

I feel at home: an analysis of the perception of Immigrant East African road runners in Brazil

Me siento como en casa: un análisis de la percepción de los deportistas inmigrantes de África Oriental en Brasil

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Resumen: El presente estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar la percepción de corredores de fondo de origen africano oriental sobre la recepción y hospitalidad brindada por atletas locales durante el período en el que vivieron y compitieron en Brasil. Se utilizó un enfoque cualitativo, aprovechando fuentes obtenidas a través de entrevistas realizadas por los autores del estudio e investigación documental. Entre otros hallazgos, se estableció que existía una distinción entre las relaciones personales y la posición de intereses profesionales entre atletas brasileños y africanos orientales. En otras palabras, aunque los extranjeros se sienten bien recibidos en Brasil, al entrar en la parte profesional, los atletas brasileños expresan descontento con la presencia de estos atletas extranjeros en el país. Los resultados de las entrevistas y el análisis documental señalan una contradicción. Los corredores africanos orientales son considerados superestrellas atléticas y son admirados por los corredores brasileños. Sin embargo, cuando se trata de relaciones profesionales, los brasileños se preocupan por las pérdidas financieras relacionadas con los premios en las competiciones con atletas africanos de alto rendimiento.

Palabras clave: Investigación cualitativa, corredores kenianos, corredores etíopes, Brasil, migración de deportistas.

Abstract. The present study aimed to analyze the perception of road runners of East African origin about the reception and hospitality extended to them by local athletes during the period in which they lived and competed in Brazil. A qualitative approach was used, appropriating sources acquired through interviews conducted by the authors of the study and documentary research. Among other findings, it was established that there was a distinction between personal relationships and the positioning of professional interests between Brazilian and East African athletes. In other words, as much as foreigners feel well received in Brazil, when they enter the professional part, Brazilian athletes express discontent with the presence of these foreign athletes in the country. The interview results and documentary analysis point to a contradiction. East African runners are considered athletic superstars and are admired by Brazilian runners. However, when it comes to professional relationships, Brazilians worry about financial losses related to race prizes when competing with top-performing African athletes.

Key words: Qualitative research, Kenyan runners, Ethiopian runners, Brazil, Athlete Migration.

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Introduction

In the social space in which road running takes place around the world, runners with origins in East African countries are protagonists among athletes. They are considered the great “stars” as most of the recent world records in distance running events are held by runners from this region (Wilber & Pitsiladis, 2012). This dominance in distance running by East African runners has elicited plenty of media as well as scholarly investigation as to the root cause for the excellent running. The success of the runners has over the years also intrigued sports scientists who wanted to examine how the East African runners trained, ate and lived (Noakes, 1998; Onywera, 2009; Onywera, Scott, Boit, & Pitsiladis, 2006; Scott & Pitsiladis, 2006, 2007). Therefore, there are diverse studies that have attempted to analyze the possible causes of this predominance of East African runners. Various authors have concluded that some of the variables that have contributed to the success of East African distance running include the runners’ unique genetic disposition, physiological efficiencies, anatomical characteristics, and socioeconomic factors (Pitsiladis et al, 2007; Scott et al, 2003; Wilber & Pitsiladis, 2012).

According to Njororai (2012), in the 50 largest half-marathons of 2012, 74% of the winners were runners with origins in Kenya, while 22% were of Ethiopian descent. This collective success has contributed to the massive pop-

ularity of the runners from the region as they get to be invited to run in distance races, both on and off the track especially road running around the world. Runners from these countries, Kenya and Ethiopia, are therefore often present in high numbers in the majority of the largest road running events in other countries across the globe. These athletes earn their living off their running (Bale & Sang, 2013; Njororai, 2012). Apart from Kenyan and Ethiopian runners, there have also been notable distance athletes from Uganda and Tanzania, which are also within the East African region. Collectively, East African runners are prominent on the international running circuits as it is a great source of their livelihoods. According to World Athletics (WA) (2020), all internationally sanctioned road races have to pay specified guaranteed prize money as well as bonuses based on performance for elite runners. According to Njororai (2010), the commercialization and professionalization of sports, particularly in track and field, opened opportunities for talented athletes to train and compete for a living. Athletes now travel around the world to take part in road races, marathons, invitational meetings and other competitions, where they are paid decent bonuses. Not unlike other parts of the world, Brazil is also consolidating itself as a reception point for these elite runners.

