manager)
Agresta, Brandão, & Neto (2008)	Brazil	Age of termination- 34.36 ± 4.42 Career Duration - no information Education Level - no information Level - professional soccer players N= 57	Kind of termination - Voluntary Causes - age, other occupational interests Identity - no information Difficulty - sadness	Coping Strategies - no information Pre-termination planning - no information Support programs - no information Major occupations after termination - no information
Gouttebauge, Frings-Dresen & Sluiter (2015)	6 countries	Age of termination- Career Duration - 12 ± 5.0 Education Level - no information Level - professional soccer players N= 104	Kind of termination - Voluntary Causes - no information Identity - no information Difficulty - anxiety, depression, harmful food and alcohol	Coping Strategies - no information Pre-termination planning - no information Support programs - no information Major occupations after termination - no information
Gouttebauge, Aoki, & Kerkhoffs (2016)	11 countries	Age of termination - 34.36 ± 4.42 Career Duration - 11.6 ± 5.0 Education Level - university or equivalent Level - professional soccer players N= 219	Kind of termination - Involuntary Causes - age, other occupational interests Identity - no information Difficulty - anxiety, depression, harmful food and alcohol	Coping Strategies- no information Pre-termination planning - no information Support programs - no information Major occupations after termination - no information
Curran (2015)	Republic of Ireland	Age of termination - no information	Kind of termination - Voluntary	Coping Strategies - no information

	and Northern Ireland	Career Duration - no information Education Level - lack of higher education Level - professional soccer league N= 30	Causes - age, other occupational interests Identity - strong athletic identity Difficulty - mental and financial health problems	Pre-termination planning - no information Support programs - Professional Footballers' Association Major occupations after termination - Occupations in sport (coach, manager)
Rintaugu, Mwhisukha, & Monyeki (2016)	Kenya	Age of termination - 31 to 35 years  Career Duration - 6 to 10 years Education Level - Highschool Level - professional soccer players N= 130	Kind of termination - Voluntary  Causes - lack of incentives and decreased physical activity Identity - strong athletic identity Difficulty - mental health problems and despair about employment	Coping Strategies - no information Pre-termination planning - no information Support programs - no information Major occupations after termination - Occupations in sport (coach, manager)
D'Angelo, Reverberi, Gazzaroli et al. (2017)	Italy	Age of termination - no information Career Duration - no information Education Level - no information Level - professional soccer players N= 14	Kind of termination - Involuntary Causes - no information Identity - strong athletic identity Difficulty - mental health problems and bad feelings	Coping Strategies - support from family and friends Pre-termination planning - No Support programs - no information Major occupations after termination - Occupations in sport (coach, manager)
Sanders & Stevinson (2017)	United Kingdom	Age of termination - 25.3 ± 5.2 Career Duration - 6.7 ± 3.7 Education Level - no information Level - professional soccer players N= 307	Kind of termination - no information Causes - family / personal and injuries Identity - strong athletic identity predictor of emotional adjustment at the end of the career Difficulty - mental health problems associated with neglect related to injuries	Coping Strategies - no information Pre-termination planning - no information Support programs - no information Major occupations after termination - no information

### 3.5. Discussion

This study aimed to carry out a systematic review on career transition and termination of sports practice in soccer players. Out of a total of 3170 articles reviewed, only eight met the inclusion criteria noticing that, despite the increase in the number of studies carried out in the field of termination and career transition in sport, few have focused on the specificity of modalities such as soccer. Based on the structure adopted by previous studies (Park et al., 2013), we sought to systematize existing information about the characteristics of former soccer players at the time of termination, the quality of termination and the available resources at the time of termination.

Regarding the characteristics of the sample, the results revealed that, in general, the former soccer players finish their career between the ages of 31 and 35 (Agresta et al., 2008; Drawer & Fuller, 2002; Gouttebarga et al., 2016; Rintaugu et al., 2016). However, even without statistical comparison, the results of Sanders and Stevinson (2017) in the United Kingdom revealed a trend to an earlier career termination. This should be considered as relevant to assessing the future impacts that a possible decrease in the age of termination may have on the needs of former players in relation to their personal development and the definition of future life plans (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). The age of termination of the sports career revealed strong relation with the difficulties felt at the moment of the termination. The lower the age of the players at the time of termination, the greater the difficulties experienced in post-career (Park et al., 2013).

Still in relation to the characteristics of the former soccer players considered in each study, there was a great difference in terms of the description reported in each one of the studies. In order to get a more detailed picture of the evolution of the career transition processes and the characteristics of the participants, we consider that future studies should carry out a detailed description of the characteristics of the sample, namely with the inclusion of variables level of practice, age of termination, starting of the career as a professional, the age of the best performance, the time between the best performance and withdrawal, the length of the professional career, the number of years of training, the level of education, as well as the number of years since withdrawal (Alfermann et al., 2004; Park et al., 2013). Regarding the quality of the termination, we confirmed that there were studies from different countries and continents that reported voluntary termination, as well as involuntary termination. However the reasons given for termination, with the exception of Sanders and Stevinson (2017) study that reported injuries as the main reason for termination, the rest of the studies reported indiscriminately the age. In this way, the age factor can be considered as a voluntary or involuntary reason for the termination of the sports career in soccer players (Roberts et al., 2015). In addition, although not mentioned in any of the studies, the fact that the participants reveal difficulties in the career transition may be associated with both voluntary and involuntary termination, due to the strong sports identity development during career (Cosh et

al., 2013; Martin et al., 2014), as well as the lack of preparation and awareness that the vast majority of athletes reveal to cope with this moment (Dimoula et al., 2013; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Stambulova & Ryba, 2014). In order to achieve a better understanding of the quality of the transition from a sports career to the moment of termination, further studies should evaluate beyond the type of termination, causes of termination and difficulties experienced, sports identity, sportsman satisfaction and the needed time to overcome the sports termination (Alfermann et al., 2004, Park et al., 2013).

Finally, we have verified that the studies carried out in the field of sports termination in soccer game still very focused on identifying the reasons for termination and the quality of termination, giving less focus to the resources associated with this transition.

Future studies are required to identify the resources available at the time of career termination in soccer players. Out of the eight studies identified, only one clearly described the coping strategies used by former soccer players, as well as the lack of a plan for sports termination (D'Angelo et al., 2017). Really, few professional soccer players reveal interest in sharing their concerns related to the post-term career, with consequences for their quality of transition (Torregrosa et al., 2004). This is also one of the factors considered to be characteristic of the sports career of European athletes especially in Southern Europe (Dimoula et al., 2013). Only one study reported the existence of a support program at the time of termination (Curran, 2015). The lack of support programs to transition careers is one of the aspects most referenced in previous studies in different sports and countries (Dimoula et al., 2013; Stambulova et al., 2009).

In short, considering the results of the analyzed studies, the quality of career termination is poor and the resources available for former professional soccer players are nearly non-existent. Interestingly, differences in the career transition process between former professional soccer players from different countries have not been generally observed, emphasizing that there should be an analysis focused on specific sports modalities in order to better define the tendencies and needs of these practitioners for years to come. Despite all this, it is necessary to carry out studies among former soccer players from different countries and cultures (Stambulova et al., 2009), as well as in terms of social evolution and conditions of support for the practice in football clubs. It is also important to understand the evolution in terms of the needs of the former professional soccer players in the last decades to prepare support programs adjusted to the needs for the next years.

### **3.6. Conclusions**

In the present literature review, eight studies were identified between 2002 and 2017 on the termination of professional soccer players of different nationalities. The results highlight the problems inherent to the transition problems of sporting careers identified in other sports.

However, it is important to note the drop in the age of termination observed by Sanders and Stevinson (2017). Future studies should check whether this trend holds for the future, or whether there are different reasons for termination, since the previous study had as its main focus the termination due to injury. Despite the similarities between studies, the low level of information on the different categories of analysis in terms of the characterization of the population and also on the quality of the transition and the available resources emphasize the need to carry out more contextual studies in the country of origin of the players.

## 4. A retrospective analysis of career termination of football players in Portugal

Carapinha, A., Torregrossa, M., Mendes, P., Guedes de Carvalho, P., & Travassos, B. (2018). A retrospective analysis of career termination of football players in Portugal. *Motricidade*, 14(4), 74-85.





## 4.1. Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyse the retirement of elite football players in Portugal. Specifically, the quality of retirement and the resources available were evaluated. To develop an understanding of the process of the sporting retirement of elite football players we used data from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with ninety professional players that played in Portuguese football national team. Fifty percent of the elite Portuguese footballers retired from sport between 36 and 40 years of age ( $M = 35.53 \pm 3.63$  years), their retirement had been involuntary and it had taken them less than a year to accept retirement. Most had only been educated to secondary level and had a strong athletic identity, no plans for their post-football career exist and relied on family as their main psychological support. None of the players had received support from a formal programme. Despite of the findings being consistent with previous research from other Southern European cultures, it seems that the athletic retirement of Portuguese footballers has some particularities.

**Keywords:** Career transition; post-retirement career; quality of termination; coping strategies, psychological support

## **4.2. Introduction**

Transition from a sports career is a process that is influenced by the athlete's situation, self, the support available and individual use of strategies (Erpič et al., 2004; Stambulova et al., 2009). According to Stambulova (2009) the transition from a sports career involves a coping process that is facilitated by a combination of contextual factors and athlete's resources (i.e., internal or external factors such as the athlete's past experiences, motivation and social and financial support). Therefore, career transition is a large research topic that encompasses research on adjustment of athletes to their new life and the athletic and non-athletic factors that contribute to their success (Stambulova & Ryba, 2014).

Athletic termination has been a hot topic in sports career transition research in recent years due to the high number of athletes experiencing serious financial, social and psychological difficulties at the end of their athletic career (Alfermann & Stambulova, 2007; Park et al., 2013). In this context, athletic termination has been studied as a process that requires former athletes to adjust to a new psychological, social, familiar, occupational, and even financial status (Stambulova et al., 2009; Wylleman et al., 2004).

