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## Adaptation, integration and acculturation of foreign athletes in sports organizations in Romania and France

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### Abstract

We live in an increasingly globalized and culturally diverse society, in which individuals with different cultural backgrounds, different education, different personalities and different values must work together and achieve optimal results. Moreover, these cultural differences are noticeable even within a group of people of the same nationality. At the same time, lately there are more and more bicultural individuals, who belong simultaneously to different cultures. Nowadays, sport has an enormous impact on society, being an extremely popular phenomenon on a global scale and which has become a business in which huge sums are spent. Sport can have both a unifying effect, bringing together different individuals, but at the same time it can emphasize cultural differences and deep ethnic differences. All these arguments justify the increased interest in multiculturalism in general, and in multiculturalism in sport in particular. Using SPSS software, this study proposes a quantitative comparative analysis of how the country in which athletes evolve, namely Romania and France, influences adaptation, self-confidence, team integration and market share of athletes.

**Keywords:** sport management, multiculturalism, adaptation, integration, aculturalisation, cross cultural skills

### 1. Introduction

Cultural barriers can cause problems of misunderstanding and that is why it is very important to understand why some people behave better in multicultural situations than others [1].

As a result of immigrants, many societies have become multicultural, and thus individuals with a different cultural past are forced to live and work together in a diverse society. In addition, in many cases, these ethnic groups are not equal in numerical, economic or political power. Moreover, such differences in power lead to the creation of minority groups [2]. Even within a group of people with the same nationality there are cultural differences [3]. Each individual possesses a certain pattern of thinking, feeling and manifestations acquired during life [4], which are represented in the culture of the social group.

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The desire to promote the country through sports success has led to an increase in the number of migrations in sports and an increase in the number of multicultural teams [5]. An increasing number of athletes are migrating to other countries for a variety of reasons [6]. Relocation of individuals can be short-term, temporary or permanent and may or may not include return to the country of origin [6]. For athletes who need to evolve in a new country, the biggest challenges are associated with adapting to a new cultural context while maintaining a high level of performance, but also a general well-being [7] Ryba et al 2020 [8].

Sports success in multicultural teams is based on the adaptation of athletes to a constantly changing climate environment [9-10]. Achieving sports performance by multicultural teams involves the transformation by coaches and administrative staff of a group of culturally and ethnically different individuals into a united group [11]. Moreover, the stakeholders do not understand very well the impact of cultural diversity [12].

Specialized studies emphasize the importance of relationships with coaches, colleagues, managers and family as a form of social support during career and transition to a new team or culture [13-22].

Other studies deepen the issue of accommodation with other training cycles and play styles [23, 24], understanding cultural values and norms [25-27], making friends [28] and last but not least the issue of social marginalization, exclusion or conflict [27, 29].

The cultural and social influences of athletes also extend to the relationships they have with teammates, coaches or club management [12]. Darapatova-Hruzewicz [12] emphasizes that adaptation means making many compromises, losing what you want and sometimes giving up even what you want to be. Moreover, the same study states that when an athlete frequently crosses the borders of a country, this can push him to loneliness. Ryba et al [6] encourage studies related to athlete migration. Further studies on gender and cultural diversity are recommended [30-32].

The aim of this paper is to highlight the particularities of adapting athletes to a new cultural environment and especially the particularities of adapting athletes in Romania and France. Moreover, this paper aims to present solutions that facilitate the adaptation and integration of athletes to a new cultural environment.

## **2. Theoretical background**

Berry [2] proposes several concepts to define the degree of adaptation of individuals to a new culture. Assimilation (acculturation) is the phenomenon that occurs when individuals do not want to preserve their cultural identity of origin, but seek daily interactions with other cultures. Integration is the phenomenon that occurs when individuals show an interest both in the culture of origin and in the interactions with other cultural groups. Basically, a degree of cultural integrity is maintained and at the same time the desire to be part of the new social and cultural environment is manifested. In terms of integration, this is easier in multicultural societies where the values of cultural diversity are promoted and where there is respect for cultural differences [33-35]. At the opposite pole, different from assimilation and integration are the notions of marginalization and separation. Marginalization is manifested when individuals show a lack of interest in maintaining the culture of origin and very little interest in relationships with individuals in the new culture. This phenomenon often leads to exclusion and even discrimination. Finally, separation is the phenomenon that occurs when individuals keep their home culture at all costs, avoiding interactions with individuals from other cultures.