Although Brazil is globally known for its massive soccer talent, basketball and volleyball, the country has a track record of hosting road races that attract athletes from all over

the world including elite East African runners. Indeed, Ribeiro et al (2013), has examined the perception of Kenyan runners in Brazil through the lenses of the coaches. The authors discuss the perception and position of the coaches of the sport on the regulatory rules for the performance of foreigners in track and field competitions in Brazil. The issue of migrant athletes became evident in the world of road running in Brazil given the big number of athletes of African origin participating in road running circuits in the country. As an example, the data found in relation to the champions of the most important Brazilian road running event, São Silvestre, in the last two decades shows that 50% of the champions were Kenyans and 30% were Ethiopians in men's competitions. For women top podium finishes for the last 20 years, figures show that 65% were Kenyan and 15% Ethiopian (São Silvestre, 2021).

The participation of foreign athletes in road running in Brazil is not such a recent phenomenon. As Dallari (2009) reports, in the previous years, the participation of foreign athletes was already allowed in the São Silvestre running in São Paulo. These foreign athletes were not restricted from participating. However, the Brazilian athletes could only participate in the events through a qualifying system in order to make it to the competition. According to Dallari (2009), the São Silvestre running went through a long period without a Brazilian athlete winning the event. Most foreign athletes in the period observed by the author brought athletes from different nationalities including Mexico, Morocco, Portugal, and Ecuador. However, in the recent past, a big number of athletes from African countries, mainly Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya have dominated the entries for foreigners (Ribeiro et al, 2013). The challenge posed by this migratory process is that potentially African athletes have better performance records in background competitions as they constitute the running elites from all over the world (Ribeiro et al, 2013; Tomazini & Mota e Silva, 2013; Vancini et al, 2013).

The institution responsible for regulating and inspecting athletics in Brazil is the Brazilian Athletics Confederation (CBAt). This, in turn, is guided by the rules instituted by World Athletics (WA) and Brazilian legislation. To regulate the participation of foreign athletes in Brazilian competitions, CBAt published the "NORM 9" (CBAt, 2009). Following the instructions of the WA, the regulation presents that for a foreign athlete to participate in competitions in Brazil, one must be a member of an affiliated club, or personally be affiliated to the federation and be authorized by the federation of the country of origin to compete in a foreign country (World Athletics, 2020).

In compliance with the general rules issued by WA, the CBAt presents other specifications for the reality of competitions in Brazil (CBAt, 2009). The regulation of road races establishes a maximum quota of participants for each level of competition, and the gold permit can have up to three of each sex per country. Silver, up to two athletes of each sex per country. And bronze, one athlete of each sex per country. However, there is also the possibility of exceptions to

the gold event category, which may change the quota limit number.

Given the context of the problem of foreign participation in Brazilian road running events, as well as the legal order for this to occur, the present study focuses mainly on analyzing the perspectives of East African runners who migrated to Brazil regarding the changes in their lives and how they were received by the local community of Brazilian runners. This research effort seeks to fill the gap identified by Njororai (2012), who stated that it was necessary that more research be done to establish the impact of the migration of athletes on the local sports culture; and their integration into society.

Sport Migration Research

Sports migration has been discussed by authors from different countries and for some years now, it has been considered an area in consolidation in the field of sports sciences (Maguire, 2011; Rojo, Njororai & Starepravo, 2020). Migration is an element found in productions about the globalization of sport and has gained significant weight in advancing new ways of looking at this phenomenon (Donnelly, 1996). According to Donnelly (1996), the starting point of this study area in the field of sport was the publication by Joseph Maguire (1994). According to Maguire and Falcous (2010), the area attracted the eyes of economists, historians, sociologists, geographers, and political scientists, as well as gaining some specific conceptual frameworks such as the migrant typology (Maguire, 1994; 1999; Magee & Sugden, 2002). Also, the analysis of sports migration was extended to several sports including soccer (Egilsen and Dolles, 2017), baseball (Takahashi & Horne, 2006), track and field (Bale and Sang, 1996; Chepyator-Thomson and Ariyo, 2016), basketball (Rojo et al, 2021), among others. Based on the general concept of migration, sports migration is conceptualized as a change of residence of an individual involved with the sports field, with relations in the dimensions of time and space of displacement. Studies on sport migration often consider only the athlete. However, authors such as Maguire (2011) and Carter (2013), point out that the role of coaches, journalists, scientists, etc., should also be included in this analysis.