### **4.2.1. Theoretical framework**

Although approaches to research on the career transition process have varied over the years, athletic termination has always been a topic of interest due to the societal concerns about athletes' adaptation to their new life (Alfermann & Stambulova, 2007). According to Stambulova and Ryba (2014) there are three main theoretical frameworks applied to sport career research of the sport career transition process. Each theoretical framework focuses on different aspects of career transition process. The first approach were based on thanatology perspectives (stages if dying) and the moment of termination was viewed as a negative and traumatic single event that changes the course of life of the participants (Schlossberg, 1981). After that, the athletic retirement model (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) was proposed to study specifically on athletic termination and the factors and resources that contribute to the quality of athletic termination and is particularly relevant to understanding of elite athletic termination. The athletic termination model comprises five categories of factor: (a) initiation of athletic retirement, (b) adaptation to athletic retirement, (c) the athlete's resources, (d) quality of athletic retirement and (e) interventions to support the retirement process. At the end, the holistic model of athletic careers (Wylleman et al., 2013) focuses on analysis of the academic, athletic, individual, psychological and academic transitions athletes undergo. That is, proposed a holistic, lifespan, multi-level approach to improve the understanding of the contextual factors in career development and transitions (Stambulova et al., 2009).

### **4.2.2. Athletic termination**

In line with the athletic retirement model recent studies have provided evidence that athletic retirement is a process that is mediated by non-athletic factors (i.e., social factors and life

events) that should be recognized as constraints of quality of life after an athletic career (Stambulova et al., 2009; Torregrosa et al., 2015). Park et al. (2013) concluded that to understand the process of career termination it is necessary to understand the factors affecting quality of post-termination career and the resources available to athletes during the termination process. There is strong evidence, for instance, that voluntary termination is associated with good adaptation to a new life and a shorter transitional period (Agresta et al., 2008; Park et al., 2013). In contrast involuntary termination due to age, deselection or injuries can contribute to difficulties with adaptation to termination, including dissatisfaction with the sudden change and negative emotional reactions to it, as well as difficulty with accepting one's new life (Stambulova et al., 2009; Wylleman et al., 2004).

Overall the research has revealed that: (a) there are multiple motifs for athletic termination and it is the outcome of a reasoned decision-making process; (b) the more control that athletes feel they have over the decision to retire, the better their adaptation to post-termination life; (c) the process of adapting to athletic termination is highly individual and hence there are large inter-individual differences in the outcome; (d) planning for termination is crucial to coping successfully with one's new life; (e) the skills and social support an athlete has are crucial to the adaptive process.

In addition, it has recently been highlighted out that athletic termination is not a purely rational decision but is also driven by emotion, compulsion and a need to be part of the game. These feelings can be associated with the loss of identity during and after athletic termination, due to loss of value of previous experiences and acquired competences during athletic career (Cosh et al., 2013). Previous research revealed that many former athletes expected to make the transition from an athletic career to a sports-related career, because they felt that they have the necessary knowledge, experience and competence to perform in this context (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2006). It would be interesting to investigate whether elite athletes' expectation that they will continue to work in their sport helps them to maintain their athletic identity and reduces negative feelings about athlete termination process (Fernandez et al., 2006; Mihovilovic, 1968).

There have been few studies evaluating the athletic termination of football players and almost all of them used small samples (D'Angelo et al., 2017; Rintaugu et al., 2016; Sanders & Stevinson, 2017). Nevertheless, recent studies revealed that whilst a minority of retired Italian football players retired from the sport voluntarily and continued to be involved in football-related activities (D'Angelo et al., 2017), most Kenyan retired football players retire voluntarily and continue to be involved in football subsequently (in coaching, sports marketing or sports administration) (Rintaugu et al., 2016). Thus, previous studies have emphasized the need to understand how nationality and culture influence athletic termination (Dimoula et al., 2013). For instance, the analysis of the loss of identity and the mental problems associated with the moment of termination or the analysis of the existence of a pre-termination plan or the

psychological support required (Dimoula et al., 2013; Jones & Denison, 2017; Park et al., 2013; van Ramele, Aoki, Kerkhoffs, & Gouttebarga, 2017) in specific countries or the comparison between different countries and cultures should be considered in further studies. In Portugal there has been scant research interest in this topic and in recent years some attempts have been made to develop programs to support athletes during the termination process. Thus, although previous research on athletic termination, it is essential to develop research on athletic termination in Portugal in order to understand the specific social factors affecting the process and contributing to develop appropriate policies and support programs (Levitt et al., 2018).

Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to identify the motifs of sporting termination in elite Portuguese Football players. Following the suggestions of Park et al. (2013) in this study it was evaluated the: (a) factors affecting the quality of the transition from athletic career to post-athletic career and (b) resources available to elite football players during this transition.

## **4.3. Methods**

### **4.3.1. Participants**

Ninety male Portuguese former elite football players participated in this study ( $M = 50.68 \pm 9.14$  age). Three criteria were used for participants selection: (a) professional male football Portuguese players; (b) participation of the national team as senior football players, and (c) career termination from football between 1985 and 2015. Most had retired from competition at the age of 36 - 40 years ( $35.53 \pm 3.63$  years) and slightly more than half had played professionally for 16 - 20 years ( $M = 16 \pm 3.12$  years as professional players). Most had only been educated to secondary level (53.3%). Interestingly, the current occupation of 97.8% of these retired football players was football-related, with the biggest group being football coaches. The study was conducted in accordance with the guidelines contained in the Declaration of Helsinki and was approved by the University Ethics Committee. Participants were informed that information from interviews would be confidential and used only for research. All the participants were informed of the purpose of the study and provided written, informed consent.

### **4.3.2. Instrument and procedures**

A semi-structured interview guide in Portuguese based on the athletic termination model was developed. The interview was focused in two themes of questions after the collection of demographic information, based on the proposal of Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) and in line with the previous systematization of Park et al. (2013): (a) quality of career transition, (b) resources for career transition (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). In the analysis of quality of career termination five dependent variables were accessed: voluntary termination (participants were asked about the reasons for career termination and about the voluntariness about the decision), athletic identity (participants were asked about other activities that they have developed during their

career, their concerns with the termination and their motivations while players), the time taken to accept termination (participants were asked about the time that they needed to accept termination), career / personal development (participants were asked about the strategies that they used to improve their career in the future and how previous knowledge help them on that) and life changes (participants were asked about their experience of transition to termination and the difficulties they feel). The analysis of available resources for career termination comprising four dependent variables: coping strategies (participants were asked about the strategies used to react to the sport termination situation and to define the most relevant), psychological support (participants were asked about the person(s) that support him psychologically), pre-termination planning (participants were asked about the existence of a termination plan) and support program involvement (participants were asked about the existence of support programs that help them on the termination process and their opinion about the importance of such programs).

The interview has been previously validated according to qualitative methods (Vaivio, 2012). The interview structure has been validated to ensure the reliability of the collected data. The final interview was developed after exploring previous drafts of the transcript using the following steps: (a) Adaptation of first draft of the interview based on previous studies; (b) Evaluation and adjustments on the interview by two senior researchers in sports sciences, who have substantial experience with interviews; (c) Development of a pilot study conducted with three former professional football players (d) Minor fixes and adaptations resulting from the pilot study; (f) Definition of the final version of the interview. Semi-structured interviews were conducted face to face in a calm environment (usually in a hotel meeting room). Interviews (lasting 45 - 90 mins) were carried out by the first author and audio-recorded with the informed consent of participants and then transcribed verbatim.

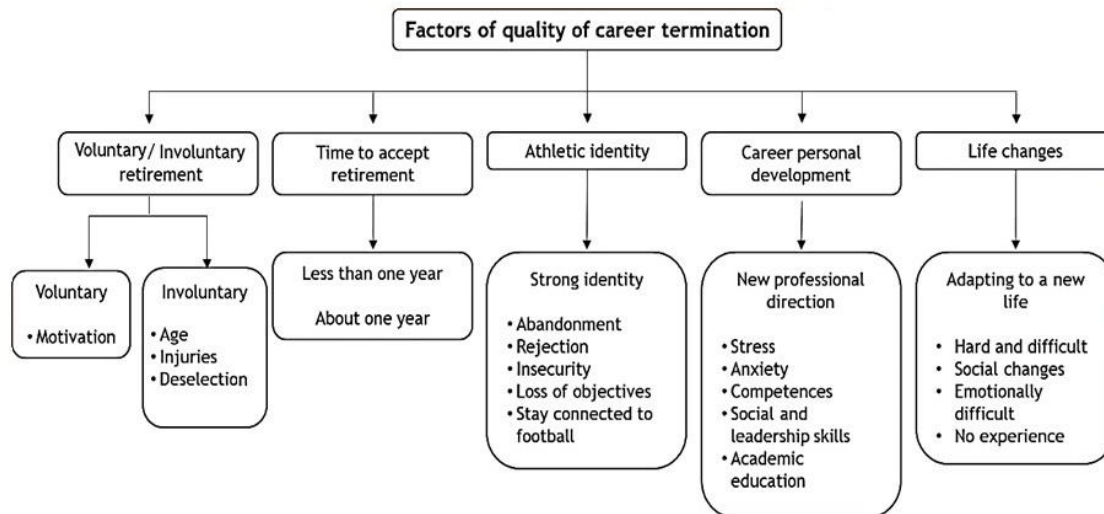
From the semi-structured interview data were extracted and organized with a deductive approach to the content according to the themes and the dependent variables previously defined. After a line-by-line analysis, transcripts were read repeatedly for familiarization and text units were coded and organized into specific categories. The descriptive and theoretical validity were ensured through a process of triangulation by all the authors. Software NVivo 10 was used to organize data codification and analysis (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

#### **4.4. Results**

In line with the previous work of Park et al. (2013) the analysis was divided into two main themes: (a) quality of career transition; and (b) resources for career transition. These categories were further divided into dependent variables that characterize the termination of the athletic career of elite Portuguese football players.