In addition to these concepts, there is another term used very often when talking about adapting to a new culture. The term bicultural is used to refer to assimilation (acculturation) and implies that the individual belongs simultaneously to two different cultures [36-39]. This concept of biculturalism is very similar to the concept of integration. Another concept used in the literature is the concept of interculturalisation. Clanet [40] describes this concept as the process by which individuals from different cultures interact.

Returning to the concept of integration, it generally brings positive effects within groups, while avoiding negative effects such as separation or marginalization [41-43]. Integration involves a balance between the culture of origin and the culture in which individuals operate [44]. This is more visible in sports teams, where the coach must know very well all the details about the players but also about the group as a whole (relationships, differences between players, ethnic issues, religion, etc.) to make the most decisions good during the game, but especially in critical and tense moments [45]. A study conducted by Ward in 2013 [44] reveals that a large proportion of New Zealand immigrants prefer integration over acculturation. It is also highlighted that the majority groups prefer assimilation, while the minority aspires to integration. Another relevant point is that integration does not always lead to adaptation.

### *2.1. Cultural transition and acculturation*

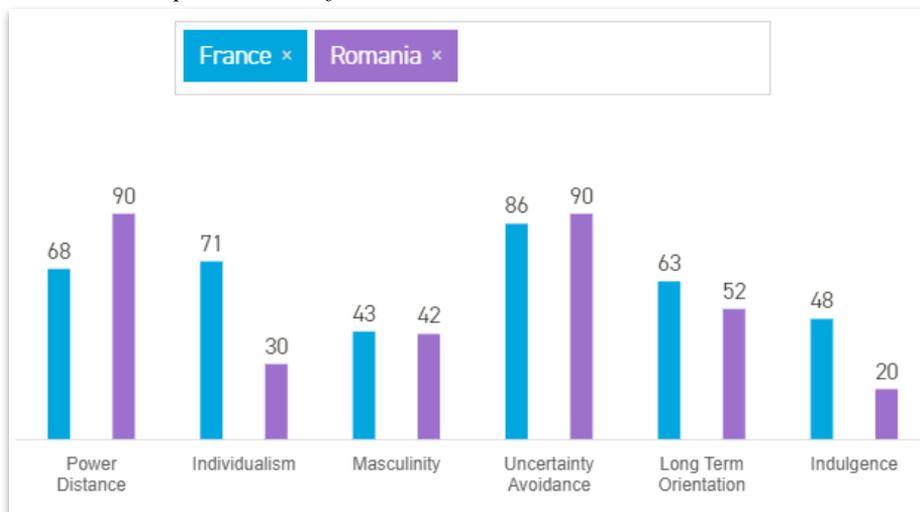
The interest of research in the field of acculturation has emerged as a result of the increasing number of migrations in various professional spheres around the world [46,47]. The process of cultural transition can be summarized as a sum of relationships between the social context specific to the area and the development needs of the immigrant athlete [6]. Cultural transition and acculturation involve certain challenges for immigrant athletes (unusual both in and out of the field), involving an emotional, cognitive, behavioral and identity adjustment [6]. The cultural transition has 3 stages: pre-transition, acute acculturation and sociocultural adaptation.