Regarding research on sports migration, Nolasco (2016) argues that published research follows some central theoretical approaches. The main ones pointed out by him are the geographical approach to migration, the figuration approach, and the approach to the world system. In addition to theoretical approaches, research on sports migration also focuses on different issues within the phenomenon. Some of the issues that research has focused include national identity (Maguire, 2011; Malcolm, 2001; Falcous & Maguire, 2005; Krøvel, 2012; Gehring, 2016; Usher, 2017), motivation to migrate (Stead & Maguire, 1998; Stead & Maguire, 2000; Botelho & Agergaard, 2011; Love & Kim, 2011; Chiba, 2013), geographic patterns of migratory flows (Maguire & Pearton, 2000; Cornelissen & Solberg, 2007; Storey, 2011), and impacts of migration on people's lives

(Njororai, 2012; Weendon, 2012; Crossan & Pecha, 2016; Travlos, Dimitropoulos & Panagiotopoulos, 2017).

According to Njororai (2012), analysis of migration patterns for Kenyan athletes revealed the lack of historical and cultural ties between Kenya and countries where her athletes had moved on permanent basis for purposes of enhancing their chances of global competitions and earnings including Qatar, Bahrain, France, Finland, Netherlands and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This migration pattern shows that there are other pull/push factors for Kenyan athletes other than colonial ties. Njororai (2012) therefore argued that the movement of Kenyan athletes in the past 20 years might well be situated within the global dynamics of economic inequality, commercialization and professionalization of sport which has led to athletic talent moving from regions of surplus to those of deficits or those willing to pay more for the services. Maguire (1999) and Magee and Sugden (2002) developed typologies to categorize the migrant athletes. Maguire's typology included mercenaries, settlers, nomads, cosmopolitan, pioneer and returnee. This categorization was based on interviews with athletes drawn from soccer, basketball, cricket and rugby. This typology was very close to that developed by Magee and Sugden (2002) after interviewing soccer players in England. Their typology of migrant athletes included mercenary, settler and nomadic cosmopolitan, ambitionist, exile and expelled. One can argue that the categories applicable to East African runners over the years include mercenary, nomadic cosmopolitan, settler, returnee and ambitionist (Njororai, 2012). These categories are not mutually exclusive, however, as they overlap in some instances. To clarify, a brief description of each of the applicable categories follows: (1) Mercenary: A mercenary athlete is one who is motivated by earning capacity and who migrates for reasons of economic reward. This motivation for financial gain could be on a short-term basis (Love & Kim, 2011; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire, 1999). The careers for athletes are short. It is therefore prudent to maximize the opportunity to earn as much as possible so as to invest in their future. The athletes from Kenya who moved to Bahrain and Qatar did so based on financial grounds and therefore could qualify as being mercenary (Njororai, 2010; 2012). (2) Nomadic Cosmopolitan: According to Magee and Sugden (2002), athletes who fall in this category include individuals who are motivated by a desire to experience different nations and cultures. Maguire (1999) explains that this group of athletes is motivated by cosmopolitan engagement with migration where the desire is to seek new experiences. The nature of the athletics circuit involves athletes moving and competing in different countries around the world (Njororai, 2010; 2012). Athletics agents have therefore strategically set up camps for their athletes to train and stay while on the competition circuit, which qualifies them as nomadic in lifestyle. This category includes athletes who move around different countries to participate in road races to earn money such as those interviewed while in Brazil in this study. (3) Settler: This category of athletes is composed of those who

move to another country to compete and continue to stay beyond the end of their athletic careers (Love & Kim, 2011). (4) Returnee: This group of athletes may move to compete in another country, but after some time are obligated to return to their homeland. Such athletes give-in to the lure of home soil which overcomes any of the advantages of staying in the host country (Love & Kim, 2011; Maguire, 1999). (5) Ambitionist: This category transcends a number of categories. However, athletes in this category are characterized by three dimensions: (i) the desire to achieve a sport career anywhere, (ii) the preference for playing in a certain location as compared to elsewhere and (iii) the desire to improve one's career by moving to a higher-quality league (Love & Kim, 2011).