#### 4.4.1. Quality of career termination

Figure 3 represent the most significant categories obtained for each psychological variable related with the quality of career termination.



**Figure 3** - Identification of the most significant categories that constraint the quality of career termination

*Voluntary termination.* For the majority, athletic retirement had been involuntary. Age was the causal factor cited by the greatest proportion of participants. Also, the injuries and deselection were considered a motif for involuntary retirement.

“I was 37 years old and I was fed up with my football playing career. I didn’t feel the same physical and mental capacity to answer to the training and game requirements. I was emotionally tired.” (Player 33)

“With the increase in my age I didn’t feel the same pleasure to continue playing. I want to continue playing but it was very hard for me” (Player 45)

“I was physically and emotionally tired because had a lot of injury problems during my career and in last years the problems have increased” (Player 73)

“In last year of my career I cannot play as I like because I didn’t felt capacity to train and play at high intensity. I was always recovering from injuries. It was very difficult for me” (Player 22).

In opposition, about a third of the sample reported that they had retired voluntarily. Lack of motivation was the causal factor cited by the greatest proportion of participants.

“I left on my own initiative, it was the right time to finish. It didn’t have the same motivation to keep on as a football player and I focus my energies in other projects. It was the right moment” (Player 15)

“In the last months I didn’t feel the same pleasure to continue training and competing. The time to go to the training sessions become an obligation because I no longer have motivation to continue and I no longer identified myself with that context” (Player 3).

*Time to accept termination.* Speaking about how long it had taken to accept athletic termination the majority of participants reported that the acceptance had been immediate or taken less than one year. However, some of them reported a year or more to accept the termination, even maintain the link with the sport or starting new activities during this time.

“I accepted immediately that it was time to retire. The days after termination were difficult but I accepted my termination as a normal process of life. However, I think that I benefited the fact that I have a proposal to continue working in football” (player 15)

“It took me some time to accept. Maybe about one year because I wanted to keep playing and I could not accept the idea even starting another job in the area of football” (player 45)

“Until now it has been difficult to accept that I’m no longer a football player. I felt that lost my dream” (player 30).

*Athletic identity.* The participants reported strong athletic identity. That is their main focus was the activity as professional football player and any one of them reported the practice of dual-careers.

“While I was a football player I did not have to think about the future and I thought that my career would be longer” (Player 28)

“Being a public figure made me feel I would not need to prepare myself for a new career. In my mind, I was above everyone and I think that at the end of my career something positive would happen to me” (Player 84).

Due to the strong athletic identity, the former athletes referred feelings of abandonment, rejection and insecurity after termination. The loss of objectives for the future was also identified as a common feeling reported by the participants.

“I felt abandoned. I felt that people start looking at me differently. It was very weird and difficult” (Player 80)

“I felt frustrated and I didn’t know what to do next. I had never dealt with similar feelings like the ones I felt after termination” (Player 33)”

“I had some money, but I didn’t know what to do in my life or with the money that I have. I didn’t have objectives for the future because it seems that my life was ended” (Player 45)

“I was approached by some opportunists who suggested I should get involved in something but I wasn’t interested in it and I didn’t care about the opportunities that they suggest me. However, due to the facilities I still got involved” (Player 3).

In line with the strong athletic identity, the participants reported the benefits to have the opportunity to stay connected to football. Interestingly, they feel that it helps to improve the quality of athlete termination. The main reasons reported for staying connected to football were intrinsic motivations, such as having a passion for football, wanting to transmit values and spirit in football and wanting to transmit acquired knowledge and the previous experience accumulated

“I always be interested in the training and the management in football and that meant the door was open for me to continue in the football area. I always wanted to stay connected to football. It helps to make the career transition easy” (player 80)

“The identification of a possibility to develop a new work in the field of football helps me to maintain my confidence. I think that I know everything about football and nothing about the other professions” (player 61)

“Passion. This is an area that I know, and I loved to work on it. I have great passion for football and I’m really happy to continue contributing to the development of the sport. I wanted to transmit all my knowledge and values to youngers” (player 17)

“I have just specialized in this sport. It is my life and I don’t imagine me out of it” (player 27).



Former players also mentioned that some opportunities to work in football emerged immediately after career termination or even during the last moments of their career as players.

“It was the moment and the opportunity for athletic termination and to start a new job in the club. When I retired I started a new career at the club. I think that my knowledge of the game and the about the environment that surrounds the sport contributes to the continuity in the club” (player 73)

“I had the opportunity to become a coach and I am enjoying it. I had to change my perspective about the game and I had to study about the coaching process, but it is very challenging, and I still feel that I am part of it” (player 12).

*Career personal development.* Some participants reported that the need to find a new professional direction after termination had caused anxiety and difficulties after the termination. In contrast another group reported that personal development and the competences and values they had acquired during their athletic career were very important for their termination because they helped them to feel valuable. The academic education on termination was also mentioned as a good way of improving quality of termination

“I needed to find a new occupation and I didn’t know what I should do more than to be linked with football. It was stressful and very difficult for me, but when I received an opportunity to work in football I try to catch her with both hands. Even today I didn’t imagine me doing another thing and it causes me some stress” (player 88)

“I put the values I have learned during my career into practice to help me to overcome the difficulties in my new life. My social and leadership skills were very important and led to help me in the new functions” (player 4)

“It was important to find an occupation and for me that meant enrolling in the graduate program” (player 16)

“The development of new skills and the frequency of the coach graduation program was very important for me. It helped to accept the termination and contributed to the development of new skills that I needed in the future as a coach” (player 12).

*Life changes.* Mostly of participants reported that adapting to a new life was hard and causes mental and physical stress. Also, the absence of competition, training, friends and routines also promotes difficulties on the process of transition.

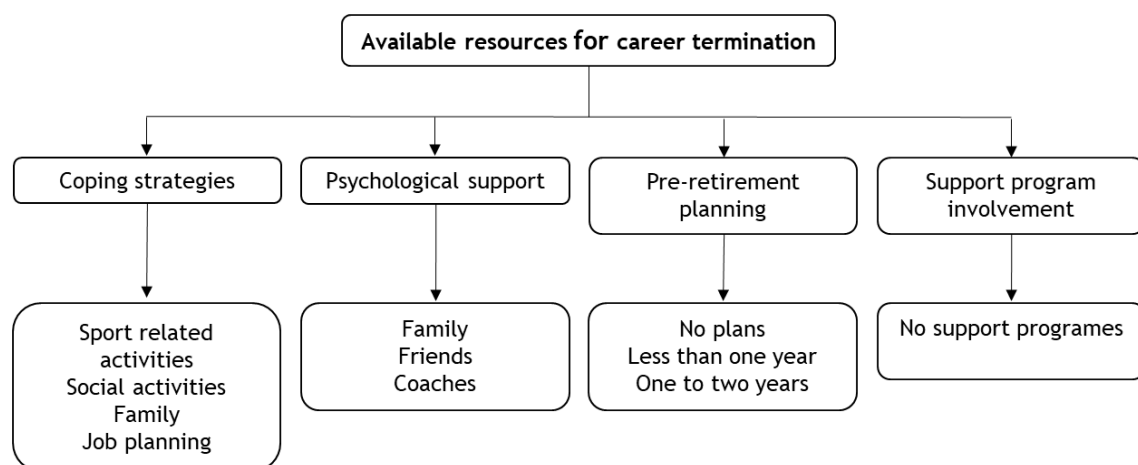
“I found it difficult to adapt to a new life. The new functions and requirements of the new job were not difficult to accomplish but we also need to consider the social changes that our life suffers. It was a mix of feelings and changes that I didn’t expected felt” (player 33)

“I felt stressed, I could not think to myself that all was finished. Initially it was very difficult emotionally. I was feeling very anxious and annoyed” (player 82)

“I missed the friends, the training, the teammates and the football. I was afraid of the future because I was worried about being unemployed. I didn’t have any academic qualification or experience (player 88).

#### 4.4.2. Available resources

Figure 4 represent the most significant categories obtained for each psychological variable related with the available resources for career termination.



**Figure 4** - Identification of the most significant available resources for career termination

*Coping strategies.* The coping strategies employed by participants included dedicating time to sport-related activities such as coaching or scouting, followed by time dedicated to family and social support activities. Few of them reported the use of time to entrepreneurial activities and job planning.

“I used to dedicate my time to family and I was also involved in some sport activities and to help institutions that worked with young children” (player 2)

“After to my family, all of my time was dedicated to watch games and analyse players. I felt that it could help me for the future and I was right.” (player 91)

“Apart from the family, I had personal investments that I try to maintain and improve” (player 78)

“I tried to define a plan for the future and I started to talk to people that could help me on my future. The contacts that I created as a football player help me a lot” (player 61).

*Psychological support.* Family was the most important source of psychological support and counselling, followed by friends and coaches.

“My family was very important for me. They really helped me to understand my new situation” (player 56)

“My real friends give me good advice and help me to stay focused on the future” (player 29)

“There was an experienced coach that helped me a lot and opened my mind in relation to the future” (player 34)).

*Pre-retirement planning.* Most participants reported that had not planned their termination, referring that they adjust their decisions in less than one year until termination or that they had never thought carefully about their termination beforehand. A few number of participants reported that they had started to plan their termination two to four years in advance or had been planning for termination throughout their career.

“I did not think about it. The, after the moment of termination the problems started to appear” (player 11)

“I started to think about my termination in the last five or six months of my playing career. I knew it would happen but in the beginning of my career I do not think about it. Really, I didn’t want to think too much about it.” (player 72).