Acculturation has been defined as a process of cultural and psychological changes in practices, values, and identity that occurs as a result of long-term contact with individuals from different cultural groups [34,47]. Acculturation is seen as a mix of social, cultural and political contexts that appear in the process of cultural transition [6]. Acculturation is an ongoing process that occurs through contacts among diverse cultural groups [34]. Intercultural exchanges between immigrant athletes and members of the destination community can take the form of the exchange of ideas, information, values and practices [6]. On the one hand, acculturation is a complex process as many immigrant athletes face racism and exclusion, and on the other hand, athletes may feel disconnected from their home community, experiencing marginalization, identity crisis or stress [6]. The process of acculturation in elite sports refers to the acquisition of common practices and habits specific to the country and area in which the athlete operates [20,48,49]. Schinke and Mc Gannon [49] state that there are 3 ways to manage the acculturation of immigrant athletes: acculturation as the sole responsibility of the athlete, limited mutual acculturation and deep mutual acculturation. Of these strategies the most beneficial is the deep mutual acculturation as this implies a deep social integration for the athlete in the new environment. Berry [2,50] developed a two-dimensional model of acculturation. This model describes different strategies based on the interaction of individuals who want to preserve their cultural identity but at the same time want to interact with other cultures. Acculturation can be two-dimensional or one-dimensional [6, 20]. Two-dimensional acculturation involves an effort on the part of both parties involved, including colleagues and coaches, who could initiate various cultural exchange activities. One-dimensional

acculturation means that newcomers can manage on their own without the help of their hosts, which leads to racism, exclusion or harmful stereotypes. Moreover, one-dimensional acculturation can lead to identity crises, depression, lack of performance, return home or end of sports career [6]. For example, 2/3 Brazilian footballers return home less than a year after leaving the country [51]. Several works describe the concept of acculturating environment. This environment refers to the intentions of the host culture in relation to newcomers. This type of environment practically targets the way newcomers are received [6,20,52]. Without a minimum of effort to culturally include foreigners, sports organizations will limit themselves to athletes only from their country of origin [6].

Ryba and Stambulova [53] defined the concept of transnational athletes to describe athletes who build their careers beyond the borders of the country in which they were born. Athlete migration can be divided into 3 categories: mobility, permanence and voluntary mobility [54]. Recent studies on the role of integration in sport indicate that the practice of organized sport by young people can be associated with behavior that promotes intercultural adaptation for both immigrants and the host population, thus promoting integration and multiculturalism [6]. The adaptation of sports immigrants depends on the quality of preparation for relocation, motivation, adaptation efforts but also on the desire of locals to help immigrants [6].

## 2.2. The cultural peculiarities of Romania and France



**Figure 1:** Comparative analysis of the cultural dimensions between France and Romania  
**Source:** Hofstede Insights Country Comparison

The best-known tool for analysing cultural dimensions was developed by the Dutch professor Geert Hofstede, who studied, based on a survey, the organizational behaviour of several dozen countries and managed to identify a set of 6 fundamental variables (dimensions), which differentiates one culture from another [55]: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation versus short-term orientation and indulgence.

The cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede [4] can be used to describe and understand the differences between cultures. Khomutova [13] states that the differences between individualistic and collectivist cultures are reflected in sports organizations.

Moreover, Khomutova [13] states that the coaches of some basketball teams in Central Europe prefer players who come from collectivist cultures and limit the number of athletes who come from individualistic cultures.

The population of a country is a determinant of success for the Summer Olympics [56,57] but also in sports associations [58]. Another factor that can influence the performance of sports associates is the Gross Domestic Product, because it is an economic indicator that suggests the potential degree of investment for the development of elite sports [59,60]. In addition, another study states that the population, football tradition and the advantage of their own field positively influence the performance of sports teams [61].

Regarding the scores of the cultural dimensions between Romania and France, it is found that there are some similarities, but also some considerable differences. Thus, both Romania and France have similar scores in terms of masculinity/femininity, both societies being feminine rather than masculine. Appropriate scores were also noted in terms of avoiding uncertainty, with both companies avoiding the unknown. Greater differences are noticeable in terms of long-term orientation, the French organizing their future plans better than the Romanians. There are very big differences in terms of power distance, indulgence, and the biggest differences are in terms of individualism. In this sense, French athletes want to stand out and can distract the ideal team atmosphere. On the other hand, athletes who come from a collectivist society, as is the case of Romanians, they tend to be more cooperative and put themselves in the service of the team [13]. The similarities could be caused by the fact that both societies are Latin origin, while the differences could be caused by the historical past or economic development. As for the Romanians, the indulgence and reduced individualism can be attributed to the influence of communism or the influence on the Romanian provinces of some empires. It is well known that communist societies are distinguished by collectivism, and communism entails the restriction of certain rights [62]. At the same time, the score in terms of individualism could be explained in terms of economic development. The more economically developed a country is, the more individualistic it is [4].