Whether an athlete is mercenary, nomadic, settler, returnee or ambitionist, it is clear that each is driven by certain ambition to travel abroad in order to compete. However, the migration of athletes may have consequences beyond the ambitions of the athletes as they have to contend with the cultural challenges that have to be navigated in order to earn success in the races as well as in life. This research effort therefore seeks to fill the gap identified by Njororai (2012), who stated that it was necessary that more research be done to establish the impact of the migration of athletes on the local sports culture; and their integration into society. The present study focused on the perception of the reception that is directed at migrant athletes in their new working spaces. In dialogue with the literature previously exposed, this study can be classified as within the category that addresses the impacts of migration. Studies of sports migration that focus on this perspective focus on investigating the social changes that have taken place in different contexts involving the migrant person.

Some studies have argued that an increase of foreigners interferes in the identification and development of new talents in the receiving country. It is argued that immigrant athletes and their dominance can have consequences for the national teams as well as in the level of local competition (Crossan & Pecha, 2016; Travlos, Dimitropoulos & Panagiotopoulos, 2017). Another point that is also found is concerning the consequences on the migrant's own life, as is the case of studies by Njororai (2012) and Weendon (2012). In this sense, in line with the objective of this article, the discussions will be based on three aspects of migration including verification whether migration impacted and transformed the migrant's own life; the migrant's perception about the reception of local peers in the destination country; and finally, some developments generated by the presence of migrant athletes in Brazil.

Methodology

With regard to doing research on sport migration, Maguire (2013) points out that the beginning of this aspect of social studies within sport dates back to the 1980s. However, Carter (2013) indicates the need for qualification of research on the subject. In the same line of reasoning,

Magee and Sugden (2002) and Maguire (2004) point to the need to improve investigative resources for the studies, based on the need to use primary empirical sources for the analyses. The present study therefore used the qualitative approach. To accomplish this task, two research instruments were used, including semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis.

For semi-structured interviews, although there was a script, this research modality made the interviewee's responses flexible (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2002). According to Sparkes and Smith (2014), semi-structured interviews have the benefit of providing a deeper knowledge about the experiences and meanings of the participant's social conditions. The interview was based on open questions about the perception of runners and their representatives about the migration process of East African runners to Brazil. On the use of interviews for social research in sport, Magee and Sugden (2002) and Maguire (2004) point out that, when the interviewed is an athlete, it is difficult to collect data. This is due to the difficult of access due to the athlete's availability and permission resting with their athletic agents.

In this sense, the selection of the members who make up the group of participants, who are athletes and coaches, was executed. These belong to groups located in Brazil. Both groups are coordinated by Brazilian coaches, being responsible for managing the athlete's career during their stay in Brazil. One group resides in the interior of the state of Paraná and the other in a city in the interior of the state of São Paulo (Nunes & Rocha, 2019). In both groups, athletes of different East African nationalities constitute a large number of the runners.

With regard to the choice of interviewees, the idea proposed by Carter (2013) was taken into consideration. Specifically, a participant was selected on the basis of being a migrant athlete and their capacity to speak out of the experience of migrating from their home country in order to run in another country, and in this particular case, in Brazil. Such an athlete's perspective is crucial to the understanding of the phenomenon of migration and reception in a new environment. In other words, Carter (2013) advocates studying the phenomenon on a micro scale that is, looking at actors and their social circumstances.

The interviewees were interviewed individually, and the interviews took place in the place where the athletes and agents reside. The interviews for the agents were conducted in Portuguese. The interviews with the athletes were performed in English. In turn, it should be noted that seven foreign athletes were available in the country. However, only four of them spoke English and therefore they are the only ones who provided testimonies.

