

Female coaches in Latin America: A qualitative systematic review of barriers, strategies, and experiences in sports leadership

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

**Support** - Personal doctoral project.  
**Review Stage at time of this submission** - Preliminary searches.  
**Conflicts of interest** - None declared.  
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**Amendments** - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 15 October 2025 and was last updated on 15 October 2025.

INTRODUCTION

**Review question / Objective** What are the barriers, opportunities, and strategies documented in the scientific literature on equality and employability of female coaches in Latin America?

**Rationale** Despite this progress, Latin America continues to show limited representation of women in leadership positions, particularly in coaching roles. Although multiple programs and policies have been implemented in the sports field to promote gender equality, structural inequalities persist that hinder equal access to decision-making positions within the sports context (Avendaño et al., 2008). In this regard, there is a need to understand and highlight the existing inequalities surrounding female coaches. Various studies have documented the multiple barriers that have shaped their professional careers. Structural barriers have been identified, such as the absence of inclusive policies; sociocultural barriers, including gender

stereotypes; interpersonal barriers related to work environments characterized by discrimination and harassment; and individual barriers arising from the need to balance professional and personal life (Hinojosa-Alcalde et al., 2023; LaVoi, 2016). Likewise, it is important to examine the factors that sustain the underrepresentation of women in elite positions (LaVoi & Silva-Breen, 2022), as well as those contributing to their low media visibility and limited presence in sports federations (Vega et al., 2019). Furthermore, it is necessary to thoroughly analyze the programs, strategies, and public policies designed to promote gender equality in sports and to provide tools that enhance women’s employability in leadership roles, particularly within the Latin American context. Despite the growth in scientific production on this topic (Korsakas et al., 2024), the percentage of female representation in coaching positions remains low, suggesting that progress is still insufficient. In addition, understanding and documenting the experiences of women who have worked or currently work as coaches is essential to make

their voices visible and to recognize the social, cultural, and organizational factors that have influenced their professional development.

Given this situation, and considering the scarcity of scientific studies in the Latin American context, we propose a systematic review of the existing literature to identify, analyze, and synthesize the barriers, strategies, experiences, and challenges that impact the employability and professional development of female coaches in Latin America. This review aims to contribute to the promotion of equal opportunities, the diversification of leadership models in sports, and the strengthening of women's roles as agents of change in a historically unequal society (LaVoi, 2016; Levi et al., 2023). Ultimately, this research seeks to generate a solid empirical foundation for understanding gender dynamics in sports and to propose recommendations that help transform sports environments into more inclusive, equitable, and egalitarian spaces for women.

**Condition being studied** This systematic review aims to identify, analyze, and synthesize the scientific literature on the barriers, opportunities, and strategies related to gender equality and employability of female coaches in Latin America. Through a systematic analysis of qualitative, quantitative, and previous review studies, this research seeks to generate evidence that contributes to the development of policies and strategies that foster the equitable participation of women in coaching roles.

## METHODS

**Search strategy** The following search terms were used: "mujeres entrenadoras", "género y deporte", "liderazgo deportivo femenino", "barreras de género", "empleabilidad en el deporte", "igualdad de género", and "América Latina".

In addition, Boolean operators were employed to construct search equations allowing for comprehensive retrieval of relevant studies addressing the research problem:

("Mujer entrenadora" OR "mujeres entrenadoras" OR "female coach" OR "women coaches") AND ("América Latina" OR "Latin America") AND ("igualdad" OR "gender equality" OR "empleabilidad" OR "employment").

**Participant or population** Female coaches in organized sports across Latin America.

**Intervention** A systematic review of qualitative, quantitative, and prior review studies addressing

the barriers, strategies, and experiences of female coaches in Latin America.

**Comparator** In this systematic review, comparators are considered conceptually and as reported in the included studies. The following types of comparison will be examined:

By gender: Female coaches versus male coaches, to identify differences in employability, opportunities, barriers, or professional recognition. By country or region: Comparison between Latin America and Europe to analyze cultural, social, or institutional factors influencing gender equality.

**Study designs to be included** Qualitative studies, quantitative studies, and previous systematic reviews.

### Eligibility criteria

Inclusion criteria: Articles published in Spanish, English, or Portuguese.

Academic papers, doctoral theses, reports from international organizations, and grey literature. Studies focusing on women coaches, gender equality, and employability in Latin America. Exclusion criteria:

Studies focusing on athletes with no relation to coaching roles.

Opinion pieces or essays lacking empirical data.

**Information sources** Databases: Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, Scielo, SpringerLink, SportDiscus, ScienceDirect, ResearchGate, UAB Library, and Google Scholar.

**Main outcome(s)** Identified barriers: Cultural, social, institutional, or personal factors limiting women coaches' participation and employability. Facilitators and opportunities: Strategies, policies, or programs that promote gender equality and employability among women coaches.

Employability indicators: Participation in coaching roles, hierarchical levels, recruitment, salary, or job stability.

Perceptions and experiences: Reported opinions and lived experiences of women coaches.

Regional or sport-specific trends: Differences by country, sport type, competition level, or time period.

**Additional outcome(s)** Contextual and sociocultural factors. Professional visibility and recognition. Impact of public programs and policies. Innovations and coping strategies. Temporal and sport-specific trends.

**Data management** All identified articles will be stored in *Rayyan* and *Zotero*.

A database will be created in *Excel* including: author, year, country, study type, language, title, objective, abstract, methodology, target population, findings, source, and quality assessment.

Data extraction and quality appraisal will be conducted independently by two reviewers. Any discrepancies will be resolved by consensus or through a third reviewer.

#### **Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis**

CASP

MMAT.

**Strategy of data synthesis** Initial coding: All relevant findings from the included studies will be coded using structured templates in *Excel*. Concepts related to barriers, opportunities, strategies, experiences, leadership perception, and sociocultural factors affecting female coaches will be coded.

Subtheme development: Codes will be grouped into related categories to generate subthemes reflecting recurrent patterns in the literature. Special attention will be paid to variations by country, sport discipline, competition level, and institutional context.

Abstraction into central themes: Subthemes will be integrated into overarching themes that synthesize evidence on barriers, strategies, facilitators, employability indicators, and experiences of female coaches.

Narrative synthesis: A narrative synthesis will be developed to describe the findings in a structured and comparative manner, emphasizing similarities, differences, and emerging trends. Textual examples and quotations from the original studies will be included to strengthen interpretation.

Confidence assessment in findings: MMAT and CASP checklists will be applied to assess coherence, relevance, sufficiency, and methodological rigor of the included studies, thereby providing a confidence rating for the synthesized evidence.

#### **Subgroup analysis**

By country or region.

By sport discipline.

By coaching or competition level.

By study type.

#### **Sensitivity analysis**

Exclusion based on methodological quality.

Exclusion by study type.

Evaluation of extreme or outlier findings.

Analysis by time period.

#### **Country(ies) involved** Spain.

**Keywords** Female coaches, gender and sport, female sports leadership, gender barriers, employability in sport, gender equality.

#### **Dissemination plans**

Publication in an indexed journal.

Presentation at academic conferences and seminars.

#### **Contributions of each author**

Author 1 - Viviana Marcela Diaz Guayazán - Database search and drafting of the systematic review manuscript.

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Author 2 - Samuel Jose Hernandez Almanza - Methodology, data analysis, and formulation of conclusions.

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