### *2.3. Statistics on multiculturalism in sport*

More than any other sport, football highlights globalization. Every two years, continental or world championships bring together countries from all over the world and create a phenomenon that is followed by billions of spectators. A research analyses the national origins of the players of the 24 teams participating in Euro 2016. Romania could be considered a champion because it is the only national team that does not have any player of foreign origin in the nucleus. Regarding the other national teams, all European teams, with one exception (Romania), have players of foreign origin. Russia has a goalkeeper of Brazilian origin, Portugal has a midfielder of Angolan origin, Spain has a player with Japanese roots, Italy has a striker of Egyptian origin, the Czech Republic has a player Ethiopian, the Poles have a defender of Brazilian origin, even Hungary has a Serbian striker and another Czech. The only team among the 24 participating in the Euro that has all the players from one origin is Romania. All the “tricolors” were born in Romania to Romanian parents [63]. Euro 2016 is a championship that stands out for its diversity and multiculturalism. The team with the most foreign players is France with 15 players of other origins [64]. Then, Belgium is not far with 13 players of other origins and Germany completes the multicultural podium with 10 sportsmen of foreign origins, 2 of whom are of Turkish origin.

To illustrate the cultural diversity, in the table below are presented more data on the number and percentage of foreign players in the top 4 football leagues in France and

Romania. These data were collected in December 2020 from the transfermarkt.de database, which is one of the largest and oldest sources of information in football [60]. Football was chosen because it is the most watched sport and because it has one of the most complex databases to illustrate multiculturalism and cultural diversity. It should be noted that in the third and fourth leagues in Romania the number of series is 10 and 42, respectively, they are not very attractive from a financial point of view for foreign athletes. Moreover, these leagues are semi-professional or amateur and do not have a centralized database.

**Table 1:** Statistics on cultural diversity in football leagues in France and Romania

| Country | Football league |            |               |            |               |            |               |            |
|---------|-----------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|
|         | First league    |            | Second league |            | Third league  |            | Fourth league |            |
|         | No of players   | Percentage | No of players | Percentage | No of players | Percentage | No of players | Percentage |
| Romania | 506             | 32.2%      | 97            | 14,9%      | -             | -          | -             | -          |
| France  | 571             | 48,5%      | 205           | 36,3%      | 98            | 21,4%      | 336           | 20,6%      |

**Source:** transfermarkt.de

### 3. Research methodology

The most widespread and well-known method of analysing quantitative data is SPSS (the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) being used mainly by researchers in the field of social sciences [65]. SPSS is a complex program, but at the same time it is an easy-to-use program. The software is able to provide any type of statistical analysis used in the social sciences, business or any other scientific disciplines [66] and different ways of viewing data. With the development of technology and the advent of personal computers and laptops, more and more people had access to this software, and researchers have specialized in using it. The software is used in a wide range of fields: market research, opinion polls, public health, administration, education, institutional research, risk management, business intelligence, financial services, sales, telecommunications, insurance. SPSS helps to use a large volume of data to predict and assist in decision making [67,68].

#### 3.1. Respondents

The number of respondents to this questionnaire is 150. They are foreign athletes who evolve in multicultural organizations in France or Romania (having a nationality other than French or Romanian). Thus, 79 of these respondents evolve in Romania and 71 evolve in France. Of these, 44 are female and 106 males, from this point of view the sample is quite unbalanced. Regarding the level of education of the respondents, 60 graduated high school, 58 bachelor's degree, 31 master's degree and one respondent graduated the doctoral study cycle. The sports that the respondent's practice is diverse: football, basketball, handball, volleyball, ice hockey and rugby (in order of number of answers). The level of athletes is also the first league in the two countries, being considered professional athletes, but also athletes who participate in semi-amateur and amateur championships. Questionnaire respondents come from 49 countries, from Europe, Africa, Asia, North America and South America. In addition, 5 of the respondents have dual citizenship, being bicultural. Thus, the countries of origin of the respondents are as follows: Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, China, Colombia, Croatia, Congo, Czech Republic, France,

Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Lithuania, Cape Verde, Northern Macedonia, Madagascar, Mali, Martinique, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Romania, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Tunisia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ukraine, Uruguay and the United States of America. It should be noted that Romanian citizens evolve in France, while French citizens evolve in Romania. Another important aspect to note is the fact that a significant number of athletes who train in France come from French-speaking countries. On the other hand, there are also athletes in Romania who come from the Republic of Moldova and who know the Romanian language, but also athletes of Hungarian nationality who evolve in areas where ethnic Hungarians are the majority.

#### 4. Results

Thus, through SPSS, 4 tests were performed in order to analyse how the country in which the athletes evolve, Romania or France, influences the degree of cultural adaptation, the level of self-confidence, team integration and market share of foreign players playing in these two countries. To perform these tests, respondents responded to 4 statements on a Likert scale from 1 (to a very small extent) to 5 (to a very large extent). To test the influence between the country and the level of adaptation, the athletes responded to the statement *"I feel culturally adapted to the club I play at the moment."* To test the influence between the country and the level of confidence, the athletes responded to the statement *"Since I came to this club the level of self-confidence has increased."* To test the correlation between the country and team integration, the athletes answered the question *"I collaborate effectively with other colleagues and staff members and thus I feel integrated in the team."* Finally, to test the correlation between the country and the market share, the athletes responded to the statement *"Since I came to this club, my market value has increased."*

Below are the contingency tables, Chi Square test tables, and analysis of these results.

##### TEST 1

**Table 2:** The correlation between the country in which the athletes perform and the level of adaptation to a cultural context

Country where the athlete is playing now \* Adaptation to cultural context Crosstabulation

| Count                                    |         | Adaptation to cultural context |          |         |       |                | Total |
|--|---------|--------------------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|-------|
|  |         | Strongly disagree              | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |       |
| Country where the athlete is playing now | Romania | 1                              | 4        | 11      | 32    | 31             | 79    |
|  | France  | 0                              | 2        | 8       | 40    | 21             | 71    |
| Total                                    |         | 1                              | 6        | 19      | 72    | 52             | 150   |

Source: Output SPSS

The results of the Chi Square test for the correlation between the country in which the athletes perform and the level of adaptation to a cultural context can be found in table 3.

**Table 3:** Chi-Square test

|                    | Value              | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|--------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 4.539 <sup>a</sup> | 4  | .338                              |
| N of Valid Cases   | 150                |    |                                   |

Although a link is identified between the country in which the athletes evolve and the integration within the team, there is no correlation in the country in which the athletes evolve and the adaptation to the cultural context. The asymptotic significance coefficient is higher than the minimum allowed limit of 0.05, so there is no correlation between the two.