Another research technique used was documentary analysis. According to Gil (2008), this type of research is characterized by the use of primary sources, that is, documents that have not yet received scientific treatment. Data obtained through documentary research, even if they are information referring to individuals/social actors, are not collected directly with research participants. For this, a

mass communication documentation was used as research sources, which characterize as archives in the format of newspapers, magazines, radios, television, websites (Gil, 2008). As far as Documentary research is concerned, materials used in sport-related websites and specialized in roads running were used to carry out the study. The selected articles are reports of protest movements organized by local athletes against the participation of East African athletes in road running in Brazil. To conduct the research, it was approved by the institution's ethics committee. Additionally, consent was sought from the athletes and their agents before conducting the interviews. Each participant was assured that they were welcome to discontinue participating in the data collection process if they felt uncomfortable with the questions. The respondents were also assured of the confidentiality of their demographic details and the information volunteered. Their information was only for academic purpose.

Results and discussion

The demographic profiles of the athletes who took part in the study are presented in Table one below. The data relating to sex, age, the country of origin, time of professional practice in sport and also the technical level according to WA ranking.

Table 1
Profiles of interviewed athletes.

Athlete	Age (years)	Origin	Experience (years)	World Ranking Position *
Man 1	29	Kenya	8	396
Man 2	34	Kenya	10	959
Woman 1	32	Uganda	10	593
Woman 2	28	Kenya	6	609

*World Ranking Road Running (2020)

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Table 1 presents some demographic details regarding athletes who participated in the study. Given the qualitative nature of the study and the language constraints, only four athletes, two men and two women, were interviewed. Three of the participants were of Kenyan origin and one Ugandan. As pointed out earlier, Kenya has one of the largest number of representatives in the world's major road running events (Njororai, 2012).

Another point to consider is that the average age of the four witnesses is around 30 years old. For many sports, this age bracket can be considered high and athletes starting to decline in performance. However, by looking back at their racing experience, as elite athletes, the perception changes. The average racing experience of the interviewees is approximately eight and a half years. It is apparent that these athletes began their professional athletics careers while in their mid-20s. Even with few years of performance within athletics, the athletes have extensive international experience.

Impacts and transformations

The success of East African athletes in middle and long-

distance races has made them national heroes as they have consistently put their home countries on the global map (Njororai, 2010, 2012, 2021). The successes enjoyed have also contributed to the improvement in the economic well-being at the personal level. Indeed, one of the major themes that emerge from the participant's migration experiences to participate in road races is the prospect of changing the quality of life. When asked about the changes that the participants have experienced in their personal lives since starting to compete in road races in Brazil, the responses were nearly identical as quoted below:

Yes, at least what I can say is that since I came to Brazil, since my first time... since I competed my first race in Brazil, at least I can see my life has changed. I can compare my life now and earlier on. Since coming to Brazil, running and competing as well as earning some good amount of money, my life has changed a lot for the better (Man 1).

The second respondent concurred by stating that:

"I can say my life standard has changed a little bit, it is not like before. After competing in Brazil, obviously, I had something good to take back to my country and make my life a little bit better than before" (Man 2).

Both the male respondents were in agreement that racing internationally in Brazil had earned them a reasonable amount of money which has changed their socioeconomic status back home in Kenya. It is apparent that the financial breakthrough was not just confined to the male runners as the female runner from Kenya also stated thus:

"Yes. Before I came here, my financial status was not good but it has now changed. It (financial status) has improved a bit. Before I came here, I totally had nothing, but now, at least even my training changed because you have something to support yourself with after training (Woman 2).

Of the athletes interviewed when asked if they perceive any change in their lives, three of them pointed to the socio-economic aspects. They credit coming to Brazil as something that changed their economic status. Another point is concerning the support to remain in the athlete's activity, as mentioned by the interviewee Woman 2.

According to Njororai (2012), the athlete individually realizes that the prospects for a better and safer lifestyle, better financial incentives, and athletic success are among the implications of migration in their lives. A demographic study of Kenyan runners shows that both the national and international runners were motivated to run for economic reasons, tradition and Olympic glory. For example, 38% of national and 35% of international runners become athletes for economic empowerment (Onywera, Scott, Boit, & Pitsiladis, 2006). Kenyan runners have to overcome barriers to maintain a presence on the international athletic circuit so as to reap economic as well as potential Olympic success which again helps to improve their marketability and earning ability (Gitau et al., 2007; Njororai, 2010). Some athletes therefore opt to migrate to countries where it is easier to win races and maximize earnings from their athletic efforts. The perspectives by Kenyan runners

in Brazil, therefore, corroborates what has been established in the literature as the motivation driving Kenya's athletes. Similarly, Chepyator-Thomson & Ariyo (2016), points out that the inequality of financial and sporting success around the world continues to be the reason and incentive for hungry talented young athletes to migrate in search of better opportunities worldwide.

