The relationship between the Big Five personality traits and coping in sport: A scoping review

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The Relationship Between the Big Five Personality Traits and Coping in Sport

A Scoping Review

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In view of obtaining the Master's degree in Psychological Sciences, specialising in Social, Work and Organisational Psychology

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1. INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered how an Olympic athlete handles the immense pressure moments before a gold medal race? In the hyper-competitive world of modern sport, every marginal gain has become crucial. To reach peak performance, an athlete must be as formidable mentally as they are technically. Every day, they face a relentless barrage of challenges, from performance slumps and the threat of injury to navigating complex relationships with coaches and teammates, not to mention managing personal life issues and media scrutiny. These situations are invariably stressful, and it is precisely in these moments that an athlete's personality and their ability to cope come into play.

Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioural strategies individuals employ to manage the internal and external demands of stressful situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It is the psychological toolkit an athlete draws upon to navigate adversity. Personality, particularly the well-established Big Five framework – comprising Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism – can be seen as the underlying blueprint that shapes an individual's tendencies, predisposing them to favour certain coping tools over others. Understanding the dynamic interplay between these two domains is therefore essential. Factors such as an athlete's gender, age, and cultural background can further moderate this relationship, highlighting the critical need for tailored interventions that can help athletes build resilience and thrive under pressure (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007). The rationale for this review is built on this necessity; by mapping how enduring personality traits influence coping, we can move towards a more nuanced, evidence-based approach to athlete support.

However, despite a compelling theoretical rationale and a growing body of evidence, the literature remains fragmented. Variations in conceptualizations, measurement approaches, and methodological designs across studies complicate efforts to synthesize clear patterns or derive actionable insights for applied practice. This fragmentation creates a clear need for a comprehensive overview to consolidate existing knowledge and strategically guide future research. This leads to the central research question guiding this review: *"What is the nature, extent, and characteristics of existing evidence regarding the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and coping in sports?"*

To answer this research question, this master's thesis employs a scoping review methodology. A scoping review aims to systematically identify and map the breadth of evidence

available on a particular topic, irrespective of source or quality (Munn et al., 2022). This approach is ideal for charting the landscape of an emerging or complex field of research. Based on our preliminary searches, no scoping review has yet been conducted to systematically map this specific intersection of personality and coping in sport, underscoring the novelty and importance of this work.

This master's thesis is structured into five chapters. The first chapter provides a comprehensive literature review, delving into the theoretical foundations of coping and personality, and examining the existing evidence on their relationship. The second chapter outlines the specific objectives and sub-questions that guide this review. The third chapter describes in detail the methodology adopted for this scoping review, in accordance with the directives established by the PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews) checklist (Tricco et al., 2018). The fourth chapter presents the results of the literature search and data extraction process. The fifth chapter offers a discussion of these findings, interpreting their implications, acknowledging the limitations of the research, and proposing concrete directions for future inquiry. Finally, a conclusion synthesizes the findings to address the research questions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Coping

One of the core elements of this literature review is coping. Therefore, it is crucial to clarify how coping is conceptualized and researched in psychology.

The conceptualization of coping has been debated among scholars for decades, particularly regarding which factors define it and where emphasis should lie when analysing coping mechanisms (e.g., Skinner et al., 2003; Uphill & Jones, 2012). Generally, three approaches are recognized: situation-based (coping differences linked to changing environments), person-based (coping differences tied to stable personality traits), or interactive (coping shaped by the interplay between environment and personality) (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). The "Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping" (TTSC; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), also referred to throughout this thesis as the "Transactional model," remains the most widely supported framework in psychological research (Biggs et al., 2017), including sport-specific contexts (Crocker et al., 2015; Nuetzel, 2023). Due to its foundational role in athletic literature, a comprehensive description of this model is provided below to anchor the review's analysis.

2.1.1. Coping definition and conceptualisation

Coping, fundamentally, refers to "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141). While several prominent definitions exist – such as Compas et al.'s (2001, p. 89) characterization of coping as "conscious volitional efforts to regulate emotion, cognition, behavior, physiology, and the environment in response to stressful events or circumstances", or Skinner and Wellborn's (1994, p. 112) view of it as "how people regulate their behavior, emotion, and orientation under conditions of psychological stress" – the definition by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) remains the most widely used. Therefore, to understand this concept, its evolution, and its application in sport, we must first examine the cornerstone model in this research area: the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This foundational framework, developed through seminal work by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman, conceptualizes coping as an integral part of a dynamic psychological process initiated by stress appraisal. The

enduring influence of their seminal work Stress, Appraisal, and Coping (1984), is evident, with over 100,000 citations found in Google Scholar (March 2025), including 16,800 since 2020.

According to the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping individuals continuously evaluate environmental stimuli through cognitive appraisal and will only use coping to deal with a stressful encounter. Cognitive appraisal is defined as "the process of categorizing an encounter, and its various facets, with respect to its significance for well-being" (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 31). This process consists of two stages: primary and secondary appraisals.

In the primary appraisal, individuals interpret events as benign (positive), irrelevant, or stressful (negative). Positive or irrelevant events pose no threat to well-being, requiring no response. However, stressful events – "a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 19) – prompt action. Stressful encounters can be further appraised as challenge, threat, or harm/loss. Challenge involves appraising potential growth or future success, associating with positive emotions. Conversely, threat is when the person is anticipating danger, while harm/loss refers to physical (injury) or mental (self-esteem) damage that has already happened to them. An important point is to note that threat and challenge are not mutually exclusive and can occur at the same time.

Secondary appraisal follows, where individuals evaluate available resources to face the stressor. This complex process assesses which coping strategies are realistically available, their likely effectiveness, and the person's capability to use them successfully. Resources include physical, psychological, social, or material assets. This stage concludes when the individual determines whether they possess adequate resources to manage the stressor. If they perceive their resources as insufficient, the coping process begins.

Importantly, 'secondary' does not denote lesser importance or strict sequential order (Dewe and Cooper, 2007). These evaluations work together dynamically, with each influencing the other in real time, constantly adjusting how individuals manage stressful situations.

Coping emerges after events are appraised as stressful (primary appraisal) and evaluated as requiring control efforts (secondary appraisal). The TTSC identifies two central functions of coping strategies: problem-focused coping, which seeks to modify or resolve the stressor itself, and emotion-focused coping, which aims to regulate emotional responses triggered by the stressor. People tend to use problem-focused strategies when they evaluate the event as modifiable, and if not, they will more often use emotion-focused strategies. It is worth noting

that these strategies can be used by the same individual, and they may use them both at different times to deal with one stressful event.

Reappraisal, the final stage, involves adjusting initial interpretations based on new information – environmental changes or emotional responses. Individuals reevaluate stressor outcomes after employing coping strategies to assess effectiveness, determining whether updated appraisal shifts perception from stressful to benign (positive) or irrelevant. Within this framework, 'adaptive coping' is defined not by strategy itself but by outcome in specific contexts – successfully managing problems while regulating emotional distress. Strategies that resolve issues at great emotional cost, or calm distress without addressing problems, are not fully adaptive. Favourable outcomes stop the coping cycle; otherwise, it continues, highlighting the model's dynamic nature. This iterative process allows people to reinterpret threats as harmless or harmless situations as threats, with positive outcomes linked to positive emotions and unsuccessful efforts triggering negative affect.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identified factors significantly influencing this dynamic process. Individual antecedents include commitments, beliefs, or personality traits, while situational factors encompass novelty/familiarity, predictability/uncertainty, or event ambiguity. These antecedents interact, affecting evaluations. For example, an individual with an internal locus of control (belief) might perceive an ambiguous situation as manageable, but stress arises if exerting control requires enduring high material costs (e.g., chemotherapy side effects), creating a conflict between personal and situational factors. This aspect of the model is in line with subsequent studies on moderator variables, as put by Crocker and colleagues (2015, p. 42): "Moderation holds that the relationship between an independent variable (such as coping) and a dependent variable (such as an emotion) varies across levels of a moderator variable (such as gender)." Within psychology, key moderators of coping – such as age (e.g., Kurth et al., 2025), personality (e.g., Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007), locus of control (e.g., Kurtović et al., 2018) and culture (e.g., Luong et al., 2020) – have been investigated.

While foundational for coping literature, the model proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) is not without its limitations. Critiques – particularly targeting weaknesses in its original coping taxonomy, such as oversimplification and observed functional overlaps between problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies (Ayers et al., 1996; Connor-Smith et al., 2000; Walker et al., 1997) – have spurred refinements.

A first example is the update provided to the 1984 model by Lazarus himself in 1999. He introduced a fourth type of primary appraisal, where the individual could also evaluate the event as a benefit, which, as stated by Lazarus (1999), "… allows us to encompass positively toned emotions as well as the negatively toned ones that flow from stress." (p. 91). Folkman (2000) expanded the theory on positive emotions' role in stress dynamics, formally introducing meaning-focused coping. The original model offered limited insight into unfavourable outcomes beyond noting continued appraisal-emotion-coping-reappraisal cycles, creating chronic stress. The revised model introduced meaning-focused coping – a coping strategy that involves drawing on personal beliefs, values, and existential goals to find or create meaning during stress – and positive emotions following failed resolutions. This mechanism generates positive emotions that restore coping resources, sustain long-term problem-focused coping, and provide distress relief, aligning with discoveries showing positive and negative emotions can coexist in stress dynamics (Folkman, 2008; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004).

Biggs et al. (2017) highlighted another enhancement: incorporating future-oriented coping. While the 1984 model addressed reactive coping to existing stressors, it inadequately accounted for anticipated future stressors (e.g., sporting event finals). This temporal dimension represents a notable departure from reactive coping, recognizing that coping processes can begin before stressful events occur.

In contrast to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional model, which centers on cognitive appraisal, Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory conceptualizes stress as a reaction to the threatened or actual loss of valued resources – defined as objects (e.g., home, possessions), conditions (e.g., marriage, job stability), personal characteristics (e.g., self-esteem, mastery), and energies (e.g., time, knowledge). COR posits that individuals strive to acquire, retain, and protect resources, and stress occurs when resources are lost, threatened, or inadequately replenished after investment. Coping, in this framework, involves efforts to minimize net resource loss (e.g., replacing lost resources) or generate resource gains (e.g., investing resources for future surplus). Critically, COR emphasizes objective resource deficits (e.g., economic hardship) alongside subjective appraisals, arguing that resource-poor individuals are more vulnerable to 'loss spirals' – where initial losses deplete coping reserves, amplifying future stress. This diverges from Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) focus on perceived imbalance between demands and resources, instead anchoring stress in tangible resource dynamics. While influential, this model is not the core focus of this review, but it is important to acknowledge the theoretical diversity within coping research. The frameworks

described here – including COR and the Transactional model – are not exhaustive, but rather illustrate foundational approaches to conceptualizing coping.

Another key conceptualization consideration involves the analysis level – intrapersonal frameworks versus interpersonal dynamics. While traditional research in psychology has framed coping as an individual-level process, studies now emphasize how individuals' stress adaptation reciprocally influences and is shaped by others (e.g., Hobfoll et al., 2018; Randall & Bodenmann, 2017). Social contextual factors – such as family relationships, workplace dynamics, or community support systems – highlight how coping can function collectively, yet studies still prioritize individual-level analyses.

Beyond the analysis level, coping's source dimension distinguishes dispositional from situational approaches. Situational coping refers to specific strategies employed contextually, varying based on situational demands. Dispositional coping ('coping style') represents relatively stable, trait-like tendencies to respond consistently across situations and time, reflecting personality characteristics. Coping inherently encompasses both trait and dynamic process characteristics (Gaudreau & Miranda, 2010), shaped by enduring tendencies while adapting fluidly to situational demands. Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional model emphasizes dynamic stress-coping interactions, integrating dispositional tendencies and situational demands through continuous appraisal. Exploring this interplay is key in psychology, helping understand how individuals handle stress based on identity and circumstances.

Lastly, the intent debate centres on whether strategies must involve conscious, effortful regulation to qualify as 'coping'. Traditional perspectives implicitly emphasize deliberate efforts following appraisals (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Critics argue this overlooks automatic regulatory processes occurring without conscious awareness (Gross, 1999; Uphill & Jones, 2012). Research suggests that once-effortful strategies (e.g., attentional redeployment) can become habitual, operating efficiently outside focal awareness. Such automaticity may enhance effectiveness by conserving cognitive resources and reducing maladaptive physiological responses (Gould et al., 1993). Contemporary views conceptualize coping along a consciousness-effort continuum, acknowledging automatic processes as valid coping when regulating stress or emotion, even if unintentional (Trudel-Fitzgerald et al., 2024; Uphill & Jones, 2012).

2.1.2. Importance of coping research

In academic contexts, coping strategies significantly predict student well-being and performance. Vizoso et al. (2018) found that adaptive coping enhanced academic engagement – manifested as vigour, dedication, and absorption – which in turn mediated higher grade point averages. Conversely, maladaptive coping correlated negatively with academic performance. Notably, external locus of control exacerbates mental health symptoms (e.g., depression, anxiety) among students, but this effect is fully mediated by self-esteem deficits and reliance on emotion-focused coping (Kurtović et al., 2018). These findings underscore the importance of institutional action: Universities could integrate mental/physical health support (e.g., accessible counselling, wellness programs) and proactively teach adaptive coping skills (e.g., mindfulness, cognitive restructuring) to mitigate stressors like financial strain or academic overload (He, 2023). Fostering supportive learning environments that normalize help-seeking is equally important to reduce avoidance behaviours (Gustems-Carnicer et al., 2019).

The clinical relevance of coping is equally valuable. Maladaptive coping styles correlate with psychiatric disorders (PTSD, depression), somatic symptoms, and poorer patient-provider relationships. For instance, among cancer patients, hopelessness predicted dissatisfaction with physician interactions, characterized by perceived disengagement and inadequate support (Meggiolaro et al., 2016). Similarly, in cardiovascular health, patients with comorbid hypertension and heart disease used fewer task-focused coping strategies than healthier peers, exacerbating symptom severity (Casagrande et al., 2019). These findings encourage clinicians to assess coping mechanisms routinely and tailor interventions accordingly.