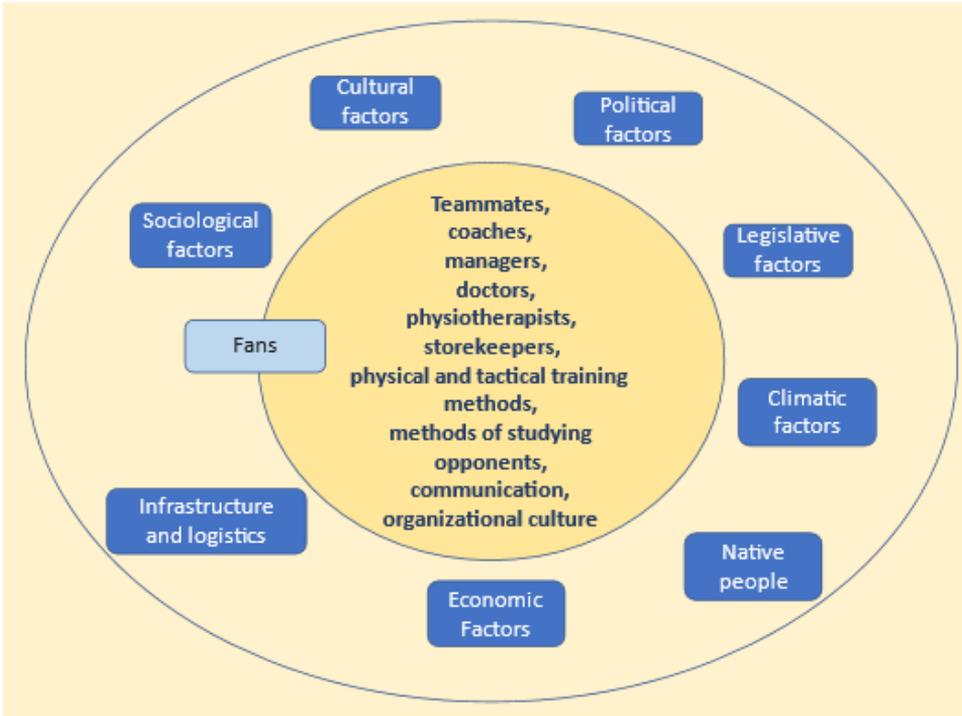
This lack of correlation suggests that it is not so much the country in which they play that matters, but rather the cultural area. As for Romania and France, these are two countries made up of several cultural areas with different particularities. It is totally different for an athlete to evolve in a city in Romania on the border of the European Union, in a city that has been under Austro-Hungarian rule for several hundred years or in an area where the predominant language is Hungarian and where temperatures frequently reach -30 degrees Celsius. The same goes for France, where it is different to evolve in the region of the Basque Country in France, in French Flanders or in Alsace.

Just as there can be multicultural teams that have a significant percentage of local players, there are also multicultural teams that do not have a large number of local players. For example, in January 2021, there are Romanian football teams such as CFR Cluj which has a percentage of 45% foreign players or FC Botoșani which has a percentage of 48% foreign players. As for the French football teams, there are teams such as Olympique Lyon where the percentage of foreign players is 72%, Paris Saint Germain where the percentage of foreign players is 68% or OSC Lille which has a percentage of foreign players of 57% [69].

Although it seems a paradox, often within these teams the locals must also integrate into the particularities of such a multicultural group. In such teams, it is not so much the country in which they play that is relevant, but rather the adaptation to local culture and integration into such a culturally diverse group. In such teams with very few local players, it is obvious that the role of national culture is very low. Thus, a distinction can be made between a micro climate of adaptation and a macro climate of adaptation of the athlete in a foreign country.

The factors that most influence the adaptation of athletes are: teammates, coaches, leaders, doctors, masseurs, physiotherapists, storekeepers, administrative staff, methods of physical training, tactics, analysis of opponents, methods of communication, organizational culture. These are the factors that influence the integration within the team and under the influence of which the athlete (depending on the level of performance at which he evolves) spends the most time.

Beyond the micro-climate of adaptation is the macro-climate, which is a series of factors that in turn influence cultural adaptation, but influence very little to no integration within the team. One of the factors at the border is the supporters who influence the adaptation and integration of athletes. The behaviour of the fans can make them integrate more easily into the team. Factors that are part of the macro adaptation climate would be: political, economic, social, legislative, sociological, climatic factors, religion, infrastructure and logistics or locals.



**Figure 2:** The micro-climate and the macro-climate of integration and adaptation of athletes within multicultural organizations

TEST 2

**Table 4:** Correlation between the country in which the athletes perform and the level of confidence  
Country where the athlete is playing now \* Self-confidence Crosstabulation

| Count                                    |         | Self-confidence   |          |         |       |                | Total |
|--|---------|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|-------|
|  |         | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |       |
| Country where the athlete is playing now | Romania | 1                 | 8        | 22      | 18    | 30             | 79    |
|  | France  | 1                 | 2        | 18      | 25    | 25             | 71    |
| Total                                    |         | 2                 | 10       | 40      | 43    | 55             | 150   |

Source: output SPSS

The results of the Chi Square test for the correlation between the country in which the athletes perform and the confidence level can be found in table 5.