*Support program involvement.* All the participants reported that there were no support programmes for retired footballers in Portugal. Participants felt that such support programmes could offer valuable support in several areas such as counselling and planning for the future, development of professional and financial decisions or academic and professional education. Furthermore, a great number of participants suggested that such programs should contribute since the beginning of their careers for the development of dual-careers.

“Support programs should help to find an orientation and help us to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of our decisions” (player 10)

“It would be important for emotional and financial management and also to provide professional tools for a future job” (player 13)

“It is important to provide academic formation and to develop alternatives for the future since the beginning of players career” (player 44)

“The development of programmes of dual careers should enable us to learn different skills such languages, informatics, economy, psychology. It should enable us to manage our career, help us with personal financial management and most importantly prepare us to the future” (player 60).

Table 2 summarises the findings on athletic retirement in terms of the two themes evaluated. Based on previous research, it was highlighted for each variable the categories that contributes for a more positive or negative termination.

**Table 2** - Identification of the most significant positive and negative factors of quality of transition and available resources for Portuguese football players

	Positive factor	Negative factor
<i>Factors of quality transition</i>		
Voluntary retirement	Voluntary - Motivation to abandon	Involuntary - Age
Time to accept retirement	Less than one year	Didn't accept the retirement
Athletic identity	Continue connected to football	One dimensional athletic identity
Career/personal development	Acquisition of competences and values	Anxiety and difficulties
Life changes		Adaptation to a new life
<i>Available resources</i>		
Coping strategies	Coaching or scouting	
Psychological support	Family	
Pre-retirement planning		Without any plan
Support program involvement		Inexistence of support programs

## **4.5. Discussion**

The aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the process of retiring from professional sport and the resources available to elite football players in Portugal. Our analysis of interview data from a sample of ninety elite Portuguese footballers is consistent with the pattern of athletic termination that has emerged from other research on athletes in Southern European cultures (Dimoula et al., 2013). The transition is characterized by maintenance of a strong athletic identity, difficulty adapting to one's new life and predominance of relocation in sports. The commonly available coping resources were participation in sport activities, support from family and friends. However, at the same time, it was reported a general lack of termination planning and absence of formal support programs.

The participants retired from sport between 36 and 40 years of age. Their career termination had been involuntary, and it had taken them less than a year to accept termination. Most had only been educated to secondary level and had a strong athletic identity. A great number of participants reported a lack of plans for their post-football career and relied on family as their main psychological support. None of the players had received support from a formal program.

### **4.5.1. Quality of transition**

Our sample of elite Portuguese footballers retired later than Kenyan footballers (Rintaugu et al., 2016), the footballers that participated in the study by van Ramele et al. (2017) and also later than Greek and Spanish elite athletes in general (Dimoula et al., 2013). Hence our participants had spent more years in professional sport than the athletes in these other studies. Such results can be related with the strong athletic identity of elite Portuguese football players and with the general lack of plans for their post-football career. For instance, (Ramos, López de Subijana, Barriopedro, & Muniesa, 2017) revealed in this line of reasoning that dual career athletes usually abandon their careers four to five years before players with a career only focused in sport. Also, active elite players usually develop with more clarity an image of termination with a plan associated in comparison with players with a career only focused in sport (Torregrosa et al., 2004)

The most common level of education amongst our sample of retired footballers was secondary level, which is in line with previous research (Rintaugu et al., 2016; van Ramele et al., 2017). We found that 97.8% of our retired footballers had remained connected to football. They reported that this was due to intrinsic motivations, such as passion for football and desire to transmit the values of football and the knowledge they had acquired during their playing career. These results confirm the tendency of former elite athletes to maintain a professional connection with sport (Dimoula et al., 2013; Rintaugu et al., 2016), however to the best of our knowledge no previous study has reported the continued professional involvement of such a high proportion in the same sport. It is a typical behavior of relocation in sports, instead of a complete termination from sport, and reduces stress and identity crisis after termination

(Torregrosa et al., 2004). In this sense, despite of the high athlete identity observed, the negative consequences of termination could be attenuated with such relocation in sport, promoting the feeling of integration and competence for the development of the new career (Dimoula et al., 2013; Fernandez et al., 2006). Even not supported by any institutional program such strategy should be encouraged for the future with programs of career transition support.

Most of the Portuguese footballers in our sample had not retired voluntarily. Termination had been forced on them by age, injuries or deselection. These results are consistent with observations of Italian footballers (D'Angelo et al., 2017). This contrasts with previous research in Kenyan footballers (Rintaugu et al., 2016) and in elite athletes suggesting that the majority of athletes retire voluntarily (Alfermann, 2000; Dimoula et al., 2013; Erpič et al., 2004). Such result is a bad predictive of adaptation to the new life condition (Alfermann et al., 2004; Torregrosa et al., 2015). Participants found involuntary termination difficult to cope with, due to the lack of control and loss of identity they experienced (Martin et al., 2014; Torregrosa et al., 2015). These difficulties may be partly due to lack of preparation for the end of one's sporting career and the short time that athletes reported. The postponement of a voluntary termination delays the plans for the future and athletes' acceptance of termination and emotional reaction to it is different when termination is involuntary.

More than half of our sample struggled to adapt to their new life and experienced mental and physical disorders. The emergence of negative feelings and mental and physical disorders at the time of athletic termination is typical of involuntary terminations (Park et al., 2013). Nevertheless most of our participants reported that it had taken them less than a year to accept termination, which is less time than reported in most previous studies (Park et al., 2013). The relatively rapid acceptance of athletic termination that we observed is probably due to the fact that most of our participants had moved into a new professional career related to football, so in this sense they had not retired from the sport. The faster integration in a new life related with the practiced sport contributes to maintain high social recognition and feeling of competence (Torregrosa et al., 2004). Recognizing the competences their athletic career has given them allows athletes to capitalize on their transferable skills in a new career and is empowering for players.

#### **4.5.2. Resources for coping**

The results of this study revealed that the available resources to face career termination are common between south European Cultures. A lot of cross-culturally common characteristics were observed between sports (Stambulova et al., 2009). It was observed that players' preferred coping strategies involved participation in sport and development of a new sport-related career, which is a common finding in retiring athletes (Dimoula et al., 2013; Rintaugu et al., 2016). Focusing on developing a new career appears to facilitate adaptation to athletic termination and reduces the risk of misuse of drugs and alcohol (Alfermann et al., 2004; Park

et al., 2013). In this process of adjustment to the new life, the participants referred the importance of psychological support from non-sporting agents (family's role, self, friends). As previously observed, psychological support helps retired athletes to maintain a positive emotional state and improves the quality of their career transition.

However, most participants reported that they had done no preparation for their post-football life and others reported that they had only started to prepare for their subsequent career towards the end of their playing career and the self-consciousness. It seems that athletes ignore or the problem of termination or try to postpone it in order to remain focused on the competition (D'Angelo et al., 2017; Rintaugu et al., 2016). Lack of knowledge about the transition process may lead to difficulties during the process (Park et al., 2013). Despite of that, most participants in the study show concerns and negative feelings regarding their future (Alfermann et al., 2004).

One of the most important ways of promoting a rapid and positive transition from playing professional sport is to offer dedicated support programs (Erpič et al., 2004; Park et al., 2013). However, any support program integration was reported by participants, in line with the other European countries (Dimoula et al., 2013; Stambulova et al., 2009). Although there always existed several attempts to develop and promote supportive programs for professional footballers it seems that players do not know or do not use such training possibilities in Portugal. In line with other studies, several participants reported that the lack of financing support and qualified people to develop further support programs may increase the risks of participation (Park et al., 2013). However, they would like to have such support and reported that support programs should be developed for counselling and consciousness regarding the future and support to help professional and financial decisions.

Further studies should compare and correlate the factors that characterize termination with the quality of termination of different groups of participants and levels of performance. This would enable the identification of factors that constraint the quality of termination. There is also a need for evaluations of other transitions in an athlete's career, such as the transition from junior to senior level. We hypothesize that there will be clear differences between the different career transitions. At the end, as a limitation of this study we should report the non-identification of the time between termination and participation in the research. It was reported as a variable that could influence results. Also, our sample was only constituted by elite Portuguese football players. It is required that further studies increase the sample of participants to compare the reality of players of different levels of practice. For instance, there is a need to understand how the high level of practice of players constraint their quality of transition and available resources.

## 4.6. Conclusions

In conclusion, our study revealed that termination of elite Portuguese footballers has general similarities with European Southern Countries but more important than that is that revealed some particularities. For instance, Portuguese footballers retired later and had longer playing careers than athletes in other countries, reported a short time to accept termination and had developed a new professional career linked to football in a short period of time. However, most of them reported that the termination was involuntarily, and experienced difficulties related with mental and physical disorders. According to that, there is a need to develop support programs tailored to the needs of Portuguese footballers. For example, more than to develop support programs based on the moment of termination, it is suggested the development of programs that support the development of the entire career to promote dual careers and to prepare and develop a more clear image of the timing and the resources for termination and for the prospective life (Ramos et al., 2017; Torregrosa et al., 2004). The development of programs focused on the athlete lifespan instead on the moment of transition or termination will contribute to improve voluntary termination and consequently better adaptations to the new life (Agresta et al., 2008; Park et al., 2013).



## **5.Career termination of Portuguese elite football players - comparison between the last three decades**

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## 5.1. Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the process of career termination of elite soccer players, comparing the quality and the resources to support career termination over the last three decades. To this end, was developed a questionnaire defined by 4 sections: (a) biographical data, (b) athletic career, (c) quality of career termination and (d) available resources at the moment of career termination. Ninety male former elite Portuguese soccer players participated in this study. The results highlighted a decrease in the length of athletic career as football players and an increase in the number of years as youth players over the last 30 years. The results also revealed that the quality of career termination was difficult. The analysis of resources for career termination revealed an increase in a high level of education over the years. Despite the evolution in the level athletes' education in the last three decades, the athletic career termination remained difficult and it was reported that they did not plan their career termination. In line with previous studies, the results highlight that the lack of plans for career termination is one of the most important factors that constraint the quality of career transition.