Coping research demonstrates strong health predictive capacity. In heart failure patients, problem-focused and active emotional coping (e.g., acceptance, seeking support) correlate with better health-related quality of life, while avoidant emotional coping (e.g., denial) predicts worse outcomes (Alanazi et al., 2023). During COVID-19, maladaptive coping mediated the path from loneliness and depression to academic procrastination and performance declines among students, highlighting its role in sustaining functioning during crises (Freyhofer et al., 2021). Additionally, maladaptive coping serves as a critical pathway linking adverse childhood experiences to substance abuse and mental health issues in adulthood, underscoring the need for early adaptive skill development (Solberg et al., 2023). In occupational health, distinct burnout profiles among teachers – differentiated by emotional exhaustion and depersonalization – showed varied reliance on dysfunctional coping, emphasizing the need for emotion-regulation training to mitigate depression (Martínez et al., 2020).

Finally, coping research directly informs interprofessional monitoring and intervention. In surgical settings, patients with high preoperative anxiety exhibit distinct coping dispositions: "monitors" seek information to reduce distress, while "blunters" prefer distraction and calming dialogue. Both groups equally valued conversations with medical staff as their primary coping support, illustrating the need for personalized communication strategies (Aust et al., 2016). This supports training healthcare teams to identify and accommodate individual coping preferences – such as providing targeted education or emotional reassurance – to optimize patient outcomes.

In synthesis, coping research is essential, demonstrating significant real-world impact, predicting outcomes and informing interventions across academic, clinical, health, and occupational domains.

2.1.3. Coping in sport

Now that we have outlined the most common framework for understanding coping and its practical relevance in research, it is important to address how these concepts apply to sports, the core focus of this review. While earlier segments did not explicitly mention athletic contexts, this omission reflects the shared theoretical foundation between general coping research and sports psychology. The field mainly builds on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional model and its revisions, adapting – rather than reinventing – these frameworks to address sport-specific stressors (Nicholls & Polman, 2007; Crocker et al., 2015; Nuetzel, 2023). Athletes facing pressure still rely on the original model's appraisal processes: they evaluate events like high-stakes competitions as challenges, threats, or opportunities, then select coping strategies accordingly. Researchers refine universal principles to address unique demands, such as performance anxiety (Hanton et al., 2008) or injury recovery (Carson & Polman, 2009), and recent developments – like studies on adaptive coping profiles (Rose et al., 2023) or longitudinal burnout trajectories (Madigan et al., 2020) – remain rooted in Lazarus and Folkman's core concepts. As Nicholls and Polman (2007) advocate in their review, however, future work must address methodological limitations and formulate sport-specific models to better account for developmental, cultural, and situational nuances in athletic contexts.

To give an example of such a specific model, here is a brief presentation of the one built by Fletcher and his colleagues (2006): a meta-model of stress, emotions and performance. This conceptual framework identifies five core dimensions of organizational stressors specific to sport performers: factors intrinsic to the sport (e.g., travel logistics, injury risks); roles within the sport organization (e.g., ambiguity, conflict); sport relationships and interpersonal demands

(e.g., leadership conflicts, lack of social support); athletic career and performance development issues (e.g., funding insecurity, selection pressures); and organizational structure and climate (e.g., communication gaps, coaching styles, political dynamics). This framework diverges noticeably from Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) TTSC. While the TTSC emphasizes universal cognitive appraisal processes (primary/secondary appraisals) and generic coping strategies (problem/emotion-focused), Fletcher et al. (2006) delineate contextual antecedents unique to athletic systems – such as media scrutiny, selection unfairness, or inadequate facilities. Crucially, Fletcher et al. (2006) focus on structural and relational demands imposed by sports organizations rather than individual perceptual processes, though both models share the foundational tenet that stress arises from person-environment transactions. Thus, Fletcher et al.'s (2006) framework extends the TTSC by mapping sport-specific organizational triggers, offering a complementary lens for understanding athletic stress. While these sport-specific frameworks help contextualize stressors, they also highlight the need to carefully delineate what constitutes 'coping' within the broader landscape of psychological regulation processes.

Building on these theoretical distinctions, it is crucial to situate the concept of coping within the broader landscape of psychological regulation, which includes the large and conceptually related field of emotion regulation. The two fields have historically evolved in parallel, with coping research traditionally focused on responses to discrete stressors and emotion regulation research examining the management of any emotion, positive or negative, often over shorter timeframes. Despite these distinct theoretical origins, recent scholarship has increasingly highlighted their substantial conceptual and measurement overlap (Trudel-Fitzgerald et al., 2024). Both frameworks investigate a common pool of strategies, including reappraisal, acceptance, avoidance, and suppression, to the point where their measures are often highly congruent. Acknowledging this growing consensus for a more integrated 'affect regulation' framework is essential. However, to maintain a clear and feasible scope for this review, a firm boundary was established. This review focuses exclusively on studies that are explicitly framed within the stress and coping literature and that use measures designated as assessing 'coping'.

Therefore, now that coping conceptualization is set, we can provide the operational definition of coping that is used throughout this scoping review. While acknowledging the consciousness-effort continuum discussed above, this review adopts a definition emphasizing effortful, conscious responses within athletic contexts. As stated by Crocker et al. (2015),

coping in sport is "effortful cognitions and behaviours an athlete employs to manage constantly changing perceived important adaptation challenges" (p. 30). This operationalization aligns with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) framework and was selected for its correspondence with the dominant theoretical model in sport psychology and its capacity to encompass the full spectrum of coping phenomena – including interpersonal and intrapersonal processes, as well as dispositional and situational approaches. Such breadth suits the objectives of a scoping review, which aims to map diverse literature.

Understanding the conceptual foundations of coping in sport is essential, but appreciating its tangible impact underscores the critical importance of this research domain. Investigating how athletes cope with stress yields vital insights directly applicable to enhancing their well-being, optimizing performance, and fostering resilient sporting environments, providing a strong rationale for a deal of this review's focus.

Research consistently suggests that coping strategies significantly influence athletes' psychological and physical states, with implications for their functioning. For instance, studies indicate that even strategies often viewed negatively, like avoidance coping, can demonstrate context-dependent utility. Carson and Polman's (2010) research with injured rugby players found that avoidance strategies helped manage short-term emotional distress during rehabilitation when goal attainment was limited, particularly when combined with alternative engagement within the sports organization. Crucially, coping plays a key role in managing competitive anxiety. Work by Hanton and colleagues suggests that adaptive coping strategies, such as cognitive restructuring and imagery, may help athletes reinterpret anxiety symptoms as facilitative rather than debilitative, potentially enhancing performance resilience through increased confidence (Hanton et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2007). Furthermore, longitudinal research highlights the potential link between coping tendencies and athlete burnout. Studies indicate that a disposition towards task-oriented coping may be associated with decreases in burnout over time (Nicholls et al., 2022), while a tendency towards avoidance coping might predict increases in burnout symptoms (Madigan et al., 2020). Distinct coping profiles identified among athletes, such as adaptive or engaged copers, also appear linked to higher levels of sport well-being and more positive stress appraisals (Rose et al., 2023). Collectively, this body of work suggests adaptive coping may serve as a protective factor for athletes' mental health and sustained engagement.

The link between coping and well-being is intrinsically connected to performance outcomes. Research suggests coping strategies may mediate the relationship between

psychological states like confidence and performance perceptions. Levy et al. (2011) found that task-oriented coping (e.g., mental imagery) appeared to positively mediate the confidence-performance link, while disengagement-oriented coping (e.g., resignation) showed a negative mediational effect. Supporting this, correlational studies generally indicate positive associations between athletes' coping skills and their reported sporting success and satisfaction (Mohmed Nor et al., 2024). These findings imply that how athletes manage stress may influence their ability to translate psychological resources into successful competitive outcomes.

Moving beyond the individual athlete, coping research increasingly acknowledges the critical role of social and relational dynamics. Systematic reviews, such as Woodhead et al.'s (2024) work on communal coping, emphasize that stressors in sport are often relationally constructed. This perspective suggests that collective efforts to manage shared stressors (e.g., performance pressure, team conflict) – termed communal coping – may strengthen team cohesion, enhance relationship resilience (like coach-athlete bonds), and potentially buffer against negative outcomes like burnout. This highlights the importance of considering the broader social ecosystem in which athletes operate and implies that interventions fostering supportive team environments and collaborative coping efforts might be beneficial.

In conclusion, research into coping in sport provides compelling evidence that how athletes manage perceived demands profoundly shapes their psychological health, competitive experiences, and the resilience of their sporting environments. This underscores the practical significance of understanding coping mechanisms. While findings offer valuable guidance for developing supportive interventions and optimizing athletic systems, it is important to recognize that coping effectiveness is often context-dependent, and further research continues to refine our understanding.

2.1.4. Coping taxonomies

Taxonomies serve as foundational tools in research, providing shared language to systematically categorize, compare, and interpret complex phenomena. Coping taxonomies can be categorized along a continuum from micro-analytic levels – examining discrete strategies (e.g., relaxation, imagery) – to macro-analytic levels, grouping strategies into broader functional categories (e.g., problem-focused vs. emotion-focused coping). This hierarchical approach has been extensively documented in stress and coping literature (e.g., Compas et al., 2001; Skinner et al., 2003). This subsection prioritizes macro-analytic classifications as they dominate the literature and form the basis for findings discussed in this review.

In general psychology, three dominant macro-analytic coping taxonomies have shaped research, though all face significant limitations. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) problem-focused versus emotion-focused distinction was criticized for oversimplification, as many strategies serve both functions simultaneously (Compas et al., 2001; Skinner et al., 2003). Carver et al.'s (1989) COPE inventory expanded this into 13 theoretically derived scales, yet factor analyses revealed unstable structures across samples. Endler and Parker's (1994) three-factor model – task-oriented, emotion-oriented, and avoidance-oriented – improved psychometric stability but was deemed insufficiently granular to fully grasp coping's complexity (Schwarzer & Schwarzer, 1996). Critically, all models struggled with poor cross-measure consistency, hindering knowledge integration (Stanisławski, 2019).

Stanisławski (2019) proposed the Coping Circumplex Model to resolve these issues using two bipolar, orthogonal dimensions: Problem Coping (active solving vs. avoidance) and Emotion Coping (positive regulation vs. negative dysregulation), forming eight distinct coping styles. The CCM overcomes taxonomy fragmentation by providing a unified spatial model enabling cross-measure interpretation.

In sport psychology, three primary macro-analytic classifications have shaped research. First, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) problem-focused versus emotion-focused distinction, though criticized for oversimplification. Second, Roth & Cohen's (1986) approach versus avoidance classification faced similar critiques for lacking nuance (Compas et al., 2001). To address these shortcomings, Gaudreau & Blondin (2004) developed a sport-specific three-factor model categorizing strategies as task-oriented, disengagement-oriented, or distraction-oriented. This framework more accurately reflects coping's multidimensional structure for sport contexts.

Despite improvements, challenges remain due to conceptual overlaps between frameworks. To address persistent taxonomic ambiguities, Nicholls et al. (2016) proposed a novel three-factor classification tailored to sport contexts: mastery coping (controlling stressors via problem-solving), internal regulation (managing emotional responses), and goal withdrawal (ceasing efforts toward objectives). This classification showed empirical validity via meta-analysis of 18 studies, offering standardized structure while retaining sport-specific relevance.

This quick overview aims to illuminate key challenges in classifying coping strategies within sport psychology – not to exhaustively map the field, but to equip readers with foundational insights for interpreting subsequent results and discussions. Coping taxonomies

remain dynamic, evolving to better capture the nuanced realities of athletic stress management, reflecting both theoretical rigor and the adaptive demands of sport-specific contexts.

2.1.5. Coping assessment

Another critical challenge in psychology lies in how researchers gather data to analyse the dynamic process of coping. Investigators employ diverse methodologies, spanning from quantitative tools like standardized questionnaires to qualitative approaches such as interviews or diaries. Each method carries distinct trade-offs: while quantitative measures prioritize reliability and cross-study comparability, qualitative designs capture nuanced, context-specific experiences (Crocker et al., 2015). Valid psychometric tools are essential – they ensure researchers measure intended constructs accurately and facilitate consistent replication, which is vital for building cumulative knowledge.

While foundational work in general psychology has established widely used instruments like the COPE (Carver et al., 1989), Ways of Coping Questionnaire (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988) and Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS) (Endler & Parker, 1990) these frameworks and their assessments face recurring critiques regarding structural instability, situational specificity, and psychometric limitations (Kato, 2015). Comprehensive discussion of these general issues extends beyond this review's scope, but their existence underscores the inherent complexity of measuring coping as a dynamic process.

In sport contexts, many assessment tools originated outside sport but have been adapted to address athletic stressors. They focus on individual coping processes over collective strategies, and despite growing recognition of communal dynamics' importance, methodologies remain anchored in intrapersonal frameworks (Crocker et al., 2015). Such instruments serve to evaluate coping effectiveness – defined by Nicholls (2010) as "the degree to which a coping strategy or combination of strategies is successful in alleviating stress" (p. 264) – and deepen understanding of how athletes adapt to stressors. This focus on effectiveness directly informs interventions by identifying patterns that guide tailored training to refine or replace maladaptive approaches (Crocker et al., 2015).

Qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and athlete diaries, provide the richness needed to understand the depth of how individuals cope, revealing, for example, how athletes tend to use different coping strategies simultaneously (Gould et al., 1993). By capturing lived experiences, these methods also uncover coping's fluidity – such as

shifts in strategy use across a season – enabling longitudinal insights into intra-individual adaptation (Holt et al., 2007).

However, coping is mostly measured using quantitative questionnaires (Crocker et al., 2010). The most widely used sport psychology questionnaires include: the Athletic Coping Skills Inventory-28 (ACSI-28; Smith et al., 1995), the Modified COPE (MCOPE; Crocker & Graham, 1995), the Coping Function Questionnaire (CFQ; Kowalski & Crocker, 2001), and the Inventaire des Stratégies de Coping en Compétition Sportive (ISCCS; Gaudreau & Blondin, 2002). Crocker and colleagues' (2015) synthesis reveals these tools exhibit mixed validity. Despite limitations, these tools provide foundational insights but require cautious interpretation due to unresolved psychometric issues.

Emerging methodologies like Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) capture coping mechanisms in real-time by prompting individuals to report immediate responses to stressors as they occur naturally (McDevitt-Murphy et al., 2018). This approach minimizes recall bias and reveals context-dependent coping dynamics, positioning EMA as a promising tool to advance ecological validity in athletic coping research.