**Table 5.** Chi-Square test

|                    | Value              | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|--------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 5.182 <sup>a</sup> | 4  | .269                              |
| N of Valid Cases   | 150                |    |                                   |

As the asymptotic significance coefficient is higher than the allowable limit of 0.05, there is no correlation between the country in which the athletes perform and the confidence level.

There are several explanations for this correlation. First of all, there are several factors that influence self-confidence (the confidence given by the coach, the support of the fans, the team, the evolution during the games, etc.), and the adaptation to the culture of a new country is just one of these factors. Moreover, although it would seem logical that there may be some correlations between adapting to a new culture and self-confidence, the statistics disprove this.

First, the correlation is made strictly between the country and self-confidence and not between cultural adaptation and self-confidence. Within some countries, such as Romania and France, there are several cultural areas with relatively significant differences. Moreover, this fact could be explained due to the fact that foreign players who play in Romania and in France, respectively, come from countries that have a European history and culture, and this fact can facilitate their transition from the country they come from, to the country in is evolving.

Many athletes are European and also evolve in a European culture, where even if there are differences the process of adaptation is easier. Moreover, there are situations in which some countries are culturally appropriate, especially countries that are geographically neighbouring. For example, some of the respondents work in France and are Belgian, while others are of Moldovan nationality and work in Romania or Hungarian nationality and work in areas of Romania where the majority language is Hungarian. As for the respondents from other continents, their native language is an international language (English, French or Spanish), which is very clear that it helps them in the process of adaptation. Moreover, there are many cases in which there are several athletes in some teams who have the same mother tongue, which also helps to adapt faster. In addition, it must be taken into account that some of the respondents have already evolved abroad, which is shown to help when individuals need to adapt to a new culture. For such athletes, adapting to a new one begins to become only a stage in their career and not an insurmountable impediment. Another factor that must be taken into account is the fact that many athletes spend several years in the same culture and end up integrating very well, many even obtaining the citizenship of the country where they have evolved for many years and can thus be considered bicultural. This suggests that after a period of time, adaptation occurs and no longer influences the athlete's activity or self-confidence. In conclusion, it can be said that more important is the cultural area to which it must adapt and not the country itself, there are also many factors that influence the self-confidence of players.

TEST 3

**Table 6:** Correlation between the country in which the athletes perform and team integration

Country where the athlete is playing now \* Team integration Crosstabulation

Count

|  |         | Team integration |         |       |                | Total |
|--|---------|------------------|---------|-------|----------------|-------|
|  |         | Disagree         | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |       |
| Country where the athlete is playing now | Romania | 2                | 13      | 28    | 36             | 79    |
|  | France  | 1                | 4       | 47    | 19             | 71    |
| Total                                    |         | 3                | 17      | 75    | 55             | 150   |

Source: output SPSS

The results of the Chi Square test for the correlation between the country in which the athletes perform and the integration in the team can be found in table 7.

**Table 7: Chi-Square Test**

|                    | Value               | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|--------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 14.781 <sup>a</sup> | 3  | .002                              |
| N of Valid Cases   | 150                 |    |                                   |

As the asymptotic significance coefficient is close to zero (0.002) and lower than the minimum allowable value of 0.05, it can be stated that there is a correlation between the country in which the athletes evolve and the integration in the team.

Regarding this correlation, several aspects need to be clarified. The answer to the following question was used to define the concept of integration: "I collaborate effectively with staff members and other colleagues and thus feel integrated into the team." First, the national culture of countries influences the activity within organizations, as well as their organizational culture. Then, in the case of the analysed countries (Romania and France) there are certain peculiarities. Most of the teams in Romania, even if they are multicultural, also have a lot of Romanian players. Through collective mental programming, it can be said about Romanians that they are welcoming people.

This explains the correlation between the country in which he plays and the integration within the team. On the other hand, many multicultural teams in France are made up of both French players but also players from French-speaking countries, from former French colonies. Thus, although athletes who come from other countries, have the advantage of knowing the local language, a very important element that helps to integrate into the team. The fact that in the country where they play, a language that players know is spoken, is an advantage in terms of adaptation. Basically, the ways of being of Romanians and French influence those who are part of the immediate adaptation environment of athletes (colleagues and staff), which in turn influences the integration of athletes.