In addition to the economic aspect, the athletes were also emphatic on how their experience is an aspect of lifestyle change that they intend to bring back to the country of origin, as well as the importance of having a support network after training. The quest for these runners to run in Brazil for financial rewards, experience new culture and then return to Kenya fits with the typology categories of mercenaries, cosmopolitan nomads, and returnees. These athletes are clear that they go to Brazil on a temporary basis to improve their economic standing, experience Brazilian way of life and then return back to East Africa. According to Maguire and Pearton (2000), migration is clearly influenced by the economic rewards available to owners, agents and athletes. These rewards are the outcome of a complex political economy in which media moguls and the representatives of transnational corporations are centrally involved, especially the transitory kind where athletes have to follow where money is generated. Athletes are drawn to where core sources of economic wealth are located. This is a process that leads to a relational situation whereby those countries on the periphery are influenced by those at the core (Economist, 2005; Jarvie, 2007). Even though Brazil is not categorized as core country, its huge economic potential and rich history in sport make it an attractive destination for runners who seek to be well remunerated for their effort. According to Cranby (1996), economic differences in the form of wages and wealth is both a pull and push factor in labour migration. Thus, wealth can pull labour from the less wealthy countries while at the same time it is a push factor where one escapes from poverty

Local reception of foreign runners

Financial gains and success in the sports career are important for sports analysis. However, according to Njororai (2012) more worrying are the consequences that affect migrant athletes. In this sense, athletes were asked about how they perceived the reaction of local athletes about their participation in Brazilian competitions. The perception of athletes can be seen in the comments:

No, there is nothing that bothers me because before they settled in the race, you find most of them want to talk with you. They want to take photos with you. So, you see that it is like... they feel proud. When they see you competing with them, they feel proud and it makes you actually very happy. (Man 2).

According to the responses of the runners interviewed, they felt that they were well received by Brazilian athletes. The interaction between Brazilian and foreign runners was minimal. However, going by the responses of the migrant athletes interviewed, the local athletes looked at the foreign

ones as celebrities. The local athletes were motivated to race alongside the star athletes from abroad hence the desire to say hello, pose for photographs before the races started. This feeling of respect for top athletes in a race is normal in international competitions even though the level of performance of the foreigners may be far superior to the standard of the local runners. It is a situation that presents foreign athletes as heroes to be respected but also as a threat to the hopes and aspirations of local runners who also want to win on their home soil. This lack of parity can be a source of conflict contrary to the perception of Kenyan Migrant runners. According to Njororai (2012), migrant athletes often face hostility from teammates of the host country and the local people who feel that foreigners are benefiting from their country at their expense. For example, a blogger on Runner's World (2007) captured the lack of a warm reception extended to a migrant athlete when, at the end of the 1500 m race during the World Athletics Championships won by Kenyan-born American Bernard Lagat, another American, Alan Webb – who was initially favored to win – refused to acknowledge his victorious teammate.

The lack of much interaction between East African migrant athletes and the local Brazilian runners could mistakenly paint the pleasantries exchanged at the beginning of races to be that of respect and honor. Behind the minimal interaction is the barrier of language. East African runners mostly converse in either Kiswahili or English, while the local language in Brazil is Portuguese. This lack of interaction and extended conversations can be frustrating. The migrant respondents stated thus:

“They are good. They are not bad. They love us. They want to talk, but the problem is language”. (Woman 1).

So to the female athlete from Uganda, she perceives that the local athletes are nice people, would love to engage in conversations but they are constrained by the language. Her sentiments are corroborated by her Kenyan counterpart, who stated thus:

“Yes, we like to talk to them, but the only thing that keeps us from talking to them, is only the language. We want to talk to them, but language... We only greet and that is the end. I would like to talk to them as much as possible, but language is a barrier... (Woman 2).