2.2. Personality

2.2.1. Personality definition and conceptualisation

As with many extensively researched psychological constructs, personality can be defined in numerous ways depending on the theoretical framework. However, most contemporary definitions share common elements that emphasize consistent patterns of thought, feeling, and behaviour that distinguish individuals from one another. Cervone and Pervin's Personality: Theory and Research – a foundational textbook in the field – exemplifies this consensus, defining personality as: "psychological systems that contribute to an individual's enduring and distinctive patterns of experience and behavior" (Cervone & Pervin, 2019, p. 4). As described by these same authors, this definition integrates two core components: (1) dispositions – enduring tendencies that demonstrate consistency across time/situations; (2) inner mental life – the coherent organization of beliefs, emotions, and motivations that form intraindividual functioning.

Personality trait theories, proposed by Allport, Cattell and Eysenck, fostered a coherent understanding of traits as "enduring and distinctive patterns", directly operationalizing core elements of contemporary personality definitions through cross-temporal consistency and inter-

individual distinctiveness (Cervone & Pervin, 2019, pp. 183-184). This conceptual alignment explains trait theory's dominance in modern research, exemplified by the streamlined Big Five framework.

The predictive utility of traits for consequential life outcomes – including educational attainment, occupational success, relationship stability, and health – often exceeds that of socioeconomic status (Bleidorn et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2007). This utility stems significantly from their rank-order stability (the consistency of individuals' relative trait positions), which increases substantially during childhood and adolescence, plateauing in young adulthood (around age 25) with minimal further increases thereafter (Bleidorn et al., 2022). Meta-analyses report retest correlations averaging r = .40-.60 over extended intervals of up to 10 years, underscoring traits' reliability as long-term predictors (Bleidorn et al., 2022). Nevertheless, this stability coexists with demonstrable malleability. Longitudinal evidence reveals systematic mean-level changes across the lifespan: Neuroticism, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness typically increase throughout adulthood (peaking in young adulthood), aligning with the "maturity principle", while Openness and Extraversion exhibit less uniform trajectories (Bleidorn et al., 2019, 2022; Roberts & Mroczek, 2008).

2.2.2. The Big Five personality model

The Big Five represents a hierarchical taxonomy of personality structure comprising five broad domains: Openness to Experience (O), Conscientiousness (C), Extraversion (E), Agreeableness (A), and Neuroticism (N). Each of these broad dimensions is further decomposed into specific facets (e.g., 6 facets per factor in the NEO-PI-R) that capture narrower, empirically related characteristics, enabling comprehensive yet efficient assessment of personality structure (Costa & McCrae, 1992; McCrae & John, 1992). Importantly, John, Naumann, and Soto (2008) clarify that this "Big Five" structure does not imply personality differences can be reduced to only five traits; rather, these five dimensions represent personality at a very broad level of abstraction, with each dimension summarizing a large number of distinct, more specific personality characteristics (p. 119).

Theoretically, the model is grounded in the lexical hypothesis, which posits that socially relevant personality characteristics become encoded in natural language (Allport & Odbert, 1936; Goldberg, 1981). This implies that the Big Five domains reflect fundamental dimensions of human individual differences distilled from everyday descriptions. While primarily descriptive rather than explanatory, the taxonomy integrates diverse personality

systems (e.g., interpersonal, temperament-based) into a common framework (John et al., 2008, p. 141).

Having established this conceptual framework, we now turn to defining each of the Big Five dimensions (OCEAN) as delineated in McCrae and John's (1992) seminal work, "An introduction to the Five-Factor model and its applications". For each dimension, we will present illustrative findings from both general and sport psychology research to demonstrate their empirical importance and practical applicability, thereby establishing a part of the rationale for conducting this scoping review.

Openness to Experience (O) captures the breadth, depth, and permeability of an individual's conscious life and their need for variety and intellectual stimulation (McCrae & John, 1992). High Openness individuals are characterized by active imagination (Fantasy) and intellectual curiosity (Ideas), while low Openness individuals tend to be more practical, conventional, and resistant to change (McCrae & John, 1992). Recent research demonstrates that higher Openness predicts greater creativity and innovation, with individuals showing enhanced divergent thinking and novel problem-solving approaches (Oleynick et al., 2017). In sport psychology, champions demonstrate significantly greater Openness than non-champion athletes (Piepiora & Piepiora, 2021), though this may reflect adaptive development through elite sport experiences rather than innate predisposition.

Conscientiousness (C) reflects individual differences in the capacity for purposeful, self-directed behaviour, particularly concerning organization, persistence, and reliability in the prioritization of long-term goals (McCrae & Costa, 1987). High levels of Conscientiousness manifest as thoroughness, neatness, diligence, reliability, organization, and goal-directed persistence (McCrae & John, 1992), while individuals low in Conscientiousness are less organized, reliable, and disciplined, often struggling with procrastination and distractibility. Longitudinal research demonstrates that Conscientiousness is the strongest personality predictor of academic and occupational success, with higher levels associated with better health outcomes and increased longevity (Roberts et al., 2007). In sport psychology, endurance athletes exhibit higher Conscientiousness than team-sport athletes, potentially reflecting the self-discipline required for individualized training (Piepiora et al., 2019). Most compellingly, meta-analytic evidence confirms that Conscientiousness – alongside Extraversion – demonstrates statistically significant relationships with athletic performance outcomes among the Big Five traits (Yang et al., 2024).

Extraversion (E) denotes a personality dimension characterized by high energy, positive emotions, surgency, and the tendency to seek stimulation and the company of others (McCrae & John, 1992). High Extraversion individuals are typically talkative, enthusiastic, energetic, outgoing, assertive, and dominant, while low Extraversion individuals are quiet, reserved, shy, and emotionally restrained (McCrae & John, 1992). Research demonstrates that Extraversion strongly predicts subjective well-being and life satisfaction, with extraverted individuals showing greater stress resilience and faster recovery from negative events (Lucas & Donnellan, 2011). In sport psychology, team-sport athletes exhibit higher Extraversion than individual-sport athletes (Allen et al., 2013), potentially reflecting greater reliance on social dynamics. Athletes in high-risk sports show significantly greater Extraversion than non-athletes, aligning with sensation-seeking demands (Tok, 2011).

Agreeableness (A) reflects individual differences in interpersonal orientation along a continuum from compassion and cooperation to antagonism and self-interest (McCrae & John, 1992). High Agreeableness is marked by prosocial traits like altruism, nurturance, caring, trust, and modesty, whereas low Agreeableness exhibits hostility, self-centeredness, spitefulness, scepticism, competitiveness, and manipulativeness (McCrae & John, 1992). Meta-analytic evidence reveals that Agreeableness strongly associates with prosocial behaviour, conflict resolution, and relationship satisfaction, while predicting lower aggression and antisocial conduct (Graziano & Tobin, 2009). In sport psychology, Agreeableness uniquely predicts collective outcomes, serving as the strongest personality predictor of team performance and highlighting its role in fostering cooperation and cohesion in interdependent athletic contexts (Piepiora, 2021).

Neuroticism (N) represents individual differences in the predisposition to experience psychological distress and negative affectivity, along with the cognitive and behavioural styles associated with this tendency (McCrae & John, 1992). High Neuroticism individuals experience chronic negative affects such as nervous tension, depression, frustration, guilt, and self-consciousness, often coupled with irrational thinking, low self-esteem, poor impulse control, and ineffective coping strategies (McCrae & John, 1992). Low Neuroticism signifies emotional stability, characterized by calmness, relaxation, even-temperedness, and stress resilience, though not necessarily high positive mental health (McCrae & John, 1992). Contemporary research demonstrates that Neuroticism is the strongest personality predictor of mental health disorders, with higher levels associated with increased risk for depression, anxiety disorders, and reduced life satisfaction (Kotov et al., 2010). Within athletic contexts, Neuroticism

functions similarly to trait anxiety and correlates negatively with performance (Waleriańczyk & Stolarski, 2021). Elite athletes exhibit lower Neuroticism than recreational athletes, reflecting superior emotional regulation under competitive demands (Allen et al., 2011).

These personality traits should not be conceptualized as inherently ‘good’ or ‘bad’ but rather as contextually adaptive. The relationship of personality traits to performance outcomes may be positive or negative depending on specific situational contexts. High Conscientiousness consistently predicts academic and occupational success through enhanced organization and goal pursuit (Barrick & Mount, 1991), yet extreme Conscientiousness may manifest as counterproductive rigidity in contexts requiring rapid adaptation or creative flexibility (LePine et al., 2000). Similarly, while Neuroticism typically correlates with increased stress vulnerability, moderate levels can prove advantageous in quality control or risk assessment roles where vigilance is critical (Grant & Schwartz, 2011). Each personality dimension operates as a double-edged sword, where benefits in one context may present challenges in another. This contextual variability becomes particularly evident in athletic performance, where identical personality characteristics may prove advantageous in certain sport contexts yet potentially constraining in others.

Let us finish this sub-section by reviewing the psychometric robustness of questionnaires developed to assess these Big Five traits. Questionnaires are a cornerstone of personality assessment due to their efficiency in collecting data from large samples and their structured approach to quantifying self-reported personality characteristics (John et al., 2008). Among the most widely recognized instruments are the NEO Personality Inventory family, including the comprehensive NEO-PI-R and its shorter, 60-item version, the NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), as well as the 44-item Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John et al., 2008, pp. 125-126, 129). Currently, the most advanced versions are the NEO-PI-III (McCrae et al., 2005) and the BFI-2 (Soto & John, 2017).

Regarding their robustness, these questionnaires demonstrate strong psychometric properties. The NEO-PI-R and NEO-FFI exhibit high internal consistency, typically with coefficients above .80 (John et al., 2008, p. 131), and satisfactory long-term test-retest stability (John et al., 2008, p. 125). Similarly, the BFI shows good convergence with other Big Five measures (e.g., NEO-PI-R, NEO-FFI), along with satisfactory internal consistencies (typically in the .80s) and acceptable test-retest reliabilities (John et al., 2008, p. 130). The BFI-2 improves upon its predecessor by incorporating a hierarchical structure of 15 facets and controlling for acquiescence bias through content-balanced scales, enhancing its reliability and predictive

validity (Soto & John, 2017). Similarly, the NEO-PI-3 builds on the NEO-PI-R with more readable items that improve psychometric properties and confirm the Five-Factor Model's structure in adolescent observer ratings across 24 cultures (De Fruyt et al., 2009).

While the Big Five model has achieved widespread adoption and shows strong empirical support in general populations, it faces several notable limitations that should be acknowledged. The model's dimensions lack true orthogonality, with significant intercorrelations between factors (particularly Agreeableness and Conscientiousness; John et al., 2008, p. 133) challenging assumptions of independence, while Openness to Experience shows considerable cross-cultural instability, manifesting differently across linguistic and cultural contexts (John et al., 2008). Additionally, the model remains fundamentally descriptive rather than explanatory, providing a taxonomic framework without elucidating the underlying psychological mechanisms that drive personality traits (John et al., 2008, p. 140). Furthermore, cross-cultural assessments face the reference-group effect, where respondents calibrate self-ratings against local cultural norms, making scores sometimes incomparable across groups and undermining claims about universal trait structures (Heine et al., 2002). These limitations do not diminish the Big Five's contributions to personality science but rather highlight the iterative nature of scientific progress. Recognizing these constraints, researchers have developed refined models such as the HEXACO framework (Ashton & Lee, 2001), which represents a natural evolution that addresses some of these structural and cross-cultural concerns while building upon the solid foundation established by John, Costa and McCrae's pioneering work.

2.2.3. Personality in sport

A challenge in sport psychology research concerns how personality traits should be measured and conceptualized within athletic contexts. In their review mapping trait personality in sport and exercise psychology, Laborde et al. (2019) clarify that traits represent aggregated states appearing consistently across time and situations (Bleidorn et al., 2019), with the trait-state distinction resting on measurement specificity. They detail three assessment approaches: momentary states (e.g., pre-competition nerves), context-specific dispositions (e.g., anxiety recurring across sport competitions), and global traits (e.g., anxiety across sport, exams, and social settings). Classical trait theory defines traits through cross-situational consistency, which demonstrates moderate predictability ($r \approx .40$; Funder, 2001). While this cross-situational consistency is foundational, Laborde and colleagues (2019) note that sport psychology pragmatically prioritizes context-specific measures, which therefore might be seen as problematic. This practice is justified because dispositions demonstrating stability over time

within sport (e.g., an athlete consistently displaying high confidence across tournaments) typically reflect broader tendencies that manifest in other contexts (e.g., confidence during academic presentations or everyday challenges). Critically, both assessment approaches offer strong predictive validity, enabling identification of athletes' enduring behavioural patterns and design of targeted interventions for performance enhancement (Roberts & Woodman, 2015).

Having established the conceptual and empirical foundations of personality, the critical question becomes: How does this knowledge translate into tangible improvements in sport? The significance transcends theoretical classification, residing in its proven capacity to optimize athlete development, enhance team dynamics, and elevate performance outcomes.

As previously stated, there exists a significant relationship between the Big Five traits and sports outcomes. Robust meta-analytic syntheses affirm that personality dimensions, particularly Conscientiousness and Extraversion, demonstrate meaningful associations with athletic performance across diverse sporting domains (Shuai et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024). Importantly, these findings translate into concrete applications for the sporting ecosystem.

Foremost, personality research provides a practical foundation for individualized athlete development. Understanding dispositional profiles enables practitioners to tailor emotional control strategies based on how different personality types respond to competitive stress (Allen et al., 2013). Research demonstrates that Conscientiousness predicts successful adjustment across multiple domains in young athletes (Laurin, 2009). Rather than attempting to modify enduring personality traits, the focus shifts to training coaches and designing support systems that work effectively with individual differences.

The value extends to talent identification. Patterns where champions exhibit higher Conscientiousness and Openness (Piepiora & Piepiora, 2021) offer objective criteria beyond physical metrics. This knowledge helps identify athletes whose psychological makeup aligns with specific sport demands, guiding selection decisions (Shuai et al., 2023).

Furthermore, this knowledge critically informs strategic team composition and dynamics. Recognizing the generally beneficial role of Agreeableness in sportsmen, or Extraversion's association with extensive communication and social interaction in interdependent team units (Piepiora, 2021), allows practitioners to construct rosters and role assignments that leverage inherent interpersonal dispositions. Personality assessments can also contribute to understanding intragroup relationships and team effectiveness, enabling the construction of applied interventions in various athletic contexts (Allen et al., 2013).