Keywords: sport career; post-career; career termination; Ecological Model of Human Development.

## 5.2. Introduction

In the last five decades, research in the area of sport career termination has advanced significantly with an improvement in the understanding of the factors associated with this process (Stambulova et al., 2009). In fact, most studies in different sports have emphasized that 15 to 20% of retired athletes go through transitional difficulties, often requiring intervention and psychological support (Alfermann, 2000; Alfermann et al., 2004; Martin et al., 2014). It can be explained by the multifactorial life process that constraints the process of career termination. That is, career termination is an individual process that is influenced by a range of individual, cultural and contextual causal factors that impacts on the process of career termination and on the adjustment of former players to the new life (Alfermann, 2000; Dimoula et al., 2013; Roberts et al., 2015). Thus, there is a need to understand the role of each factor in career termination of different countries or sports to really understand the impact of such process in athletes life (Stambulova et al., 2009).

Indeed, career termination is influenced by the situation, the self, the support and the individual strategies and it requires the adjustment of former athletes to the new psychological, social, familiar, occupational, and even financial status (Jordana et al., 2017; Park et al., 2013). Previous research has shown that the reasons for the end of athletic career are generally: age, deselection, injuries and free choice (Park et al., 2013), and these can be decisive in the adaptation to the post-sport phase (Alfermann et al., 2004; Stambulova et al., 2009). However, different consequences can emerge according to the type of reasons pointed for career termination (Alfermann & Stambulova, 2007; Roberts et al., 2015). While free choice is usually associated with easy and healthy processes of career termination, deselection and injuries are usually associated with involuntary and difficult processes of career termination with correspondent negative emotions for the general of former players. The age is a more complex factor. Previous research reported that age can promote more easily or difficult transitions according to the level of voluntariness to abandon the athletic career (Roberts et al., 2015). According to that, Stambulova et al. (2009) pointed that the quality of a career termination depends of a multiplicity of causes, namely the crucial contribution of voluntary decision making, the importance of a planning for post-career life or the existence of social and individual resources for the athlete.

Also, over the last years it was emphasized that some cross-cultural research is necessary due to the diversity and needs of players of different countries, or even sports (Dimoula et al., 2013; Stambulova et al., 2007). Supported by the Ecological Model of Human Development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) it was advocated that research and intervention in career termination should avoid replicating general assumptions from any study in a certain country and sport to other particular context (Stambulova et al., 2007; Wylleman et al., 2004). It was argued that the focus of research should be redirected towards the career termination of athletic career in a more holistic perspective and considering different levels of analysis (Wylleman et al., 2013).

Also, previous research suggested that research into career termination in sport should include the analysis of demographic characteristics, culture and sporting context, as well as the influence of sport systems and environmental contexts to really understand the process and the factors that constraint players development and career termination (Henriksen, Stambulova, & Roessler, 2010; Larsen, Alfermann, Henriksen, & Christensen, 2014; Park et al., 2013).

The Ecological Model of Human Development considers that human development is constraint by three different microsystems in interaction. The microsystem as the unit of the system is related with the social roles, interpersonal relations and experiences developed by an individual in a particular setting (e.g., family, club, team, the coach, the type of training tasks, the facilities of the club). The mesosystem comprises the relationship between two sub-systems (e.g., family, club, school) and can be related with the social activities, the community support and the associated values shared and developed between participants. At the end, the macrosystem can be described as the social-cultural context (e.g., the national sport culture) that surrounds the development of the individual identity (Araújo et al., 2010).

Aligned with the Ecological Model of Human Development, some research has been developed at macro-social level to understand the impact of the socio-cultural context or even the national sport culture of each country in career termination of athletes. For example in a wide perspective, Stambulova et al. (2009) sustain that there are similarities between the North American, West European and Australia traditions in career termination due to the resemblance between the social-cultural contexts of the respective countries. Focused in the European analysis, the European Perspectives on Athletic career termination project analyzed the process of athletes career termination in five different countries: Germany, Lithuania and Russia, France and Sweden (Alfermann et al., 2004; Stambulova et al., 2007). The results revealed an influence of the social-cultural context in the career termination process. For instance, West European athletes planned career termination in advance in comparison with East European athletes. Otherwise, in Russia there is a cooperation between the sport and scholar system promoting the development of a dual career and high level of formal education than in countries such as Germany, France or Sweden. Also, the athletes from Sweden reported high quality of transition than German, French or Lithuanian and Russian athletes (Stambulova et al., 2009). Such results can be clearly related with differences among social, cultural and even structural or political structures in each country. Recently, Dimoula et al. (2013) through the comparison between Greek and Spanish elite athletes proposed a Southern European perspective of athletic career termination. It was revealed that the Southern European perspective could be characterized by voluntary career termination, lack of career termination planning, high athletic identity and relocation in the sports world. Similar results, reinforcing such idea, were observed with retired Italian football players, except for the voluntary career termination. Almost all of the Italian players referred involuntary career termination (D'Angelo et al., 2017).

Despite of the solid results obtained in the cross-cultural perspective and for instance on the proposal of the Southern European perspective of career termination, such studies only considered how the Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem influences the process of career termination and neglected how changes on the mesosystem (e.g., club opportunities, school) or in the microsystem (e.g., family, team, the coach, the training process, the facilities of the club) could constraint the career termination of athletes. Thus, there is a need to improve the understanding of changes at meso and micro level that characterizes and constraint the process of career termination in a specific country. Such ideas are aligned with the proposals for development of career programs in which it was clearly pointed the need to adjust such programs to each athlete specificity (e.g., individual options, type of sport, club and family characteristics) (Stambulova et al., 2009). According to that, a call for a more specific socio-culturally situated approach focused on Bronfenbrenner's meso and micro systems will allow a greater understanding of the factors that constraint career termination and to develops more adjusted local programs to former athletes (Stambulova et al., 2007). Such analysis could be extremely important on the analysis of the available resources of career termination, namely the level of formal education, coping strategies or psychological support. Particularly, the level and type of coping process and the psychological support, that can be constraint by Bronfenbrenner's meso and micro systems, should be considered as key factors for the process of successful transition (Stambulova et al., 2009). In view of the above, the purpose of this study was to explore in a specific country the process of career termination of elite football players in the last 30 years, comparing the quality of career termination and the resources for career termination over the three decades of this temporal period. Such analysis will allow to understand if changes on resources for career termination at meso (e.g., club opportunities to start the practice or the school frequency), and micro level (e.g., the support of family, club or institutional support programs, the resources for transition) constraint the quality of career termination. Due to the evolution observed in last 30 years in the education, sport conditions and on the structures of the football clubs, we expect that players that retired recently reveal higher resources for career termination allowing a better quality on career termination.

### **5.3. Materials and Methods**

Ninety male former elite Portuguese soccer players participated in this study ( $M=50.68 \pm 9.14$  age). Three criteria were used for selection: (a) professional male football Portuguese players; (b) participation of the national team as senior football players, and (b) career termination from football between 1985 and 2015. Considering the two criteria, a balanced sample from the retired elite Portuguese soccer players in three last decades was defined: Group I (G I) retired between 1985-1995 ( $n=30$ ), Group II (G II) retired between 1996-2005 ( $n=30$ ), and Group III (G II) retired between 2006-2015 ( $n=30$ ).

The participants were informed that the information reported is confidential and only be used to research. All the participants were informed of the purpose of the study and a written

informed consent was obtained. The study protocol followed the guidelines stated in the Declaration of Helsinki and was approved by the University Ethics Committee.

According to athletic career termination model (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) and based on the Retirement from Sports Survey (Alfermann et al., 2004) a questionnaire was developed for comparison between players of different decades. The questionnaire structure has been validated to ensure the reliability of the collected data. Final questionnaire was developed after exploring different opinions of previous drafts of the transcript using the following steps: (a) Adaptation of first draft of the questionnaire based on previous studies; (b) Evaluation and adjustments on the questionnaire by two senior researchers in sports sciences, who have substantial experience with questionnaires; (c) Development of a pilot study conducted with three former professional football players (d) Minor fixes and adaptations resulting from the pilot study; (f) Definition of the final version of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was defined by 4 sections: (a) biographical data, (b) athletic career, (c) quality of career termination and (d) available resources at the moment of career termination. In the section of biographical data, the participants reported the age, and the year of career termination. In the section of athletic career, the players reported the age when retired, the length of athletic career (i.e., the years as professional footballers) and the years as youth players (i.e., the years of formal practice between U9 to U20). In the section of quality of career transition, the participants reported the causes and the voluntariness of career termination (participants were asked about the reasons for career termination and their voluntariness) and the quality of the career termination (participants were asked about the level of difficulty of career termination). Regarding the voluntariness and the reasons for career termination, aligned with previous research (Park et al., 2013) the participants were asked to answer one of the possible reason (free choice, age, deselection, or injury). The quality of career termination was evaluated by a multiple-choice question with three answers (“1-Easy and healthy”, “2-Regular with emotional stability” and “3-Difficult with negative emotions”).

In the section of available resources of career transition, the participants reported the level of formal education (participants were asked about the level of formal education from the options primary, middle, secondary and High level education), the coping strategies (with the identification of the activity that help them in the moment of career termination were chosen from the following possibilities: sport related activities, social activities and foundations, family, entrepreneurship activities, job planning, political activities and academic education), the psychological support (participants were asked about who supported them psychologically from the following possibilities: family, friends, coaches, sport agents and clubs’ presidents) and the existence of a pre-career termination plan (participants were asked about the existence of a career termination plan through a multiple-choice question with two answers). The questionnaires were administrated to the athletes in a calm environment (usually in a hotel meeting room) after a retrospective interview about their process of career termination.