It is therefore evident that the language barrier makes it difficult for migrant athletes to have any serious and intensive social engagement with the local athletes. This absence of interaction therefore creates an environment where only shallow but courteous pleasantries are exchanged in form of greetings and at most a request for a shared photo pose. For athletes who move and compete in countries only on a temporary basis, there is no motivation to invest in learning the local language. This is particularly so for road runners, including those taking part in marathons as they do not stay long enough in a local country to be fully invested in the local culture including language mastery. Instead, they are more like tourists who pass through, enjoy the short time experience and move on to the next venue of competition. Indeed, the literature points to the language barrier as one

of the problems faced by migrants, whether from other areas (Koser & Salt, 1997), or even more specifically those linked to sport (Maguire & Stead, 1996). The language barrier may be responsible for hindering the greater interaction of migrant athletes with the locals, as well as communication with agents and trainers (Maguire, 1994; Klein, 2011).

In a study with Premier Ligue football players in Europe, use of translation strategies to aid communication with foreign athletes within the professional environments of clubs is found to be effective and valuable (Baines, 2013). However, this resource is something that is not fully exploited in the situation of East African athletes in Brazil. Communication in English is openly carried out with agents/trainers. However, when they leave the premises and professional relationship with their agents, relations with Brazilian athletes are hindered, the same occurs with spectators, as most of the latter do not have fluency in English.

As it can be observed, the East African athletes have a perception that they are well received by their Brazilian peers based on exchanged pleasantries just before and immediately after races. The lack of deep engagement in conversations is constrained by the language barrier. Basing on pleasantries, East African runners seems to have a positive perception of local runners. However, documentary analysis shows that the perception of East African runners seems not to be in tune with the local athletes' feelings towards foreign athletes participating in local Brazilian road races.

Stop the running

If on the one hand the foreign runners feel well received by their hosts and opponents, it can be seen that, as pointed out by Maguire (1994), the migration of skilled labor in the sport can also generate a level of hostility, which counteracts the initial perception of foreign athletes. The contradiction was expressed by the interviewed agent as well as analysis of media reports selected for the study. In one report, local athletes mobilized themselves to protest participation of foreigners in local races. The report stated thus:

“During the last Saturday, 10/19, a group of Brazilian runners organized a protest against what they consider an excessive number of foreigners in national circuit events. The start of the penultimate race of the Caixa Racing Circuit was delayed by 15 minutes and the same group threatens not to start for the São Paulo stage, in case the Brazilian Athletics Confederation does not hear the demands made by the athletes” (Aranda, 2013^a). (Portuguese original) The excerpt presented above refers to the introduction of the article published by Renato Aranda, in October 2013, on the electronic portal about running *Webrun*. With the great disparity in the competition of National Road Races competitions between Brazilian runners and Kenyan runners, there are many Brazilian representatives who were unhappy with the situation. The case reached a point of clear conflict in late 2013, when the discontent of Brazilian athletes led them to carry out protests against CBA's regulatory measures (Aranda, 2013a; Aranda, 2013b; Lucena, 2013).

Reporting the same fact, another report presents the incident as a consequence of the abandonment suffered by Brazilian athletes, who do not feel represented by the responsible institutions.

"The athletes, tired and saturated with so much neglect, decided to take drastic measures uniting in the Ribeirão Preto stage in protest and decided not to leave, to the surprise of the organizers, who called the female athletes to leave and all, in turn, did not attend to tickets causing discomfort to the ORGANIZATION and delaying the test by 15 minutes" (Lucena, 2013). (Original in Portuguese)

Other points raised by Brazilian athletes are in relation to the condition of the event in which the protest takes place. It is a national circuit, in which there is an award in monetary values for the first placed finisher. It is clear that local athletes feel that national races should be for locals only as revealed in this quote:

"What elite athletes say is that, despite the name of the competition being the National Running Circuit, the presence of foreigners is increasing, who compete with an advantage over the Brazilians. This is because foreigners, according to Brazilian athletes, arrive rested, participate in some competitions and return to their countries of origin. The Brazilians, if they want to apply for sponsorship of the CAIXA, need to collect as many points as possible, which means participating in all or almost all the events in the circuit" (Lucena, 2013). (Original in Portuguese)

In addition to the large participation of foreigners, there is concern about the lack of sponsorship for Brazilian athletes. And greater attention to the discontent of the state-owned CAIXA Company which sponsors the teams working with the East African runners. The elements presented can be compared to the fact that occurred in the USA, in which after a high number of athletes in university competitions there was a series of discontent with the presence of these athletes (Bale & Sang, 1996; Gootas, 2013). There was even an attempt to create an exclusive race circuit as well as incentive structure for native runners (Bale and Sang, 1996; Manners, 2007).