In synthesis, personality research in sport represents more than academic curiosity – it constitutes a significant shift in understanding and optimizing human performance. Evidence demonstrates that the Big Five personality traits serve as reliable predictors of athletic success, provide actionable insights for individualized coaching, and offer frameworks for talent identification and team composition. This research enables practitioners to move beyond one-size-fits-all approaches toward precision-based athlete development.

2.3. Coping and personality

2.3.1. Factors influencing coping: The importance of individual differences

Several variables have been extensively researched to understand their influence on coping processes. In addition to personality (which will be explained below), the most prominent factors are age, gender, and cultural background, each demonstrating significant effects on how individuals select and implement coping strategies.

Firstly, age represents a factor in coping strategy selection, with distinct developmental trajectories emerging across the lifespan. For example, Kurth et al. (2025) conducted a 10-year longitudinal study revealing four coping dimensions: instrumental action, denial/disengagement, positive reappraisal, and focus and venting of emotions. At baseline, older adults reported higher use of instrumental action, denial/disengagement, and positive reappraisal but lower use of focus/venting of emotions compared to younger adults. All coping strategies showed overall decreased usage over the decade, with positive reappraisal declining more steeply among older participants.

Secondly, gender significantly influences both coping strategy selection and effectiveness. Kelly et al. (2008) found that women utilizing less positive reframing exhibited higher depressive symptoms compared to women using more positive reframing and to men, regardless of their reframing usage. Additionally, women reporting greater self-blame demonstrated elevated trait anxiety levels, an effect not observed in men. These gender-specific patterns extend to quality of life outcomes. Gattino et al. (2015) revealed that while problem-focused strategies enhanced well-being across all domains, self-blame proved especially maladaptive for men, decreasing their quality of life across all measured dimensions. Social and instrumental support particularly enhanced the relational quality of life for women, highlighting the importance of gender-tailored interventions. These findings already hint that individual differences in psychological dispositions, beyond broad demographic categories, may play crucial roles in determining coping effectiveness.

Finally, cultural background also shapes coping preferences, with collectivistic versus individualistic orientations creating distinct patterns. Luong et al. (2020) demonstrated that individuals from collectivistic contexts favour harmony-promoting strategies, while those from individualistic contexts prefer confrontational approaches. Chinese Americans exhibited less positive affect reactivity and greater recovery compared to European Americans, mediated by different appraisals of social support. A review by Kuo (2011) confirms that culture affects stress-coping through multiple pathways, including differential patterns across ethnic groups and varying effects of acculturation on strategy selection.

2.3.2. Conceptual rationale for Personality-Coping research in sport

The preceding sections established coping as a dynamic, transactional process (Section 1) and personality as a system of enduring psychological dispositions (Section 2). Integrating these domains represents a theoretically coherent and empirically imperative line of inquiry within sport psychology. This sub-section outlines the conceptual rationale underpinning personality-coping relationship investigation, drawing explicit connections between foundational frameworks and highlighting personality's unique value over other individual difference factors like demographics.

Coping inherently embodies characteristics of both dispositional tendency and dynamic, situationally responsive process (Gaudreau & Miranda, 2010). The "dispositional vs. situational nature" debate acknowledges that while athletes exhibit relatively stable, trait-like coping preferences (dispositional coping), their actual strategy use is also fluid, adapting to the specific demands and appraisals of unique stressors (situational coping). This dispositional aspect of coping directly aligns with the conceptualization of personality outlined earlier. Personality traits represent the underlying, relatively consistent psychological architecture that predisposes individuals towards certain patterns of appraisal, emotional reactivity, and, consequently, characteristic ways of engaging with stressors over time and across situations. Studying personality-coping relationships, therefore, explores the pathways through which enduring individual differences influence the dynamic stress-coping process, bridging the conceptual gap between stable traits and fluid coping responses by highlighting the interactive nature through person-situation interactions.

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) TTSC provides a natural foundation for integrating personality. This model positions coping as arising from a dynamic interplay between the individual and environment, mediated by cognitive appraisal. Critically, Lazarus and Folkman

(1984) identified individual antecedents – including beliefs, commitments, and personality traits – as key factors influencing this entire appraisal-coping cycle. These antecedents shape how individuals:

1. Appraise Stressors (Primary Appraisal)**:** Personality traits influence whether an event is perceived as a challenge, threat, or harm/loss. For instance, high N should predispose individuals towards threat appraisals, while high E may bias towards challenge appraisals in social-evaluative sporting contexts.
2. Evaluate Resources (Secondary Appraisal): Personality traits shape the perception of available coping resources. High C may foster confidence in problem-solving abilities (a key resource), while low A might diminish perceptions of available social support.
3. Select and Deploy Coping Strategies: Enduring dispositions influence the repertoire of strategies an individual habitually considers and feels capable of employing. For example, high O may correlate with greater cognitive flexibility and willingness to experiment with novel coping approaches, while high C may favour organized, planful (problem- or task-focused) strategies.
4. Engage in Reappraisal: Personality can influence the tendency and style of reappraisal. Optimism (linked to low N and high E) could facilitate positive reappraisal, while pessimism may hinder adaptive reinterpretations.

Beyond predicting strategy selection, personality traits provide crucial insight into the mechanisms underlying variations in coping effectiveness among athletes. Coping effectiveness was briefly defined in section 2.1. using Nicholls' (2010) definition, but a more exhaustive approach reveals its true depth. Crocker et al. (2015) emphasize that coping effectiveness in sport should be conceptualized not merely as stress reduction, but as successful adaptation encompassing both task success and emotional regulation (p. 52). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) captured this dual requirement: "A person who manages a problem effectively but at great emotional cost cannot be said to cope effectively... Similarly, a person who regulates emotions successfully but does not deal with the problem source cannot be said to be coping effectively" (p. 188). This helps explain why a strategy effective for one athlete (e.g., a high A athlete seeking social support) might be ineffective for another (e.g., a low A athlete forced into support-seeking). Personality explains this variability by highlighting how traits interact with situational demands and the inherent 'fit' between individual disposition and chosen strategy.

2.3.3. Empirical evidence for Personality-Coping relationships

The influence of personality on appraisal processes represents a fundamental level of interaction between traits and coping. Research consistently demonstrates that Neuroticism predicts threat appraisals, whereby individuals perceive stressors as overwhelming and beyond their control, while Extraversion and Conscientiousness correlate with challenge appraisals that frame stressors as manageable opportunities for growth (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Optimism facilitates positive reappraisal by enabling individuals to reframe adversity in more constructive terms (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010, p. 692). These general population findings receive strong corroboration within athletic contexts. Allen et al. (2011) demonstrated similar patterns among athletes, where Neuroticism predicted increased avoidance coping, while Extraversion linked to problem-focused approaches, particularly among athletes who were also emotionally stable and open to new experiences, consistent with a combination of traits that may facilitate effective coping.

Personality traits also predict coping strategy selection patterns. In the general population, Conscientiousness predicts problem-focused strategies (e.g., planning), Neuroticism strongly links to avoidance and rumination, and Extraversion drives social support-seeking (Guadalupe & DeShong, 2025). Sport research corroborates these broad tendencies but uncovers unique interactions: Conscientiousness, representing a dimension of cognitive maturity, negatively predicts distraction-oriented and disengagement-oriented coping (e.g., resignation) in athletes, which might reflect disciplined task-persistence (Nicholls et al., 2013), while Neuroticism similarly predicts maladaptive strategies like distancing and venting (Kaiseler et al., 2019).

Coping effectiveness is moderated by personality. Studies show problem-focused coping reduces distress more effectively for conscientious individuals, while avoidance exacerbates distress for those high in Neuroticism (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010, p. 694). Nicholls et al. (2013) found that cognitive social maturity, including conscientiousness, peer influence on behaviour, and rule following, relates to how adolescent athletes cope and perceive effectiveness. In the same study, higher Conscientiousness was associated with more task-oriented coping and less disengagement-oriented coping. While distraction- and disengagement-oriented coping generally predicted lower effectiveness, task-oriented coping showed neutral overall effects but significantly positive effects for female athletes. Peer influence negatively affected coping effectiveness, suggesting it can inhibit adaptive coping (Nicholls et al., 2013). This study highlights cognitive social maturity as significant for understanding adolescent athlete coping with competitive stressors. Neuroticism's association

with less adaptive coping further underscores trait-contingent effectiveness (Kaiseler et al., 2012).

The empirical link between personality and coping has tangible applications across high-demand contexts. Personalizing interventions demonstrably improves outcomes: for individuals high in Neuroticism, improving emotion regulation and matching coping to situations could be beneficial (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Therapeutic education tailored to patients' personality and cognitive abilities is considered necessary by healthcare professionals, with expectations that individualization will improve intervention results (Ricci et al., 2022). Health professionals can utilize personality assessments to design individualized stress management programs for preventing stress-related disorders in high-stress occupations, improving coping outcomes (Schlatter et al., 2022). Within sport psychology, while literature remains limited compared to general population research, the potential for personality-informed interventions appears substantial. The consistent patterns across general and athletic populations, combined with sport-specific nuances in competitive contexts, suggest that personality-tailored coping interventions could significantly enhance both athlete well-being and performance outcomes.

This empirical evidence demonstrates that personality-coping relationships represent robust, measurable phenomena with clear practical applications (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007). The consistency of findings across diverse populations, coupled with sport-specific patterns that both corroborate and extend general population research, provides compelling justification for continued investigation within athletic contexts. Understanding how personality systematically influences appraisal processes, strategy selection, and coping effectiveness offers sport psychology practitioners a scientifically grounded foundation for developing more precise, individualized interventions that align with athletes' natural psychological tendencies while addressing their unique competitive demands.

This robust empirical foundation underscores the centrality of personality traits – particularly the Big Five framework – in shaping athletes' coping processes, effectiveness, and overall adaptation to sport-specific stressors. However, despite compelling theoretical rationale and growing evidence, the literature remains fragmented. Variations in conceptualizations, measurement approaches, and methodological designs across studies complicate efforts to synthesize clear patterns, identify consistent gaps, or derive actionable insights for applied practice. To systematically consolidate this evolving knowledge and strategically guide future research and intervention development, a scoping review is essential.

3. OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research employs a scoping review methodology. As defined by Munn et al. (2020, p. 950), scoping reviews aim "to systematically identify and map the breadth of evidence available on a particular topic, field, concept, or issue, often irrespective of source... within or across particular contexts".

Accordingly, the primary objective of this master's thesis is to establish a consolidated understanding of the current research landscape concerning the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and coping strategies utilized by sportsmen. Through a systematic examination of the literature, this review specifically aims to characterize the nature, extent, and central themes of existing studies, thereby clarifying the dynamics of this relationship within sport settings.

To achieve this objective with rigor and transparency, the research process was guided by the methodological standards outlined in the JBI Manual for Evidence Synthesis (Peters et al., 2020) and the PRISMA extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR; Tricco et al., 2018). This structured approach ensured systematic identification, selection, and synthesis of relevant evidence. Specific methodological adaptations were incorporated to meet the Faculty of Psychology master's thesis protocols, including single-reviewer screening.

Driven by this objective and methodology, the central research question guiding this scoping review is:

What is the nature, extent, and characteristics of existing evidence regarding the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and coping in sports?

Which leads us to these sub-questions:

1. How are Big Five personality traits and coping operationalized and measured in sport psychology research, and what theoretical frameworks are used to define coping in this field?

2. What methodological approaches characterize the literature examining personality-coping relationships in athletes, including study designs, assessment timeframes, and stressor contexts?

3. What are the broad results patterns in the included studies?

4. What research gaps and future directions emerge for understanding personality-coping relationships in sport contexts?

4. METHODOLOGY

To ensure methodological transparency while systematically mapping the literature on personality-coping dynamics in sport settings, this chapter delineates the methodological framework governing this scoping review using the aforementioned guidelines, namely the JBI Manual for Evidence Synthesis (Peters et al., 2020) and the PRISMA-ScR extension (Tricco et al., 2018).

4.1. Protocol

The development of a formal protocol represents standard practice for systematic literature reviews (Peters et al., 2020). Scoping reviews require *a priori* systematic planning to ensure methodological transparency and rigor. A comprehensive protocol was established before commencing this review to delineate core procedural stages, serving as quality assurance and safeguarding against ad hoc decisions. While protocol publication represents conventional practice in peer-reviewed research, this thesis-based project required contextual adaptation. The protocol was established during the *pré-mémoire* phase of the first-year master's and underwent academic supervision, ensuring thorough conceptual planning while acknowledging practical limitations typical of graduate research. This approach maintains scholarly standards of premeditated design despite formal non-publication.

4.2. Eligibility criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria constitute a fundamental determinant of literature review quality, serving to ensure methodological precision and relevance to the research question. These criteria were rigorously operationalized through the Population-Concept-Context (PCC) framework to systematically evaluate source eligibility, aligning with previously described research objectives to guarantee selective specificity and maintain analytical focus essential for valid scoping review outcomes.

Population: This review places no particular restriction on eligible populations as long as study participants practice sport as defined below. While all categories of sportsmen are eligible, the focus remains on athlete populations. The inclusion of participants is not restricted by age or competitive level, as scoping reviews provide an opportunity to scope broadly over a subject area to analyse present evidence and help guide future research. Coaches, parents, or sport psychology practitioners are excluded unless they are active sport participants.

Concepts: There is a relation between two concepts: Big Five personality traits and coping. Regarding coping, the chosen working definition for eligibility is "effortful cognitions and behaviours an athlete employs to manage constantly changing perceived important adaptation challenges" (Crocker et al., 2015). To maintain theoretical and methodological precision, this review exclusively includes: (1) Studies explicitly framed within coping theory (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman's Transactional model), and (2) Measures explicitly labelled as assessing 'coping' (e.g., COPE, MCOPE, or DCICS inventories). Studies focused primarily on emotion regulation are excluded, even where strategies functionally resemble coping. This boundary ensures theoretical coherence and methodological consistency in synthesizing coping-specific taxonomies and measures.

Regarding personality, this review operationalizes the construct through the Big Five framework (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism). While assessment of all Big Five dimensions represents the ideal operationalization, this review adopts an inclusive approach: Studies examining any individual Big Five dimension or combination are eligible, provided they explicitly reference the Big Five framework. This strategy prioritizes knowledge mapping comprehensiveness – the core objective of scoping reviews – while acknowledging that personality-coping dynamics in sport may be examined through specific trait-strategy relationships. Non-Big Five personality constructs remain excluded.