Data from questionnaires were grouped into three distinct groups according to the decade of career termination of participants (G I [1985;1995], G II [1995;2005], and G III [2005;2015]). Due to the characteristics of data, the comparison of the athletic career between the three generations of retired elite football players were calculated using a one-way ANOVA, and the quality of athletic career termination and the available resources using a  $\chi^2$  analysis. Analysis were performed with SPSS 22.0 for windows. All statistical hypothesis testing was two-tailed and a value of  $p < 0.05$  was considered statistically significant.

## 5.4. Results

### 5.4.1. Athletic career

No differences were observed between participants of different groups on age when retired ( $p > .05$ ) (Table 3). Otherwise, the participants differ significantly in years in professional football and years as youth players ( $p < .05$ ), with the GI revealing a higher number of years as professional footballs than GIII. In opposition, GIII revealed a higher number of years as youth football players than GI.

**Table 3** - Means (and standard deviations) for participants' characteristics

Variables	G I	G II	G III	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Age when retired	36.13 (4.05)	35.6 (2.53)	34.86 (4.15)	0.91	.406
Years in professional football	17.07 (2.52)	16.13 (2.40)	14.8 (3.88) *	4.30	.017
Years as youth player	3.53 (1.40)	5.53 (1.88) #	7.77 (1.30) *	55.66	.000

Note: G I [1985;1995]; G II [1995;2005]; G III [2005;2015]. \* Significant difference ( $P < .05$ ) between G I and G III; # Significant difference ( $P < .05$ ) between G I and G II

### 5.4.2. Quality of career termination

#### 5.4.2.1. Causes of career termination

No differences were observed between participants of different groups on the causes of career termination ( $p > 0.05$ ). Free choice was the most reported cause for career termination by G I, while for G II was age and for G III was injuries. Deselection was the less frequent reported factor (10%) across all three generations (see Table 4).

#### 5.4.2.2. Quality of career termination

No differences were observed between groups on the quality of career termination ( $p > 0.05$ ). Most of participants from all the groups reported a difficult career termination (see Table 4).



**Table 4** - Analysis of quality of career termination: causes and quality of career termination.

Variable	G I		G II		G III		$\chi^2$	$p$
	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Causes of career termination								
Free choice	10	33.3	10	33.3	9	30	4.075	0.66
Age	8	26.7	12	40.0	7	23.3		
Injuries	9	26.7	5	16.7	11	36.7		
Deselection	3	10	3	10.0	3	10.0		
Quality of career termination								
Easy	8	26.7	9	30	7	23.3	2.404	0.62
Regular	6	20	8	26.7	11	36.7		
Difficult	16	53.3	13	43.3	12	40		

Note: G I [1985;1995]; G II [1995;2005]; G III [2005;2015].

### 5.4.3. Available resources

#### 5.4.3.1. Level of formal education

Significant differences were observed between groups in the level of formal education when retired ( $p < 0.05$ ). It was observed a decrease in the number of players that referred primary education and an increase in the number of players that referred higher level education from G I to G III (see Table 5). Most of participants across all three groups revealed High School as their highest level of education.

#### 5.4.3.2. Coping strategies

No differences were observed between participants of different groups on the coping strategies when retired ( $p > 0.05$ ). Results revealed that most of participants across all three generations were focused on sport activities, social activities and foundations and family (see Table 5).

#### 5.4.3.3. Psychological support

No differences were observed between participants of different groups on the psychological support when retired ( $p > 0.05$ ). The family was the most important counselling reference, followed by friends and coaches (see Table 5).

#### 5.4.3.4. Pre-career termination planning

No differences were observed between participants of different groups on pre-career termination planning. Most participants, independently of the generation context, reported the absence of plan of career termination ( $p > 0.05$ ) (see Table 5).

**Table 5** - Analysis of available resources: level of formal education, coping strategies, psychological support and pre-career termination planning.

Variable	G I		G II		G III		$\chi^2$	p		
	F	%	F	%	F	%				
Level of formal education										
Primary Education	5	16.7	-	-	-	-	12.781	0.04		
Middle Education	9	30.0	8	26.7	7	23.3				
Secondary Education	14	46.7	18	60.0	17	56.7				
High level Education	2	6.7	4	13.3	6	20.0				
Coping strategies										
Sport related activities	10	33.3	9	30.0	6	20.0	2.404	0.62		
Social activities and foundations	3	10.0	6	20.0	8	26.7				
Family	4	13.3	8	26.7	6	20.0				
Entrepreneurship activities	8	26.7	4	13.3	3	10.0				
Job planning	5	16.7	1	3.3	5	16.7				
Political activities	-	-	1	3.3	1	3.3	3.66	0.89		
Academic education	-	-	1	3.3	1	3.3				
Psychological support										
Family	16	53.3	15	50.0	14	46.7	3.66	0.89		
Friends	7	23.3	6	20.0	6	20.0				
Coaches	6	20.0	6	20.0	5	16.7				
Sport agents	-	-	2	6.7	3	10.0				
Clubs' presidents	1	3.3	1	3.3	2	6.7	3.66	0.89		
Pre-career termination planning										
No	24	80	26	86.7	25	83.3				
Yes	6	20	4	13.3	5	16.7				

Note: G I [1985;1995]; G II [1995;2005]; G III [2005;2015].

## 5.5. Discussion

In line with the Ecological Model of Human Development, the aim of this study was to explore the process of career termination in elite Portuguese football players, comparing the quality of career termination and the resources for career termination over the last three decades. The results partially confirmed our expectations. Actually, the players that recently terminated their careers revealed higher level of formal education in comparison with others, however without implications for the quality of career termination. Remarkably, older players revealed higher length of athletic career while the recently retired players revealed longer years as youth football players. Although not analyzed here, it seems that the increase in the number of years as youth players revealing some changes on the clubs' perspective, on the training

process, and on the facilities of the clubs to improve the development of players (micro) and the increase on the higher level of formal education revealed changes on the relation between families, clubs and the school (meso system) (Araújo et al., 2010). Still, those changes didn't contribute to improve the quality of career termination of elite Portuguese football players. Further research is required to analyze not only the players' perspective regarding career paths and career retirement but also the perspective of clubs, schools and families allowing a clear understanding of the impacts of changes on micro and meso systems on the career termination of football players. That is, further studies should be developed with new and validated questionnaires or interviews that clearly evaluate the Bronfenbrenner's meso and micro systems.

The results seem to follow the common characteristics of sport career termination in other European cultures (Dimoula et al., 2013). That is to say, professional football players reported a difficult process to adjust their life after their athletic career termination. The great number of players that refer the causes for career retirement by injuries, deselection and also age can be associated with the difficulties in adaptation to the new life (Alfermann et al., 2004; Dimoula et al., 2013; Torregrosa et al., 2015). Despite the difficulties on athletic career termination reported, it was observed an increase over the decades in the level of formal education. In last decades, formal education increased and a higher number of players were enrolled in higher-level education. Surprisingly, the increase in the educational level did not contribute to improve the quality of career termination (Park et al., 2013). Thus, more than to be constrained by the surrounding environment, the quality of the process of career termination can be explained by the labor market and/or the low level of players' resources. The low preparation and feeling of poor control on the process of career termination felt when injuries, deselection and, in some cases, age were reported contributed difficulties into the new life style transition (Martin et al., 2014).

These Portuguese football players reported, over those decades, similar coping strategies to deal with career termination, including time dedicated either to sport related activities or to family and social support activities, social activities and foundations that might be categorized as a productive and positive response according to several authors (Alfermann et al., 2004; Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavalley, 1999). Also, an available resource to face career termination and social adjustment is the development of support from family and friends (Stambulova et al., 2009).

Consistent with the results obtained in other sports, it was observed that the players for all the decades did not have, in general, a plan for career termination. Captivatingly, previous research reported that the plan for career termination had higher influence on the quality of career transition than the nationalities or cultural differences (Alfermann et al., 2004; Stambulova et al., 2007). Our results highlight that the lack of plans for career termination had higher influence on the quality of career transition than the available resources of players such

as the level of formal education *per se*. This result helps to clarify why the quality of career termination was, in general, reported as difficult over the last three decades, despite of the increase in the level of education or the number of years as youth players (Araújo et al., 2010). As previously pointed, the athlete career termination is a process in which the micro, meso and macro levels contributes to enrich and prepare the players to develop better feelings and strengthen their level of control over the process. Thus, there is a need to create a transversal culture of management of careers that should be part of everyday life of elite athletes (Larsen et al., 2014). The development of programs of dual careers and plans of career termination supported by all the agents involved in the process (schools, clubs, sport federations, leagues, career managers, sponsors and governments) should engage the players and improve their ability to manage their career. This is crucial to improve the quality of career termination of professional football players (Stambulova et al., 2009). Further research should be developed to better understand the levels of correlation between the quality of career termination and each of their available resources.

Although the current research presents some limitations due to the used questionnaire, the analysis and comparison between the three last generations of elite players that ended their athlete career help to understand that, despite of the great differences observed in general society, the problems of career termination remain the same. Career retirement are difficult processes that need to be prepared over the entire career and the existence of supportive programs are paramount to improve the preparedness and the level of voluntariness of elite players for career termination.

## **5.6. Conclusions**

The main purpose of the current study was to explore the process of career termination of elite football players in the last 30 years, comparing the quality of career termination and the resources for career termination over those three decades. The results highlighted similarities on career termination over the last three decades and revealed similarities with the athletic career termination of athletes from Southern European cultures.

Despite the evolution in the level of the education of the former athletes for the last three decades, athletic career termination remains difficult because it almost doesn't exist any plan for that life period transition. In such circumstances and considering the huge socioeconomic relevance of football, it must be a priority, for several authorities and sport organizations, the development of integrated support programs for athletes, enabling them to plan their career termination in a qualified and sustainable manner.