TEST 4

**Table 8:** Correlation between the country in which the athletes perform and the market share

Country where the athlete is playing now \* Market value Crosstabulation

Count

|  |         | Market value      |          |         |       |                | Total |
|--|---------|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|-------|
|  |         | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |       |
| Country where the athlete is playing now | Romania | 0                 | 2        | 35      | 25    | 17             | 79    |
|  | France  | 2                 | 2        | 32      | 24    | 11             | 71    |
| Total                                    |         | 2                 | 4        | 67      | 49    | 28             | 150   |

The results of the Chi Square test for the correlation between the country in which the athletes perform and the market share is presented in table 9.

**Table 9:** Chi-Square Test

|                    | Value              | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|--------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 3.022 <sup>a</sup> | 4  | .554                              |
| N of Valid Cases   | 150                |    |                                   |

Following this test, it was found that there is no correlation between the country in which the athletes perform and their market value. The asymptotic significance coefficient is higher than the allowed limit of 0.05.

This result has several explanations. Athletes have some experience that gives them the right to assess market share and in addition have access to many databases that can help them shape the idea of market share. Then, this correlation is made only in two countries: France and Romania, and the data cannot be extrapolated to a larger scale. The sports that the respondent's practice are sports that have a high degree of competitiveness both in France and in Romania (football, women's volleyball, women's handball). Moreover, there are enough cases of athletes, who despite the fact that they are evolving in a lower ranked championship than others, still have a high market value. Market share is also given by international confrontations, where national teams or teams from different countries meet. Thus, there are cases of teams that successfully evolve in international competitions, despite the fact that the respective championships they come from are not the most competitive.

## 5. Conclusions, limits and discussion

The world of team sports is a complex world because very different people, with different levels of education, different cultural values and different characters, have to work together and get maximum results. At the same time, there are more and more transnational athletes nowadays, and sometimes differences can cause problems if they are not managed effectively. Moreover, these differences are accentuated by the globalized world in which we live and in which even teams made up of individuals of the same nationality show notable differences.

In such a world with global influences, the adaptation of athletes and their integration into the team is a very important aspect for sports organizations. Adaptation and integration depend on many factors, but it would be faster and more beneficial for both sides if the locals made an effort to help foreigners adapt. Thus, the foreign athlete goes through a process of acculturation through which he tries to adapt to the new common practices and habits specific to the area in which the athlete carries out his activity. This transition poses certain challenges and requires an adjustment of the athlete to the new environment. In their attempt to adapt, foreign athletes have an inner conflict between the desire to preserve their cultural identity and the desire to interact effectively with individuals in the new cultural area. However, some athletes have adapted so well to new cultures that they are considered bicultural because they belong to two cultures at the same time.

Countries have different cultural areas that can differ significantly. In addition, there are more and more highly diversified teams in which the number of locals is small and sometimes non-existent, so the integration within that team is totally different from adapting to the new cultural context in which the athlete lives outside the sports field. However, it is possible that the cultural features and the way of being of the Romanians and the French can influence the integration of the athletes within the team. There are many factors that influence the self-confidence of athletes, but strictly the country in which they perform (Romania or France) does not influence the level of confidence. The same thing happens in the market value, which is not affected by the country in which the athletes play, there are players who play in lower ranked championships but who still have a high market value.

Nowadays, the world of sports is becoming more and more similar to the business environment, and the information in this study can be beneficial for all activities that involve working in a team with different people and in different countries.

The limitations of this study are represented by the fact that the sample is not balanced in terms of grouping by gender and by the fact that the sample is not very numerous, but it must be taken into account that the number of athletes evolving in Romania and France is limited and overall, the percentage of athletes surveyed is representative.

After the end of the Covid 19 pandemic, the world will once again be able to travel and work in all corners of the world. Multiculturalism is likely to follow its upward trend, and interest in adapting and integrating athletes will also increase. Thus, we suggest both qualitative and quantitative research on the issue of multiculturalism, adaptation to new cultural contexts and integration into culturally diversified teams.

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