Finally, to map relationships between Big Five traits and coping, eligible studies must either statistically test their association (e.g., correlations, regressions) or qualitatively analyse connections between them. Studies describing coping and personality separately are excluded.

Context: The context is sport in general, defined by Pink (2008) as: "An activity involving physical exertion, skill and/or hand-eye coordination as the primary focus, with elements of competition where rules and patterns of behaviour exist formally through organisations." What is important for eligibility is to fall into that definition and not in physical activity, defined by the World Health Organization (2020) as: "any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure." Therefore, E-sport studies are excluded, while youth, competitive, recreational, professional and Olympic sport studies are all eligible.

Type of studies: All empirical study designs (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods) are eligible. Only peer-reviewed journal publications in English or French – excluding master's theses, dissertations, and grey literature – are included to ensure methodological quality and accurate interpretation.

4.3. Selecting databases

Comprehensive database selection is critical for ensuring methodological exhaustiveness in scoping reviews. Four interdisciplinary databases were selected to ensure comprehensive coverage: SPORTDiscus (EBSCOhost), PsycINFO (Ovid), Medline (Ovid) and Scopus.

SPORTDiscus represents the premier database for sports and exercise science literature, providing specialized coverage of sport-specific research, including sports psychology that might be underrepresented in broader databases.

PsycINFO, produced by the American Psychological Association, serves as the definitive resource for psychological literature. Its sophisticated APA Thesaurus indexing system enables precise searches for psychological research relevant to sports contexts.

Medline, maintained by the U.S. National Library of Medicine, constitutes the world's largest biomedical database. Its Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) vocabulary ensures thorough coverage of health-related and physiological dimensions of sports research.

Scopus offers the largest interdisciplinary database across multiple disciplines. Its broad coverage captures emerging research areas and cross-disciplinary studies that might not appear in domain-specific databases.

4.4. Electronic search strategy

As with other forms of systematic literature reviewing, the development of comprehensive search strategies represents a critical methodological component for ensuring exhaustive literature identification in scoping reviews. Building upon the PCC framework outlined in the eligibility criteria, systematic search strategies were constructed to maximize the number of hits – relevant papers meeting inclusion criteria – while minimizing noise – papers not matching inclusion criteria. The fundamental objective was to achieve an optimal balance between sensitivity and specificity, recognizing that complete comprehensiveness remains an aspirational rather than achievable goal in systematic searching.

For each component of the PCC framework, both controlled vocabulary terms (subject headings) and natural language terminology were systematically identified and strategically combined using Boolean operators to construct database-specific search equations. Search strategies underwent iterative refinement, with non-contributory terms removed to optimize retrieval efficiency while maintaining comprehensiveness.

Complete search strategies, including detailed explanations of search term tables, Boolean operators, truncation applications, subject headings definitions, and retrieval numbers for each database platform, are comprehensively documented in the appendices (see Appendix 1). This technical documentation ensures methodological transparency and replication capacity.

4.5. Source of evidence screening and selection

Retrieved references from PsycINFO (Ovid), Medline (Ovid), SPORTDiscus (EBSCOhost), and Scopus were imported into Covidence (https://www.covidence.org) on July 18, 2025, a systematic review management platform designed to facilitate transparent and efficient study selection processes. This web-based software enables systematic organization of retrieved literature while maintaining methodological rigor throughout the screening phases.

The evidence selection process followed a standardized three-stage protocol within the Covidence environment. Initially, all retrieved references underwent automatic deduplication to eliminate identical records across databases, ensuring each unique study was evaluated only once. Subsequently, a two-phase screening approach was implemented: first-level screening based on titles and abstracts, followed by full-text evaluation for studies meeting initial inclusion criteria where full articles were accessible.

Additional identification methods were employed in July 2025 to ensure comprehensive literature coverage. Citation screening involved examining references from strategically selected sources using two systematic criteria: the three most cited studies among the 14 database-retrieved papers (Woodman et al., 2010; Allen et al., 2011; Kaiseler et al., 2012) based on Google Scholar citation counts, and foundational reviews spanning key theoretical domains (Piepora, 2020, for personality in sport; Crocker et al., 2015, for coping in sport). This approach ensured coverage of both influential empirical evidence and established theoretical foundations. Additionally, Connected Papers and Research Rabbit, web-based tools that use citation network analysis to identify related academic literature through algorithmic recommendations, were employed to expand literature identification. Firstly, Connected Papers provided citation network visualization for the same three top-cited seed studies, with all papers displayed in the interactive graphs screened by title for relevance. Secondly, Research Rabbit analysis utilized the same seed articles to generate recommendations for similar work, foundational papers, and citing studies through similar citation network analysis. The top 50 similar recommendations, plus all foundational and later citing works, were screened by title for relevance.

During full-text screening, explicit exclusion criteria were systematically applied with justification for each excluded study to ensure transparency and consistency. The predefined exclusion categories comprised: (1) Not Big Five – studies failing to employ the Big Five personality framework; (2) Not Coping – studies not investigating coping mechanisms according to the established working definition; (3) Interaction Not Studied – research examining personality and coping independently without exploring their relationship; and (4) Dissertation – non-peer-reviewed dissertations and theses.

While JBI methodological guidelines (Peters et al., 2020) recommend dual independent screening by two researchers to enhance objectivity and reduce selection bias, this review was conducted by a single reviewer due to resource constraints inherent in master's thesis-level research. This methodological adaptation represents an acknowledged limitation while maintaining a systematic approach to study selection through transparent application of predetermined criteria and comprehensive documentation of exclusion rationales.

4.6. Data extraction process

Following the identification of eligible studies, a structured data extraction was performed. The development of extraction categories was mainly informed by Connor-Smith and Flachsbart's (2007) meta-analysis to ensure all relevant information was captured.

Data were charted onto two complementary grids. Grid 1 was designed to capture the general study overview, while Grid 2 focused on detailed study methodology and context. This dual-grid approach enabled the structured organization of information ranging from basic study characteristics to specific methodological and contextual details.

A complete description of each extraction category is provided in Appendix 2, Section A. The completed extraction grids are presented in their entirety following that description.

In accordance with established scoping review methodology, this review does not incorporate formal quality assessment of included studies. This decision aligns with the fundamental purpose of scoping reviews to map existing literature comprehensively rather than evaluate study quality or synthesize evidence for practical application.

While the JBI Manual for Evidence Synthesis (Peters et al., 2020) recommends dual extraction by independent reviewers to enhance objectivity and minimize extraction bias, resource constraints inherent in graduate-level research necessitated single-reviewer implementation.

5. RESULTS

This section presents the findings derived from the systematic literature search following the methodology outlined above. Initially, a flow diagram will be presented, which demonstrates all steps undertaken to reach the final selection of included studies. Data synthesis follows a narrative approach based on extracted information, with results structured by extraction categories to identify trends.

5.1. Study selection process

The systematic search strategy across four databases yielded 133 records: PsycINFO (n = 36), Medline (n = 11), SPORTDiscus (n = 35), and Scopus (n = 51). Following automatic deduplication thanks to the Covidence's tool, 43 duplicate records were removed, leaving 90 unique records for title and abstract screening. During this initial screening phase, 60 records were excluded for failing to meet eligibility criteria, resulting in 30 reports sought for full-text retrieval. One report could not be retrieved, leaving 29 full-text articles assessed for eligibility.

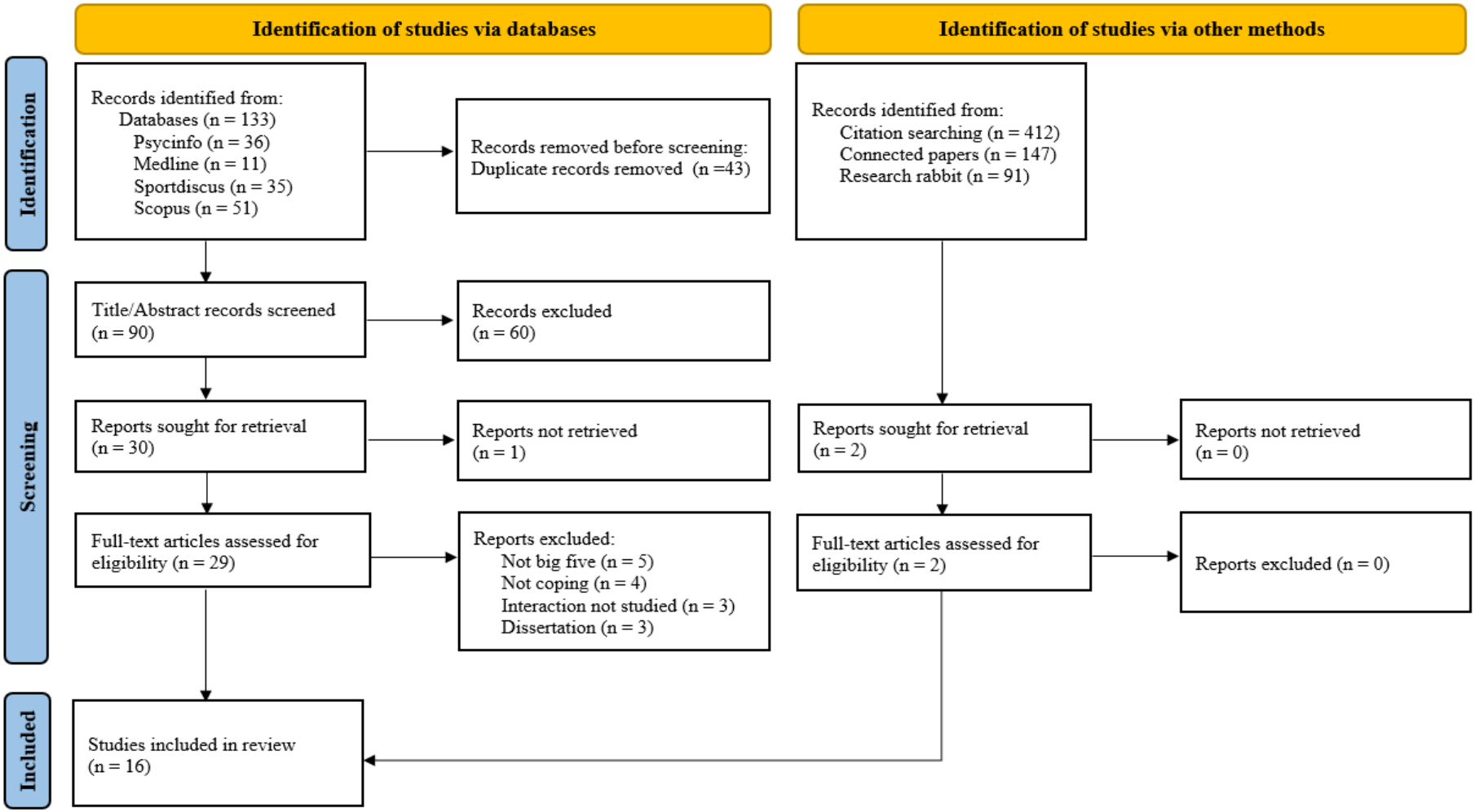
Full-text screening led to the exclusion of 15 studies with documented rationales: five studies did not investigate the Big Five personality framework, four did not examine coping mechanisms, three failed to study the interaction between personality and coping, and three were dissertations rather than peer-reviewed publications. This systematic evaluation resulted in 14 studies from database searches meeting all inclusion criteria.

Complementary identification methods generated substantial additional screening volume. Citation screening of strategically selected foundational sources identified 412 references, while Connected Papers visualization networks yielded 147 records, and Research Rabbit algorithmic recommendations produced 91 records. While PRISMA guidelines do not explicitly represent this intermediate step in the flow diagram, the 412 citations initially underwent title-only screening, after which 12 papers proceeded to abstract screening, ultimately yielding 2 studies sought for full-text retrieval. The comprehensive screening process through these 'other methods' pathways contributed 2 additional eligible studies following full-text assessment.

The complete selection process, encompassing both database searches and supplementary identification methods, resulted in 16 studies forming the evidence base for this scoping review. The PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1) provides a detailed visualization of the screening and selection process across all identification pathways.

Figure 1

PRISMA flow diagram



Adapted from: Page MJ, McKenzie JE, Bossuyt PM, Boutron I, Hoffmann TC, Mulrow CD, et al. The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. BMJ 2021;372:n71. doi: https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71

For more information, visit: http://www.prisma-statement.org/

5.2. Description of included studies

5.2.1. Date of publication

The 16 studies included in this scoping review were published over 15 years, from 2008 to 2023. The research output shows an uneven pattern over time. There was initial research activity between 2010 and 2013, which produced five of the included articles. This was followed by a gap in research, with no eligible studies published between 2014 and 2017. Research activity increased again from 2018 onwards. The year 2019 was particularly productive, contributing five articles and representing nearly a third (31.25%) of the total literature reviewed. Overall, the majority of research (10 of the 16 studies, or 62.5%) was published in the last six years (2018-2023), showing that research on the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and coping in sport is primarily a recent area of study.

5.2.2. Methodological design

The methodological landscape of the synthesised literature is characterized by a striking homogeneity. Fifteen of the sixteen included studies employed a purely quantitative design, relying exclusively on the administration of questionnaires to gather data on personality and coping. This uniformity underscores a dominant scholarly approach within this research domain, prioritizing standardized, scalable data collection to investigate personality-coping relationships. The sole exception to this trend was the study by Coulter and colleagues (2018), which adopted a mixed-methods approach, complementing its quantitative data with qualitative interviews to construct a more holistic and nuanced psychological portrait of the athlete.

5.2.3. Geographical distribution of research

The collective body of research originates from ten different countries, with research activity concentrated in certain regions. A significant majority of the studies were conducted within Europe, which was the source of 12 of the 16 articles. Within this European context, the United Kingdom emerged as the most prolific contributor, accounting for six studies. Poland was the second most frequent country of origin, contributing three studies.

The remaining research was distributed more broadly, with single studies originating from Australia, India, and the United States. This distribution indicates that while the personality-coping relationship in sport is a topic of international interest, the current evidence base is predominantly shaped by research conducted in Western, and particularly European, academic contexts.

5.2.4. Study objectives

To comprehensively understand how personality-coping relationships have been investigated in sport psychology, this section examines the selected literature from two perspectives: the main thematic objectives that researchers have sought to explain through personality-coping dynamics, and the analytical approaches employed to study these relationships.