## 6. Discussão Geral

A presente tese teve como propósito desenvolver o conhecimento no que respeita à caracterização do perfil de abandono de ex-jogadores de futebol profissional em Portugal, à qualidade e aos recursos disponíveis no momento do término da carreira desportiva. Para o efeito foram levados a cabo 3 estudos, nomeadamente uma meta-análise onde foi possível identificar os principais estudos sobre término de carreira no futebol e as principais características deste processo com jogadores de diferentes países. Posteriormente foram realizados dois estudos observacionais onde se procurou caracterizar o término da carreira de jogadores de futebol de elite em Portugal, avaliando a qualidade do abandono e os recursos disponíveis nesse momento, bem como, tendo por base o Modelo Ecológico de Desenvolvimento Humano, avaliar como alterações ao nível dos micro e meso-sistema social poderão influenciar o término da carreira desportiva em jogadores de futebol de elite nos últimos 30 anos.

No que diz respeito ao estudo do término da carreira de jogadores de futebol de elite, verificou-se a existência de um reduzido número de estudos (8), sendo que de forma interessante se verificaram traços comuns entre os estudos reportados, mas também algumas diferenças em função do país onde se desenvolveu o estudo. De um modo geral, os jogadores de futebol profissional terminam a sua carreira desportiva entre os 31 e os 35 anos. No entanto, verificou-se que existe uma tendência de diminuição na idade do término da carreira nos estudos mais recentes (Sanders & Stevinson, 2017). Em relação aos motivos de abandono e à qualidade do pós-carreira, os estudos reportaram diferenças ao nível da vontade de terminar a sua carreira desportiva, sendo que o país de origem se verificou um importante fator nesta escolha. Enquanto jogadores do Brasil, República da Irlanda, Irlanda do Norte e Quênia reportaram abandono voluntário, jogadores do Reino Unido e Itália reportaram no geral abandono involuntário. No entanto, fruto da grande identidade atlética revelada pelos ex-jogadores de futebol verificou-se que independentemente do voluntariado do abandono, a generalidade dos estudos revelou dificuldades no momento da transição. Deste modo, o facto de existir pouca vocação para o desenvolvimento de carreiras duais e para o desenvolvimento de uma identidade atlética muito forte, parecem ser fatores comuns aos ex-jogadores de futebol de diferentes. Apesar da literatura apontar outros fatores a serem avaliados, como a satisfação do atleta face à sua carreira ou o tempo necessário para superar o abandono da carreira desportiva, para um entendimento mais amplo da qualidade da transição, os estudos realizados revelaram-se muito restritos neste âmbito (Alfermann et al., 2004; Park et al., 2013).

Relativamente à disponibilidade de recursos no abandono da carreira de jogadores de futebol profissional, este foi um assunto que recebeu pouca atenção nos estudos levados a cabo. No entanto, destacamos a escassez de programas de apoio para o desenvolvimento e termos da carreira desportiva em jogadores de futebol (Dimoula et al., 2013; Stambulova et al., 2009).

Este poderá ser, aliás um dos fatores que mais contribui para as dificuldades do pós-carreira desportiva, independentemente do país ou modalidade desportiva (Dimoula et al., 2013; Stambulova et al., 2009). Deste modo, consideramos que são necessários estudos futuros que potenciem a avaliação do desenvolvimento e término da carreira desportiva de jogadores de futebol de diferentes níveis competitivos e em diferentes países de modo a uma melhor compreensão de quais os fatores transversais a este processo e quais os que são mais influenciados por fatores culturais e sociais.

Face ao exposto, no sentido de uma melhor compreensão sobre o processo de término da carreira de jogadores de futebol de elite em Portugal, nomeadamente no que diz respeito à qualidade do abandono e aos recursos disponíveis para enfrentar esse momento, foi realizado um estudo observacional de abordagem qualitativa e retrospectiva, que integrou 90 ex-jogadores de elite de futebol portugueses. Tendo por base os relatos dos participantes, verificou-se que, à semelhança do que acontece em outros desportos em outros países do sul da Europa (Dimoula et al., 2013), a maioria dos jogadores não detinham mais do que o ensino secundário, tinham uma forte identidade atlética, reformaram-se entre os 36 e os 40 anos de idade, de forma involuntária, sem planeamento prévio para a carreira pós-futebol, contando essencialmente com o apoio psicológico familiar. No entanto, ao invés do verificado em estudos realizados noutros países com jogadores de futebol, os motivos de término de forma involuntária (Sanders & Stevinson, 2017). Consequentemente, a maioria dos participantes reportou dificuldades no pós-carreira, inclusivamente associados a problemas psicológicos e económicos, tal como verificado em estudos anteriores (Cosh et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2014).

No que diz respeito aos fatores que potenciam a adaptação pós-carreira o processo de termos de carreira desportiva, e sabendo que a maioria dos participantes reportou dificuldades no momento de transição, verificou-se que a maioria dos ex-jogadores de futebol reportaram grande dificuldade em conciliar a carreira desportiva com outra carreira dual, fortalecendo deste modo a identidade atlética. Este facto afigura-se de grande importância para o momento de término da carreira desportiva, pois verificou-se em estudos anteriores que elevada imagem atlética é um dos fatores que contribui decisivamente para dificultar o momento de transição e o pós-carreira (Cosh et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2014). Por outro lado, o facto de a maioria dos participantes ter abandonado a carreira de forma involuntária, à semelhança do observado com jogadores de futebol italianos (D'Angelo et al., 2017) e contrariamente ao reportado por jogadores de futebol do Quênia (Rintaugu et al., 2016), constituído como um fator de elevado impacto negativo na adaptação às condições da nova vida, acentuado pela falta de planeamento e pela ausência de programas de apoio formal.

De forma interessante, os resultados deste estudo evidenciaram uma tendência muito elevada para os jogadores de futebol de elite continuarem ligados profissionalmente à modalidade depois do abandono da carreira. Como justificação apresentam a motivação e paixão pelo futebol e pelo seu desenvolvimento (Park et al., 2013). Deste modo, revelaram que o desejo

de transmitir os valores e o conhecimento adquiridos ao longo da sua carreira constituem-se como um novo desafio para os ex-jogadores (Dimoula et al., 2013; Fernandez et al., 2006). Esta tendência parece explicar a rápida aceitação do abandono da carreira reportada pelos participantes deste estudo (menos de um ano), em oposição ao reportado na maior parte dos estudos anteriores (Park et al., 2013).

De forma semelhante ao verificado em estudos anteriores, as estratégias de *coping* seguidas para ultrapassar os momentos de maior stress e dificuldade associados ao momento de transição dizem respeito à prática ou visionamento de atividades desportivas ou intervenção social (Park et al., 2013), sempre suportadas por uma grande contribuição e compreensão familiar que se constitui como o principal agente de suporte ao jogador de futebol (Dimoula et al., 2013; Stambulova et al., 2009).

Por fim, no sentido de uma melhor compreensão dos fatores que condicionam o processo de término da carreira desportiva, recorreremos ao Modelo Ecológico de Desenvolvimento Humano no sentido de avaliar o contributo de diferentes sub-sistemas ao longo dos anos para o processo de término da carreira desportiva. Ao invés do esperado, apesar da evolução económica, social e cultural dos últimos 30 anos, não se verificaram praticamente diferenças ao nível da qualidade do término da carreira, dos motivos associados, bem como ao nível das estratégias e fatores que contribuem como facilitadores deste processo. No entanto, tal como vem sendo reportado em estudos anteriores, verificaram-se melhorias ao nível da escolaridade dos jogadores de futebol, bem como uma diminuição do número de anos como séniores e um aumento do número de anos de formação dos jogadores de futebol. Considerando que estas alterações se devem a alterações em termos dos sub-sistemas micro e meso, as mesmas não são suficientemente fortes para mudar o paradigma de desenvolvimento e pensamento do jogador de elite de futebol. Deste modo, ao nível dos sistemas meso e micro do modelo ecológico do desenvolvimento humano de Bronfenbrenner (1977), evidenciou-se neste estudo a dificuldade sentida no abandono da carreira, constante nas três décadas analisadas explicada pela igualmente constante falta de planeamento. Face ao exposto, e tendo por base os resultados de estudos anteriores (Alfermann et al., 2004; Stambulova et al., 2007), consideramos que a capacidade de planeamento do momento do término da carreira desportiva exerce uma maior influência na qualidade desta transição do que fatores culturais, sociais, ou mesmo relacionados com o aumento da formação escolar dos participantes. Face ao exposto, mais do que a criação de modelos de formação educativa dos jogadores de futebol integrados no contexto escolar regular, devem ser desenvolvidos programas que vão ao encontro das necessidades dos jogadores de futebol, permitindo-lhes, mais do que apreender conhecimento geral, é necessário que os seus programas permitam potenciar as suas capacidades atuais, dotando estes jogadores de ferramentas para a gestão da sua carreira e do término da mesma (Larsen et al., 2014). O desenvolvimento de programas de base tutorial alicerçados nas atividades de empresários de futebol ou de instituições intervenientes na modalidade (escolas, clubes,

federações, ligas de futebol, gestores de carreiras, managers ou outros), permitirão dotar os jogadores de uma maior consciência sobre o seu momento de término da carreira desportiva e o desenvolvimento de um plano de desenvolvimento pessoal associado. Este processo é crucial para potenciar o término de carreira num processo mais agradável e associado a menos problemas (Stambulova et al., 2009).



## 7. Conclusões

As principais conclusões retiradas dos diferentes estudos contemplados na presente investigação foram:

A pesquisa realizada na temática do abandono da carreira de jogadores de futebol profissional de várias nacionalidades tem realçado os problemas inerentes a esta transição, à semelhança do que acontece em outras modalidades desportivas. No entanto, a investigação tem negligenciado a recolha de alguma informação relativa à caracterização da população alvo e à qualidade da transição e recursos disponíveis.