On the other hand, one of the agents responsible for the presence of East African runners in Brazil, defends the presence of these migrant athletes as a sports investment in the country.

"If he [Brazilians] wants to be an athlete, with a future, he has to invest in himself. And Kenyan athletes can be a basis for comparison, because running with the guys is synonymous with getting better results, improving your performance. [...] The running time of a Kenyan turns out to be a benchmark" (Agent 1).

According to the agent the participation of foreign runners enables the improvement of the athletic performance level of Brazilian runners. Similar arguments are presented in the study carried out by Elliot and Weedon (2011) on football, where the authors point out, from a series of interviews, that the presence of foreign athletes cannot be observed only as a way of pushing native athletes the edge of the leagues. But yes, the recruitment of foreign players

could provide an exchange of experiences that provide opportunities for development for both groups of players.

However, another coach, now from Brazilian athletes, agrees with the positioning of the positive impact on sports performance, but makes reservations about the phenomenon.

"I am not against Africans. There must be an African here to raise the level of Brazilian athletics. I am against this invasion, this crowd of Africans, there are many Africans here. This totally takes away the chance of Brazilians, including Marílson Gomes dos Santos, who was eighth in São Silvestre 2011. The truth has to be told" (Minardi in TERRA, 2012). (Original in Portuguese)

Even though the presence of Africans may represent an improvement in the technical level of the races, according to the coach interviewed, there is an excessive number of athletes of African origin, which makes it unlikely that Brazilian athletes will win the competitions. This is relevant because sporting results, especially victories achieved in competitions, generate financial compensations for athletes. Given that athletes only rely on earnings from running, the more the wins the better the pay check. However, this dream is made difficult when national events have foreigners from East Africa line up and win races. This issue is crucial to local athletes as they do not have a fixed income from their clubs or national athletics association. The pursuit of financial gains, both by foreign athletes and Brazilians, is associated with racing and winning competitions since they do not receive salaries from institutions.

One of the first studies to observe this resistance to migrants was carried out by Maguire (1994), who analyzed the case of North American players in English basketball. Also analyzing basketball, the study by Shor and Galily (2012), based on the perspective of glocalization, the authors point to an Americanization of Israeli basketball, and also expose the mechanisms of acceptance and resistance found. However, in the case of Israel, discontent arises on the part of spectators and the local community, which is different from the case of athletes from East Africa in Brazil. Resistance against immigrant talents has also been observed in football, where concerns about the impact of the number of migrant players force organizations and governments to create resistance mechanisms including creation of maximum foreign players per team (Bullough & Mills, 2014). In football, as in the case of basketball, both are understood as the great movement of people migrating from countries with extreme development of sporting talent in a specific sport. This can also be seen in the case of East African runners who migrate to Brazil.

Conclusions

This article investigated the perspectives of East African runners regarding the changes in their lives after migrating to run in Brazil and how they viewed their reception by the local Brazilian athletes. This article investigated the perspectives of East African runners on the changes in their

lives after migrating to train and compete in Brazil basing on the sport migration theory and the impact such a movement has on the athlete and the hosts. Using the typology of sports migration labour, it is clear that the East African runners in Brazil fit into the categories of mercenary, cosmopolitan nomads and returnees. From an economic point of view, the athletes noticed an improvement in their financial conditions. When looking at the relationship with native Brazilian athletes, the perception of East African runners is positive. However, Brazilian athletes do not seem to have the same perception regarding African athletes. A possible explanation for the phenomenon is the fact that most of the participants in competitions in Brazil are recreational individuals, who find in East African athletes the vision of stars and look for them more for photos and spectator relationships.

The interview results and documentary analysis point to a contradiction. East African runners are considered athletic superstars and are admired by Brazilian runners. However, when it comes to professional relationships, Brazilian athletes and coaches worry about financial losses related to race prizes when competing with top-performing East African athletes. On the other hand, the East African runners have a positive view of their reception by local athletes given that due to language constraints, there is very limited interaction. This lack of congruence in the experiences of the migrant athletes in comparison to their hosts warrants further study and analysis on a larger scale than the current study.

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