Main thematic objectives

The 16 studies were analysed and classified based on their primary thematic objective, with each study assigned to a single, best-fit domain. The analysis confirms that the personality-coping (P-C) relationship is a central pathway for understanding critical outcomes in sport psychology, grouped into five principal domains: Performance and Training Optimization, Theoretical and Conceptual Advancement, Coping Effectiveness, Psychological Well-being and Mental Health, and Risk Mitigation and Safety.

Performance and Training Optimization (5 studies) focused on leveraging the P-C relationship to enhance athletic processes and outcomes. Kalinowski et al. (2020) linked personality and coping to technical-tactical effectiveness in soccer players, while Kaplánová (2019) investigated the P-C dynamic to understand what separates excellent from average gymnastic performance. Other research examined preparatory processes: personality and performance strategies predicting training quality (Woodman et al., 2010), coach leadership moderating negative personality trait effects on training behaviours (Zhang et al., 2019), and personality predicting coping styles to inform wrestler training (Tomczak et al., 2013).

Theoretical and Conceptual Advancement (5 studies) aimed to advance scientific understanding of psychological constructs and their sport-related interrelationships. Coulter et al. (2018) used a case study demonstrating McAdams' multilayer framework utility for understanding athlete personality and mental toughness conceptualization. Others advanced theoretical understanding of the P-C link by exploring interactive effects of personality dimensions on coping (Allen et al., 2011) or examining consistency of coping versus defence mechanisms across situations (Nicolas & Jebrane, 2008). Methodological innovations included Allen et al.'s (2012) validation of cardiovascular patterns as objective biomarkers for personality and coping, and the work by Vesković (2021) to test the factorial structure of a coping inventory while focusing on exploring the P-C relationship.

Coping Effectiveness (3 studies) centred on athletes' perceptions of how successfully they managed stressors, rather than subsequent performance or health outcomes. Kaiseler et al. (2012) and Preet & Shourie (2019) examined how Big Five traits influence coping selection, perceived stressor intensity, and perceived coping strategy effectiveness. Kaiseler et al. (2019) reinforced this theme by investigating independent and interactive effects of personality traits on dispositional coping and perceived effectiveness.

Psychological Well-being and Mental Health (2 studies) used the P-C relationship to explain mental health symptoms and well-being outcomes. Altamura et al. (2019) investigated how Neuroticism and coping strategies mediate the link between a specific gene (5HTT-LPR) and anxiety/depression symptoms in elite athletes. Contreras et al. (2023) evaluated relationships between stress, sport anxiety, Neuroticism, and coping to inform student-athlete mental health interventions.

Finally, Risk Mitigation and Safety (1 study) examined the P-C relationship for preventing physical harm in high-stakes environments. Próchniak & Próchniak (2021) explored temperamental personality traits as predictors of future-oriented coping with weather stress among mountain hikers, understanding how hikers proactively manage dangerous conditions to inform outdoor sports safety.

Analytical approaches

The analytical methods reveal a clear distinction between research where the P-C relationship constitutes the focal research question and research where it serves a supporting role within broader theoretical models. Specific analytical approaches – from foundational main effects to complex moderation and mediation analyses – define the current investigation state, as illustrated in Figure 2.

All 16 studies examined the main effects of personality traits on coping strategies, testing direct relationships between Big Five traits and athletes' coping behaviours as the universal starting point for P-C relationship investigation.

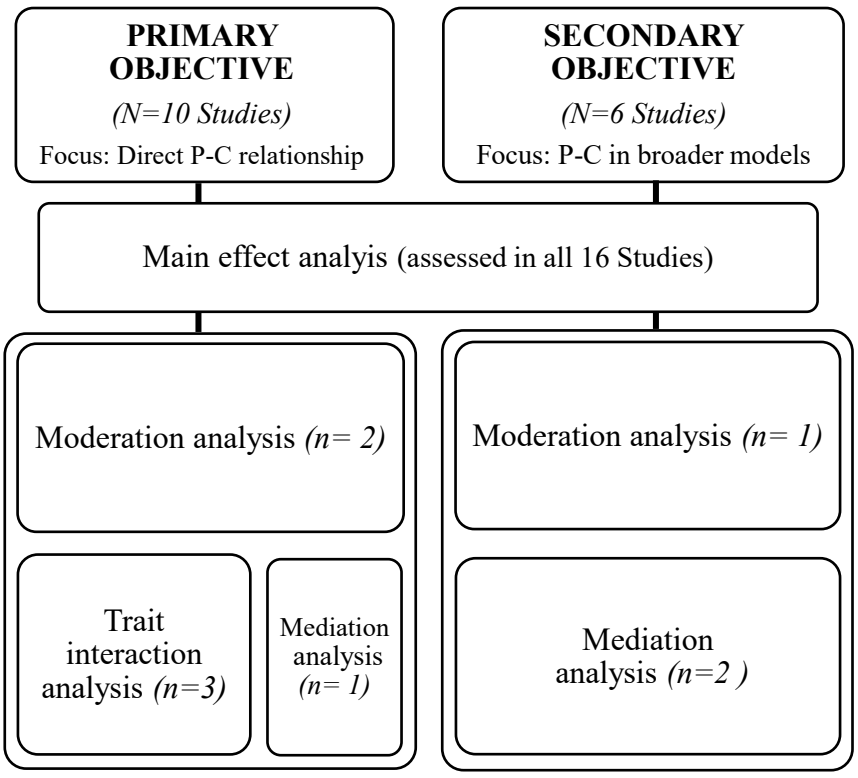
Ten studies positioned the P-C relationship as their focal research question, with the central aim of directly mapping predictive pathways from Big Five personality traits to sportsmen's coping patterns. Beyond establishing these direct links, a subset explored more nuanced relationships through moderation analyses. Kaiseler et al. (2012) tested Neuroticism as a moderator affecting how stress intensity relates to coping strategies, while Zhang et al.

(2019) tested inspirational motivation as a moderator of the Neuroticism-coping link. Additionally, three studies (Allen et al., 2011; Kaiseler et al., 2019; Vesković, 2021) explored personality-by-personality interactions to understand how trait combinations predict coping strategies. Conversely, Kalinowski et al. (2020) adopted a mediational approach, testing task-focused coping strategies as explanatory mechanisms linking personality traits to soccer performance outcomes. The other four studies in this group focused exclusively on main effects (Tomczak et al., 2013; Kaplánová, 2019; Preet & Shourie, 2019; Próchniak & Próchniak, 2021).

The remaining six studies framed the P-C relationship within larger explanatory frameworks, where it served a supporting role in understanding broader phenomena. The analytical approaches in this group notably emphasized mediation. Contreras et al. (2023) examined stress as a mediator between Neuroticism and dysfunctional coping strategies. Similarly, Altamura et al. (2019) utilized mediation analysis, positioning the Neuroticism-coping relationship within a genetic-stress framework by testing maladaptive coping as a mediator between Neuroticism and anxiety symptoms. Woodman et al. (2010) employed a moderation approach, finding that low Neuroticism was more strongly related to coping when emotional control was high. The other three studies in this group focused exclusively on main effects (Nicolas & Jebrane, 2008; Allen et al., 2012; Coulter et al., 2018).

Figure 2

Hierarchical classification of study objectives



5.2.5. Synthesis of key findings

The primary findings from the 16 included studies reveal a complex and multifaceted relationship between the Big Five personality traits and coping strategies in sport. While outcomes vary, the literature provides clear evidence that personality dispositions predict athletes' tendencies toward certain coping styles. A detailed synthesis of these relationships, which will be visually summarized in Table 1, is presented below.

A prominent finding across numerous studies is the association between Neuroticism (N) and maladaptive coping patterns. High N was linked to increased avoidance coping (Allen et al., 2011; Allen et al., 2012; Kaiseler et al., 2012), distraction and disengagement coping (Kaiseler et al., 2019), lower problem-focused coping and diminished effectiveness (Preet & Shourie, 2019; Kaiseler et al., 2019), and reduced coping with adversity (Zhang et al., 2019). Contextualizing this within a mental health framework, Altamura et al. (2019) demonstrated that this tendency toward maladaptive coping serves as a mediator between genetic predispositions, Neuroticism, and the development of anxiety symptoms in elite athletes. The emotion-focused coping relationship was less clear, with positive (Vesković et al., 2021) and negative (Contreras et al., 2023) associations reported, though Tomczak and colleagues (2013) found that high N increased emotion-oriented coping among women. Interestingly, Kaiseler et al. (2019) found that high N could interact with high E or O to promote task-focused coping, suggesting moderation by other personality factors. Zhang et al. (2019) additionally noted that transformational leadership (e.g., inspirational motivation) could buffer the negative effects of high N on coping behaviours. In a notable exception, Kaplánová (2019) found that high N was associated with greater coping with adversity and freedom from worry.

Conversely, low Neuroticism (low N) consistently predicted adaptive coping outcomes. Athletes with low N showed greater coping with training adversity (Woodman et al., 2010) and increased use of both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies (Coulter et al., 2018; Preet & Shourie, 2019). Furthermore, low N was associated with reduced dysfunctional coping, with this relationship mediated by stress levels (Contreras et al., 2023) and enhanced coping effectiveness mediated through task-oriented strategies (Kalinowski et al., 2020).

Conscientiousness (C) was frequently associated with adaptive, task-oriented coping. Higher Conscientiousness predicted increased problem-focused and task-oriented coping (Allen et al., 2011; Kaiseler et al., 2012; Tomczak et al., 2013; Coulter et al., 2018; Preet & Shourie, 2019; Vesković et al., 2021), while reducing distraction and disengagement coping

(Kaiseler et al., 2019). This finding was particularly relevant for performance outcomes; Kalinowski et al. (2020) showed C's positive effect on soccer match effectiveness was mediated by task-oriented coping strategies. Furthering proactive engagement themes, Prochniak & Prochniak (2021) identified Conscientiousness as a key preventive coping predictor in high-risk sports. One study linked higher C to greater emotion-focused coping (Allen et al., 2011). Notably, Kaiseler et al. (2019) found that high C could interact with high A to increase distraction-coping, representing an unexpected departure from these traits' typically adaptive profile. However, none of the reviewed studies found significant relationships between low Conscientiousness and specific coping strategies or coping style.

Extraversion (E) was predominantly linked to adaptive coping styles. Multiple studies reported positive associations with problem-focused or task-oriented coping (Kaiseler et al., 2012; Kaiseler et al., 2019; Preet & Shourie, 2019), with high E also reducing distraction-coping (Kaiseler et al., 2019). This is linked to positive outcomes, with research demonstrating that Extraversion enhances performance effectiveness via task-oriented coping (Kalinowski et al., 2020) and predicts proactive coping in challenging environments (Prochniak & Prochniak, 2021). Conversely, low E was linked to diminished coping with adversity and reduced coachability (Kaplánová, 2019). Allen et al. (2011) found complex influences: Extraversion's positive effect on problem-focused coping was strongest with low N and high O, while high E, high O, and high A combinations predicted greater emotion-focused coping.

For Agreeableness (A), the research mainly demonstrated an adaptive coping profile: higher levels were associated with increased task-focused coping while simultaneously reducing reliance on distraction-focused and disengagement-focused strategies (Kaiseler et al., 2019), as well as decreased emotion-oriented coping (Vesković et al., 2021). This adaptive pattern was further supported by positive associations with problem-focused coping (Allen et al., 2012) and preventive coping (Prochniak & Prochniak, 2021). Conversely, low A predicted greater avoidance-focused coping (Allen et al., 2012). However, some inconsistencies emerged, including a link to maladaptive coping in one case study (Coulter et al., 2018) and a negative association with task-oriented coping in female athletes (Tomczak et al., 2013).

Similarly, Openness to Experience (O) showed predominantly adaptive associations, with higher levels linked to both problem-focused coping (Kaiseler et al., 2012) and task-focused coping (Kaiseler et al., 2019), while also enhancing concentration, confidence, and peaking under pressure (Kaplánová, 2019). In contrast, lower O was associated with increased avoidance-focused coping across multiple studies (Allen et al., 2011; Allen et al., 2012).

These findings collectively demonstrate that while individual personality traits show consistent patterns, their influence on coping can be moderated through interactions with other traits, and importantly, through cognitive appraisals as suggested by Kaiseler et al. (2012), who found that personality traits indirectly influence coping strategies via appraisal processes. Finally, it is noteworthy that Nicolas & Jebrane (2008) found no significant correlation between any of the Big Five traits and coping strategies, though this likely reflects the study's small sample size (N=26) rather than true null effects, as several correlations approached meaningful magnitudes (e.g., Neuroticism-Distancing r=0.35, Extraversion-Problem solving r=0.21).

Table 1

Big Five personality traits and coping style associations in sport

Big Five trait	Dominant pattern	Key findings
Neuroticism	**MALADAPTIVE** (Consistently reported)	↑ Avoidance, distraction, disengagement coping ↓ Problem-focused coping and effectiveness • Exception: High N × High E/O → ↑ task-focused coping
Conscientiousness	**ADAPTIVE** (Consistently reported)	↑ Problem-focused and task-oriented coping ↓ Distraction and disengagement strategies • Exception: High C × High A → ↑ distraction coping
Extraversion	**GENERALLY ADAPTIVE** (Frequently reported)	↑ Problem-focused and task-oriented coping ↓ Distraction coping • Enhanced when: Low N + High O co-occur
Agreeableness	**MODERALTY ADAPTIVE** (Less frequently reported)	↑ Task-focused and preventive coping ↓ Distraction, disengagement, emotion-oriented coping
Openness	**MODERALTY ADAPTIVE** (Less frequently reported)	↑ Task-focused, problem-focused coping, concentration, confidence and performance under pressure

Note. Arrows indicate direction of association (↑ = increased, ↓ = decreased). "×" denotes trait interactions, with "/" indicating "or" and "+" indicating "and".

5.2.6. Sample characteristics

The total number of participants across included studies shows considerable variation, with sample sizes ranging from single-subject case studies to several hundred individuals. The majority of research was conducted with small to moderately sized cohorts, with eleven of sixteen studies recruiting fewer than 200 participants. This group includes studies with particularly small samples, such as Coulter et al.'s (2018) qualitative portrait of a single mentally tough athlete and Tomczak et al.'s (2013) focused examination of 20 cadet wrestlers. In contrast, five studies utilized larger samples exceeding 200 participants, ranging from 209

mountain hikers (Prochniak & Prochniak, 2021) to the largest cohort of 482 athletes (Kaiseler et al., 2012). This distribution highlights a predominant reliance on smaller, targeted samples, with a smaller subset of studies employing larger-scale survey designs.