O processo de abandono da carreira de jogadores de futebol profissional portugueses é caracterizada pela manutenção de uma forte identidade atlética, dificuldades de adaptação a uma nova vida, uma nova carreira associada ao futebol, falta de planeamento pré-reforma, uma ausência de programas de apoio formal e um apoio psicológico proveniente da rede familiar e de amigos. Apesar desta transição seguir um padrão semelhante ao de outras modalidades em culturas do sul da Europa, esta apresenta algumas particularidades, nomeadamente um abandono da carreira mais tardio e uma carreira mais longa.

A qualidade do abandono da carreira de jogadores de futebol profissional em Portugal e os recursos que lhes são disponibilizados não tem sofrido alterações relevantes ao longo das últimas três décadas. Uma diferença encontrada entre as três décadas analisadas foi o nível de educação dos atletas, que tem vindo a evoluir. Não obstante, o planeamento do abandono da carreira atlética continua a manter-se quase inexistente, assim como as dificuldades sentidas neste processo.

As conclusões deste trabalho vêm enfatizar a necessidade de realização de programas de avaliação em diferentes modalidades e de forma contextualizada de modo a uma melhor compreensão dos fatores que determinam a qualidade do pós-carreira desportiva. Verificou-se ainda que a falta de planeamento no desenvolvimento da carreira desportiva e no planeamento do seu término têm consequências gravíssimas para o modo como os jogadores de futebol encaram este momento.



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# **ANEXOS**

## **Protocolo entrevista e questionário demográfico**





## UNIVERSIDADE da BEIRA INTERIOR

António Manuel Morais Carapinha, aluno da Universidade da Beira Interior, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, doutorando no Departamento de Ciências do Desporto, encontro-me atualmente a fazer trabalho de investigação na área do futebol profissional em Portugal, mais concretamente sobre a transição de carreira do jogador de futebol profissional. Venho por este meio solicitar a sua colaboração numa entrevista que será realizada de acordo com um guião elaborado e validado para o efeito, juntamente com um questionário demográfico que é igualmente preenchido pelo entrevistado. A recolha de dados será registada/gravada por uma câmara de vídeo embora, para todos os efeitos, o trabalho esteja sujeito a absoluta confidencialidade, sendo dado a conhecer apenas aos inquiridos. A importância da sua colaboração como ex-atleta profissional de futebol no testemunho de vida é fundamental para esta investigação. No final do trabalho, será possível criar um modelo/proposta de um sistema de apoio aos profissionais da área, numa transição de carreira mais equilibrada e saudável. Agradeço que assine este documento como confirmação de que está informado e concorda com o que lhe foi solicitado como forma de colaboração na realização desta investigação.

O entrevistado

O Investigador

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Doutorando António Carapinha

# Protocolo Entrevista

## Transição de Carreira Desportiva no futebol de elite em Portugal

### I Qualidade do abandono de carreira

#### P1-Razões para o término de carreira e voluntariedade na decisão

1. Em que circunstâncias deixou o futebol profissional?
2. Foi fácil esta decisão? Porquê?
3. O que o levou a tomar essa decisão?
4. Alguém o incentivou a tomar essa decisão?

#### P2- Identidade atlética / outras atividades na carreira

5. Em que outras atividades ou papéis estava envolvido durante a sua carreira profissional? (Família, sociedade, política, outras atividades.). Desenvolveu outra profissão/atividade durante a sua carreira desportiva?
6. Quais foram algumas das suas preocupações imediatas que ponderou quando se retirou do futebol profissional?
7. Teve alguns comportamentos que achasse como sendo negativos e que não o favoreceram na transição de carreira?
8. Que comportamentos acredita que influenciaram positivamente a sua transição de carreira desportiva?
9. Experimentou algumas perturbações de ordem mental ou física? Procurou ajuda de um conselheiro ou outro profissional?
10. Quais foram os fatores ou motivações que o levaram a optar por uma carreira ligada ao futebol profissional?
11. Qual é a perceção que as outras pessoas tinham em relação a si? (As outras pessoas viam-no principalmente como um atleta?)
12. A maioria dos seus amigos eram atletas?

13. Da imagem que tem de si mesmo, percebe-se maioritariamente como um atleta?

14. Qual era a importância do desporto na sua vida?

15. Comparativamente a outras atividades, o desporto ainda ocupa uma parte significativa do seu pensamento? (ativo, passivo, indiferente)

16. Alguma vez abdicou de algo pela sua carreira desportiva?

17. Sente-se realizado com as suas conquistas?

### **P3- Carreira / desenvolvimento pessoal**

18. Durante a sua carreira, como é que as suas perspetivas, atitudes e crenças influenciaram a transição de carreira no desporto profissional para o seu papel atual? (momentos e intensidade)

19. Há quanto tempo terminou a sua carreira no futebol profissional?

20. Que ações se verificaram entre o fim de carreira desportiva no futebol profissional e a transição para uma nova carreira ligada ao futebol profissional?

21. Sente que as competências adquiridas ao longo da sua carreira de atleta profissional foram transferidas para a sua carreira após o término da carreira desportiva? Consegue identifica-las?

22. Quais foram as experiências/adaptações mais difíceis que teve de enfrentar após a retirada do futebol profissional?

23. Quais foram as dificuldades ou necessidades que sentiu relativamente à sua transição de carreira?

24. O que aprendeu como atleta profissional que o tenha ajudado na sua vida após a retirada do futebol?

### **P4- Mudanças de vida**

25. O que precisou após o termo da sua carreira profissional para dar sentido e satisfação à sua vida? Do que sentiu falta?

26. Dadas as suas experiências e as experiências de outros jogadores de futebol profissional, como descreveria uma transição de carreira desportiva com sucesso do futebol para a “vida regular”?

### **P5- Tempo para aceitar o abandono**

27. Quanto tempo demorou até se conformar com a sua decisão de se retirar do futebol profissional?

## **II**

### **Recursos para o abandono de carreira**

### **P6- Estratégias de coping**

28. Quem contribuiu para a preparação da sua transição de carreira após o futebol profissional?

29. Como é que surgiu esse apoio? Em que medida sentiu que esse apoio foi útil?

### **P7- Apoio psicológico**

30. Quem o apoiou ou ajudou mais durante a sua transição de carreira desportiva? (1 – Discordo totalmente; 2 – Discordo; 3 – Discordo ligeiramente; 4 – Não concordo nem discordo; 5 – Concordo ligeiramente; 6 – Concordo; 7 – Concordo totalmente)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Treinador							
Companheiros equipa							
Familiares							
Amigos							
Agentes desportivos							
Associações							
Outros: _____							

### **P8- Planeamento do abandono**

31. Quando é que começa normalmente a preparação para a vida após o futebol profissional, na maioria dos jogadores? E Para si?

32. Quanto tempo dedicou ao pensamento relativo à sua retirada do futebol profissional e transição de carreira, durante a sua carreira profissional? E Em que medida é que as preocupações com o futuro estiveram presentes no decorrer da carreira de futebol profissional? (momentos e intensidade das preocupações)

33. Quando considera que deveria ter início a preparação para a vida após uma carreira no futebol profissional?

#### **P9- Planeamento do abandono**

34. Na sua opinião, quem deveria ser conselheiro pela preparação dos atletas de elite para sua transição de carreira do desporto?

35. Tinha conhecimento de serviços de transição e apoios, e utilizou quando era jogador de futebol profissional? Sim ou não? Em caso afirmativo, quais?

36. O que pensa do apoio das organizações nacionais do desporto na assistência à transição de carreira dos atletas?

37. Caso tivesse tido a oportunidade de participar nos programas de apoio à transição de carreira, que benefícios esperava ter obtido?

38. Consegue identificar os riscos ou limitações que envolvem um programa de apoio?

#### **Última Questão**

39. Se tivesse oportunidade de fazer tudo de novo, faria alguma coisa diferente relativamente à sua carreira profissional, retirada do desporto ou transição de carreira? Se sim, o quê?

## Questionário Demográfico

**Completar este questionário demográfico é voluntário e deverá demorar aproximadamente 5 minutos. Por favor lembre-se que não existem respostas certas ou erradas. Se tiver qualquer questão, sinta-se à vontade para interpelar o investigador para clarificação e sinta-se à vontade para incluir qualquer informação adicional que considere que possa ajudar-nos a compreender melhor as experiências de transição da carreira desportiva dos jogadores de futebol.**

Número de Identificação \_\_\_\_\_

### Informação Demográfica

40. Idade Mês e ano de nascimento:

41. Ocupação Atual:

42. Raça/Etnicidade:

43. Estado Civil:

44. Habilitações literárias e/ou técnicas (selecione todas as completadas):

a) Primário

b) Preparatório

c) Secundário

d) Superior

e) Pós graduações

f) Cursos ligados ao desporto (árbitro; dirigente; treinador/nível

g) Mestrado

h) Doutoramento



### **Passado Desportivo**

45. Ano de abandono da carreira desportiva:

46. Com que idade se retirou?

47. Quantos anos jogou nos escalões de formação?

48. Quantos anos jogou futebol profissional?

### **Qualidade do abandono de carreira**

49. Qual a causa principal para o seu abandono de carreira? Escolha a indicada:

Livre escolha	
Idade	
Lesão	
Rejeição	
Outras	

50. Qual o nível de satisfação no momento do abandono de carreira? Escolha a indicada:

Fácil	
Regular	
Difícil	

### **Recursos para o abandono de carreira**

51. Diga quais as principais ocupações que teve após o momento do abandono de carreira.


52. Refira quem o ajudou a ultrapassar o momento do abandono de carreira.


53. Durante a sua carreira planeou o momento do abandono? Sim ou não?

Sim	
Não	

**Obrigado pela sua participação no estudo de pesquisa**