Regarding sex distribution, a notable imbalance is evident with a clear overrepresentation of male athletes. Ten of sixteen studies were either exclusively or predominantly male. Four studies recruited exclusively male participants, including research on elite athletes (Altamura et al., 2019) and student-athletes (Zhang et al., 2019; Kalinowski et al., 2020). In contrast, only one study focused exclusively on female athletes (Vesković et al., 2021), and another featured a majority of female participants (Kaplánová, 2019). A minority (four studies) presented balanced or roughly balanced sex distribution, such as 100 male and 100 female athletes (Preet & Shourie, 2019) and equal splits of 10 male and 10 female wrestlers (Tomczak et al., 2013).

Participant age represents a key demographic feature, with most studies focusing on late adolescents and young adults. Mean age across studies ranges from 15.01 to 25.3 years. The youngest cohort was examined by Vesković et al. (2021), studying youth volleyball players with a mean age of 15.01 years. The highest average age was reported by Allen et al. (2012) at 25.3 years. Most studies centred on university-aged or young adult athletes, with mean ages clustering between 19 and 23 years. Notably, only Altamura et al. (2019) provided a broad age range (18-36 years) without specifying a mean. Overall, the evidence base primarily reflects athletes' experiences during developmental career stages.

5.2.7. Sport context

The included studies encompassed a variety of sport contexts, broadly categorized by whether the sport was individual, team-based, or not specified. A significant portion of the research focused on individual sports, such as canoeing/kayaking (Nicolas & Jebrane, 2008), gymnastics (Woodman et al., 2010; Kaplánová, 2019), wrestling (Tomczak et al., 2013), aiming sports (Preet & Shourie, 2019), and mountain hiking (Prochniak & Prochniak, 2021). Other studies investigated team sports, including Australian football (Coulter et al., 2018), soccer (Kalinowski et al., 2020), and volleyball (Vesković et al., 2021). Several studies included a mix of both individual and team sports (e.g., Allen et al., 2011; Allen et al., 2012; Kaiseler et al., 2019) or did not specify the sport classification (Kaiseler et al., 2012; Contreras et al., 2023).

Beyond the individual or team classification, the studies also captured a wide spectrum of competitive levels, ranging from beginner to international. The highest level of competition, International Level, was represented in studies involving athletes competing in world

championships or multi-national tournaments (e.g., Nicolas & Jebrane, 2008; Woodman et al., 2010; Allen et al., 2011; Kaiseler et al., 2012; Altamura et al., 2019; Preet & Shourie, 2019; Kaplánová, 2019). The National Level included athletes competing for national titles or in top-tier domestic competitions (e.g., Tomczak et al., 2013; Coulter et al., 2018; Kalinowski et al., 2020; Contreras et al., 2023).

At the sub-national level, studies featured athletes competing at County/Regional Level championships (e.g., Allen et al., 2011; Kaiseler et al., 2012). The Club/University Level was also well-represented, encompassing athletes in local club leagues or university sports programs (e.g., Allen et al., 2011; Kaiseler et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2019). Finally, some studies included athletes at the Beginner Level, participating in entry-level or developmental programs (Kaiseler et al., 2019), while others did not specify the competitive level of their participants (Vesković et al., 2021; Prochniak & Prochniak, 2021).

5.2.8. Personality assessment

The personality assessment measures employed across studies utilized various validated instruments to capture the Big Five dimensions. The most frequently employed instrument was the NEO-FFI (Neuroticism-Extraversion-Openness Five-Factor Inventory), used in eight studies. Other studies opted for the shorter Big Five Inventory (BFI), including Kaiseler et al. (2012); Kaiseler et al. (2019); Preet & Shourie (2019); and Contreras et al. (2023). Additionally, the NEO-PI-R (Revised NEO Personality Inventory) was used by Nicolas & Jebrane (2008), and the NEO-PI-3 by Coulter et al. (2018). For more concise assessments, the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) was utilized by Zhang et al. (2019), and the IPIP (International Personality Item Pool) by Woodman et al. (2010).

While most studies assessed all five dimensions, some explicitly focused their analysis or discussion on particular traits based on their research questions or initial findings. For instance, Altamura et al. (2019) and Contreras et al. (2023) specifically focused on Neuroticism, investigating its relationship with maladaptive coping and dysfunctional coping, respectively. Similarly, Woodman et al. (2010) and Kalinowski et al. (2020) concentrated on Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Conscientiousness. Zhang et al. (2019) also narrowed their focus to Extraversion and Neuroticism, examining how transformational leadership might moderate their effects on training behaviours.

5.2.9. Coping assessment and theoretical framework

The assessment of coping strategies across the included studies employed a variety of established questionnaires, each categorizing coping into different taxonomies. The most common approach involved instruments that classify coping into problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance-focused strategies. This tripartite taxonomy was measured by tools such as the Abbreviated Ways of Coping Questionnaire (WOCQ) (Nicolas & Jebrane, 2008), the Coping with Stress Questionnaire (CFQ) (Allen et al., 2011; Allen et al., 2012), the modified COPE inventory (Kaiseler et al., 2012; Preet & Shourie, 2019), and the Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS) (Tomczak et al., 2013). Some studies using the COPE inventory further refined the avoidance category into maladaptive coping (Coulter et al., 2018; Altamura et al., 2019) or used the Brief COPE to include a dysfunctional coping dimension (Contreras et al., 2023).

Another prominent taxonomy observed was the task-focused, distraction-focused, and disengagement-focused coping, measured by the Dispositional Coping in Competitive Sport (DCICS) scale (Kaiseler et al., 2019; Vesković et al., 2021) and the Coping in Competitive Sport (CICS) scale (Kalinowski et al., 2020). Broader measures, such as a subscale of the Questionnaire of Trait Inventory (QTI), were used to assess “coping with adversity” (Woodman et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2019). Kaplánová (2019) utilized the Athletic Coping Skills Inventory-28 (ACSI-28), which assesses a more granular set of coping-related skills including, coping with adversity, coachability, concentration, confidence, goal setting, mental preparation, peaking under pressure, and freedom from worry. Lastly, Prochniak & Prochniak (2021) developed a custom scale on “preventive” and “proactive” coping with specific stressors like bad weather.

Regarding the theoretical framework, the vast majority of the included studies explicitly grounded their investigation of coping within the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, as conceptualized by Lazarus & Folkman (1984). This framework, extensively described in our literature review, was either explicitly referenced or employed through coping inventories that align with its principles across all but one study. Only Kaplánová (2019) did not explicitly state or infer a specific theoretical framework for its coping assessment.

5.2.10. Coping focus and timeframe

The included studies primarily adopted a dispositional coping focus, examining athletes' typical coping responses across various situations. This approach was evident in 10 of the 16 studies (62.5%), which aimed to understand stable individual differences in coping tendencies.

In contrast, six studies employed a situational coping focus, investigating coping responses to specific, recent stressors. This distinction (38.5%) allowed researchers to capture how coping strategies might vary depending on the immediate demands of a particular stressor.

Notably, all studies assessed coping at an intraindividual level, focusing on the coping strategies employed by individual athletes rather than comparing interindividual coping patterns between different individuals or groups.

Regarding the timeframe of coping assessment, all included studies utilized a retrospective approach. This meant participants were asked to recall and report on coping strategies used in past situations.

5.2.11. Stressors characteristics

The studies included in this review varied in how stressors were identified and described, falling primarily into two categories: researcher-defined or self-selected stressors.

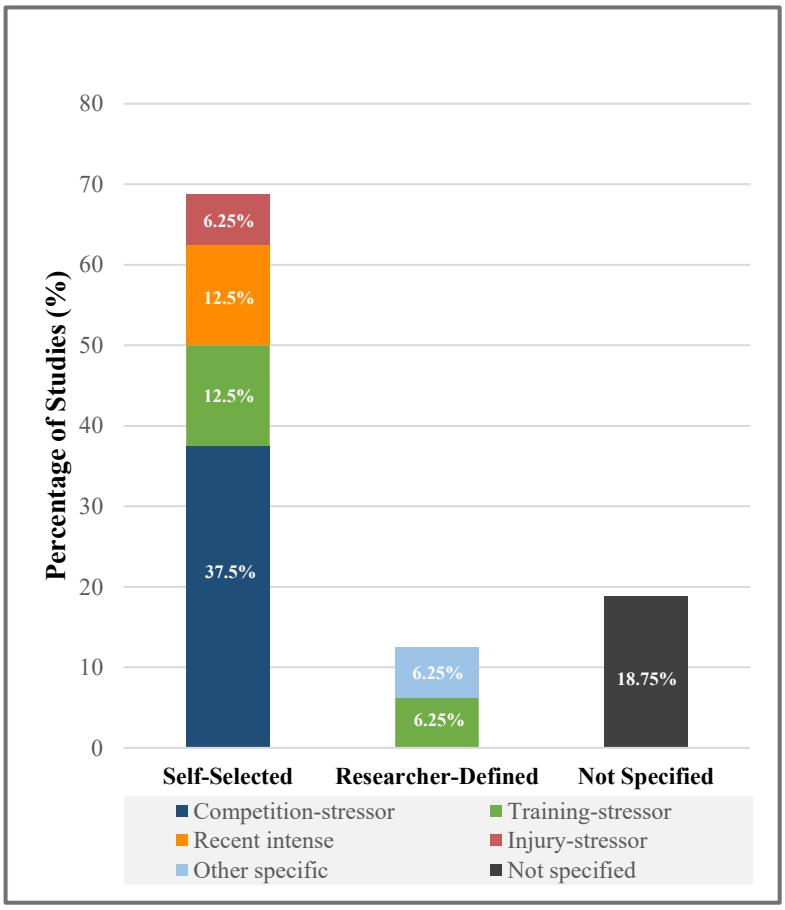
A minority of studies (12.5%) utilized researcher-defined stressors, where the specific stressful situation was predetermined by the researchers. For example, Nicolas & Jebrane (2008) focused on "specific responses to stress in pre-competition and stress training," while Prochniak & Prochniak (2021) examined coping with "adverse weather" during mountain hiking. This approach allows for greater control over the type of stressor being investigated, potentially enabling more direct comparisons across participants.

In contrast, the majority of studies (68.75%) employed self-selected stressors, asking athletes to identify and report on a personally relevant stressful experience. This often involved recalling "typical responses to stressors in broad competition" (e.g., Allen et al., 2011; Allen et al., 2012; Kaiseler et al., 2019; Altamura et al., 2019) or "training-specific stressors" (Woodman et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2019). Some studies prompted for "most intense sport stressor experienced in the last 14 days" (Kaiseler et al., 2012) or "previous three months" (Preet & Shourie, 2019), indicating a focus on recent, impactful events. A unique instance of a self-selected stressor was "injury and subsequent time out from the game" (Coulter et al., 2018).

Finally, three studies (Tomczak et al., 2013; Kaplánová, 2019; Contreras et al., 2023) did not specify the nature of the stressor characteristics in their methodology sections.

Figure 3

Distribution of stressor types across included studies



Note. Stressor categories were derived from data extraction tables based on the specific types of stressors investigated in each study. Full category descriptions and extraction grids are available in the appendices (see Appendix 2).

6. DISCUSSION

This final chapter interprets the study findings by contextualizing them within existing scientific literature and examining them through the perspective of our research questions. For transparency, both the limitations of selected studies and our methodological approach are addressed. Finally, we outline directions for future research.

6.1. Interpretation of results

6.1.1. Developmental context and generalizability

A key characteristic of the literature mapped in this review is its focus on athletes in late adolescence and young adulthood, with the mean age across studies falling between 15 and 25 years. A plausible explanation for this demographic concentration lies in the competitive level of the samples studied. An analysis of the included articles reveals that a clear majority – more than 60% – of participants were recruited from sub-national contexts, such as universities, clubs and regional areas, where athletes are inherently younger. The inherent logistical and financial challenges of accessing older, professional, and elite athletes for research might make these younger populations more available, further contributing to this demographic skew.

This demographic reality creates an interesting intersection: the typical age for developmental and collegiate sport coincides precisely with what personality science has identified as a uniquely formative period for personal development. This life stage is characterized by significant mean-level changes in traits – typically towards greater psychological maturity – and by increasing rank-order stability that begins to plateau around age 25 (Bleidorn et al., 2022).

This intersection of developmental trajectories provides a compelling framework for interpreting the consistency with which personality-coping relationships were identified in the reviewed studies. While this review did not assess effect sizes, the regularity of reported associations may be explained by the developmental context. During these formative years, an athlete's coping repertoire is being actively shaped, tested, and consolidated under intense and structured competitive pressures. It is therefore plausible that their coping responses are more directly and consistently reflective of their underlying, still-solidifying personality dispositions. This interpretation is supported by external meta-analytic evidence from general populations, which found quantitatively stronger relations between personality and coping in younger samples (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007, p. 1094). The proposed mechanism is that with age

and experience, individuals develop greater coping flexibility, which may partially "wash out individual differences" linked to personality (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010, p. 691); the young athlete may not have yet had time or diverse experiences to build such flexibility.

The dynamics observed in a 20-year-old athlete – whose personality and coping style are co-developing under competitive pressure – represent a specific developmental context that cannot be assumed to apply to masters athletes whose personalities have stabilized and whose athletic challenges are different. The research landscape, therefore, offers a robust map of the personality-coping relationship during its formation but provides limited insight into how this relationship functions after this critical developmental window closes.

6.1.2. Sport-specific complexities and the evolving analytical landscape

At first glance, this scoping review's findings suggest that personality-coping relationships within athletic populations largely mirror well-established patterns in general psychological literature. The consistent association between high Neuroticism and maladaptive coping strategies – such as avoidance, distraction, and disengagement (e.g., Allen et al., 2011; Kaiseler et al., 2019) – directly reflects broader meta-analytic findings linking this trait to problematic disengagement coping (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007, p. 1095). Similarly, the tendency for athletes high in Conscientiousness and Extraversion to employ adaptive, task-oriented strategies (e.g., Kaiseler et al., 2019; Kalinowski et al., 2020) aligns with established research showing these traits predict problem-solving and engagement coping (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007, p. 1095).

However, concluding that the sport context merely validates these general patterns without offering unique insights might overlook emerging complexities calling for deeper investigation. While Neuroticism predominantly links to maladaptive coping, the athletic environment reveals significant moderating influences: high Neuroticism interacted with high Extraversion or Openness to promote task-focused coping (Kaiseler et al., 2019), and transformational leadership effectively buffered its typical negative impact (Zhang et al., 2019). Similarly, Agreeableness showed unexpected associations with maladaptive coping in specific contexts (Coulter et al., 2018; Tomczak et al., 2013). These exceptions point toward unexamined contextual moderators within sport environments.

Fortunately, researchers have begun adopting sophisticated analytical approaches to uncover these hidden mechanisms. While all 16 studies established foundational main effects – direct relationships where personality traits predict coping behaviours – several have moved

beyond simple prediction to investigate the 'how', 'when', and 'for whom' of these relationships. Following Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) framework that coping responses emerge from interactions between individual characteristics and situational demands, these advanced studies reveal processes underlying sport's apparent inconsistencies.

Mediation analyses have begun unpacking mechanisms through which personality influences coping effectiveness. Kalinowski et al. (2020) demonstrated that task-focused coping mediates the link between Conscientiousness and soccer performance, revealing a process-based pathway to competitive success. Contreras et al. (2023) showed that stress explains the pathway from Neuroticism to dysfunctional coping, identifying a specific psychological mechanism that could become an intervention target.

Even more revealing are moderation analyses investigating contextual factors buffering or amplifying personality effects. The finding that inspirational motivation can buffer the negative relationship between Neuroticism and coping with adversity (Zhang et al., 2019) demonstrates that personality's impact appears not deterministic but contingent on environmental factors. This aligns with broader theoretical understanding that personality interacts with context to shape outcomes, and that its influence on coping effectiveness varies across individuals and situations (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007, p. 1082). The most sophisticated studies have examined personality-by-personality interactions (e.g., Allen et al., 2011; Kaiseler et al., 2019), treating personality as the integrated system it is.

These analytical advances suggest that current inconsistencies are not methodological noise but signals that linking five global traits to general coping dimensions captures only the foundational layer of sport's nuanced reality. The true sport-specific effects likely lie in interactions with situational variables unique to athletic contexts – sport type, coaching climate, competitive level, or performance moment demands. Sport psychology appears positioned to uncover 'how', 'when', and 'for whom' personality-coping relationships manifest most powerfully in competitive environments.

6.1.3. The multidimensional nature of coping effectiveness

The analysis of thematic objectives reveals a diverse research landscape where Performance and Training Optimization and Theoretical and Conceptual Advancement emerge as the two largest, equally represented domains, while smaller clusters focus specifically on Coping Effectiveness and Psychological Well-being. This distribution highlights a crucial insight: when research moves from theoretical exploration to applied outcomes, the concept of

‘effectiveness’ is primarily interpreted through distinct lenses – performance enhancement and psychological health – which are rarely investigated together.

This artificial separation overlooks the foundational theoretical understanding that coping effectiveness in sport requires successful adaptation across both domains simultaneously. As previously described in chapter 1, coping effectively in sports requires a person to successfully manage both the task at hand and their emotions. It isn’t enough to just reduce stress or achieve the goal; you must do both. As Lazarus and Folkman (1984) noted, a person who solves a problem but at a great emotional cost, or a person who feels emotionally fine but doesn’t solve the problem, has not truly coped effectively.

Despite these discrete outcome categories in current research, common threads reveal the multifaceted functionality of certain personality-coping relationships. Task-oriented coping, consistently linked to Conscientiousness, appears to yield positive outcomes across these different domains, though through potentially different mechanisms. Within the Performance category, Kalinowski et al. (2020) demonstrated that task-focused coping is a direct route to competitive achievement in soccer. Meanwhile, in the Coping Effectiveness domain, Kaiseler et al. (2019) linked these same adaptive strategies to greater perception of having managed stressors successfully. Concurrently, findings from the Psychological Well-being category indicate that athletes experiencing higher sport anxiety are more likely to adopt dysfunctional coping patterns, which may exacerbate risks to mental health (Contreras et al., 2023).

This pattern raises a fundamental question for the field: What defines ‘effective’ coping in sport? While theoretical frameworks recognize effectiveness as inherently multidimensional, requiring both successful task management and emotional regulation, the current literature suggests that empirical investigations treat effectiveness as monolithic. The notable scarcity of studies measuring these different effectiveness facets simultaneously represents a significant gap in current understanding. This separation may reflect practical realities where short-term performance goals can overshadow, and potentially conflict with, athletes’ broader psychological well-being needs.

6.2. Limitations

6.2.1. Limitations of the included studies

Stressor definition and taxonomic inconsistencies

Two interrelated methodological limitations significantly constrain the interpretability and comparability of findings across reviewed studies. First, a fundamental tension between ecological validity and scientific rigor is evident in how stressors were defined. Nearly 70% of reviewed studies utilized self-selected, often vaguely defined stressors (e.g., "stress in broad competition"), while only 12.5% employed researcher-defined stressors, and nearly 20% failed to specify stressor context at all. While self-selection may enhance personal relevance – and meta-analytic research suggests personality-coping correlations can be stronger in such studies (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007, p. 1084) – this lack of standardization presents a substantial barrier to cumulative knowledge building.

As coping strategies are dynamic and shift in response to specific situational demands, failure to characterize stressor properties – such as controllability, severity, or domain – makes meaningful comparison across studies complicated. This contradicts direct recommendations that researchers "should not simply combine participant responses to a wide array of self-generated stressors" (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010, p. 696). The absence of standardized stressor definitions prevents understanding why specific coping strategies were employed or deemed effective, limiting the practical applicability of findings.

Compounding this issue is substantial diversity in coping taxonomies. This review identified at least seven distinct classification systems across 16 studies. This reflects a broader, systemic challenge in coping research, characterized by "bewildering richness" of conceptualizations featuring over 100 category systems and 400 different labels for coping behaviours (Skinner et al., 2003). Recent studies confirm that this lack of unified theory and proliferation of distinct measures remain primary obstacles to field advancement (Guadalupe & DeShong, 2025; Stanisławski, 2019).

The confluence of unstandardized stressor definitions and divergent taxonomic frameworks creates a compounding effect that severely constrains synthesis. When conceptual overlap exists – where a single strategy like "seeking support" could be classified as 'emotion-focused' in one model but 'task-oriented' in another – combined with unclear stressor contexts, it becomes "difficult to compare studies and therefore identify how coping is related to performance" (Nicholls et al., 2016, p. 1). This dual fragmentation arguably represents the most significant barrier to conducting meaningful quantitative meta-analyses in this domain.

Measurement approach limitations

The methodological choices regarding coping assessment reveal a substantial disconnect between theoretical conceptualization and practical measurement. While coping is theoretically understood as a dynamic, contextual process (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), all sixteen studies relied exclusively on retrospective timeframes, asking athletes to recall past coping efforts. This approach persists despite explicit recommendations to abandon such designs, as retrospective reports are susceptible to memory errors and reporting biases (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010, p. 696). Further complicating this is the potential conceptual mismatch in how situational versus dispositional coping is measured. As highlighted by Guadalupe and DeShong (2025, p. 6), a broader trend involves repurposing tools beyond their validated functions. "Using a situation-specific measure like the Ways of Coping Questionnaire to assess general or trait-like coping tendencies disregards the situational specificity the tool is built around, potentially leading to skewed interpretations of coping as a fixed characteristic rather than a dynamic response to stressors" (Guadalupe & DeShong, 2025, p. 6). This misapplication blurs the important theoretical line between dispositional and situational coping, making it difficult to know precisely what is being measured.

Furthermore, the universal focus on individual-level coping appears to overlook the inherently social nature of athletic contexts, which is explored in half of the included studies. However, this focus on intrapersonal processes is reflective of a broader trend in the literature. As highlighted in a recent systematic review by Woodhead et al. (2024), research into interpersonal coping (IC) in sport is still in its "infancy". The advancement of IC research is hindered by conceptual and methodological challenges, including a "lack of consistency in IC-related terminology" and the need for "methodological innovation... to develop quantitative measures of IC". Therefore, the reviewed studies' reliance on individualistic measurement is not simply a limitation, but a reflection of a field where validated interpersonal frameworks and assessment tools are not yet widely established.

The split between dispositional (ten studies) and situational (six studies) coping measures reflects appropriate theoretical considerations, as personality traits should theoretically predict stable coping patterns more strongly than fluid, situation-specific responses (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007, p. 1083). This emphasis on dispositional coping is therefore a logical consequence of investigating stable personality trait influence. However, this categorization requires cautious interpretation for several reasons. First, the potential misapplication of situation-specific tools to assess general coping tendencies blurs the theoretical distinction

between dispositional and situational measurement. Second, three of these categorizations were inferred based on questionnaires used rather than explicit researcher intentions, adding uncertainty to this methodological split. The predominance of dispositional measures, while theoretically justified, exists within a somewhat blurred methodological landscape that may complicate the interpretation of personality-coping relationships in sport.

Generalizability constraints

The reviewed literature exhibits significant demographic homogeneity that constrains generalizability. Ten of sixteen studies featured exclusively or predominantly male samples, with cultural concentration in Western, particularly European, contexts. This represents a critical limitation, as both sex and culture have been identified as important potential moderators of personality-coping relationships (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007, p. 1084), particularly in sports context (Kaiseler & Polman, 2010). The current knowledge base may not accurately reflect the experiences of female athletes or those from non-WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) populations.

This demographic narrowness is compounded by methodological and theoretical homogeneity. The reviewed studies employed almost exclusively quantitative questionnaires (15 of 16 studies) interpreted through a single theoretical framework – the Transactional Model. While this convergence produces theoretical coherence, it also creates potential echo chambers. The field lacks insight into subjective experiences that qualitative methods might reveal, nor understanding of what alternative theoretical models, such as Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources theory, might contribute to understanding sport-specific resource dynamics.

Methodological rigor concerns

While the primary aim of this scoping review was to map the extent and nature of the literature rather than to formally appraise its quality – a task reserved for systematic reviews – a characterization of the field's methodological practices is essential for contextualizing the findings. A responsible interpretation requires acknowledging the foundation upon which the collective evidence is built. Analysis of the included studies reveals inconsistent engagement with three core pillars of robust quantitative research: sample size justification through power analysis, transparent reporting of measurement reliability, and management of inflated Type I error risk in multiple statistical tests. These trends provide crucial insight into the methodological maturity of personality-coping research in sport.

A foundational concern is the near-universal absence of *a priori* power analyses to justify sample sizes. Underpowered studies risk failing to find real relationships and can lead to inflated effect sizes when significance is found by chance (Button et al., 2013). Only one of the 15 quantitative studies provided power analysis to rationalize recruitment (Zhang et al., 2019), while 94% proceeded without justification. This makes it difficult to ascertain whether samples were adequately sized to detect the small-to-moderate effects typical in personality-coping research (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007). This widespread neglect suggests the field may be operating with unknown replication risks.

Measurement reliability reporting presents a more encouraging picture. A clear majority of studies (81%) provided at least partial reliability statistics, demonstrating general awareness of measurement quality importance. However, reporting practices showed inconsistency, with some studies providing only partial data, limiting full evaluation of measures used.

Finally, management of inflated Type I error rates was addressed by only a minority of studies. Approximately 73% conducted numerous correlations or regressions without mentioning or correcting for this increased statistical risk. Among those who engaged with the issue, a hierarchy of rigor was evident: some demonstrated awareness but applied no correction (Contreras et al., 2023), while others employed robust procedures like Bonferroni correction (Nicolas & Jebrane, 2008; Altamura et al., 2019) or False Discovery Rate (Kaiseler et al., 2019). This suggests nascent but not widespread adoption of best practices.

In synthesis, the methodological landscape reveals a field in development. The patterns here – particularly lacking power analyses and inconsistent Type I error control – support characterizing the field as being in a foundational, exploratory stage. While these practices do not invalidate important descriptive work completed, they warrant cautious interpretation of collective findings and underscore a critical research gap: the need for methodologically rigorous, adequately powered, and statistically conservative studies to confirm and build upon the foundational patterns mapped in this review.

6.2.2. Limitations of our methodological approach

In the interest of scientific transparency, it is essential to critically reflect on the methodological choices that shaped this scoping review. Every research project operates within constraints, and this master's thesis is no exception. The inherent limitations of our approach stem largely from adapting rigorous review frameworks to our practical context.

A primary consideration is that ideal guidelines for conducting scoping reviews, namely the PRISMA-ScR checklist (Tricco et al., 2018) and the JBI Manual (Peters et al., 2020), were necessarily adapted to meet specific directives of the Faculty of Psychology, Speech Therapy, and Educational Sciences. Most significantly, these frameworks recommend two independent reviewers for study screening and selection to ensure rigor and reduce bias. Following faculty guidelines for master's theses, this review was conducted by a single researcher. While systematic and transparent application of *a priori* eligibility criteria was employed to mitigate this limitation, the absence of a second reviewer inherently introduces potential selection bias.

The literature search scope was intentionally constrained to peer-reviewed journal publications, excluding grey literature such as theses and dissertations. The PRISMA flow diagram confirms that three dissertations were excluded at full-text screening on this basis. While this decision should enhance evidence-base reliability, it means that potentially valuable research was omitted. Additionally, this review did not incorporate broad-scope engines like Google Scholar – a deliberate choice to manage the trade-off between sensitivity and specificity, recognizing that such searches often generate high volumes of irrelevant results.

The electronic search strategy itself warrants reflection. As noted in the methodology chapter, the goal of any search is to strike an "optimal balance between sensitivity and specificity, recognizing that complete comprehensiveness remains an aspirational rather than achievable goal". The strategy employed yielded a relatively modest 133 records from four major databases. This could be interpreted as a finding in itself, suggesting that the direct intersection of the Big Five, coping, and sport is a highly specific and still-developing research niche. However, a critical self-appraisal suggests potential avenues for greater breadth. While the core concepts were thoroughly combined, the search did not include keywords for specific sports – even if "soccer" and "football" were tested for each database – or closely related personality constructs (e.g., "grit," "resilience"). Including such terms, alongside the limitation to English and French language articles, may have uncovered relevant studies that did not use the broader "athlete" or "Big Five" keywords in their abstracts, and thus represents a potential constraint on the exhaustiveness of our search.

Finally, the scope was intentionally constrained by excluding the parallel field of emotion regulation. As established in the literature review, recent scholarship increasingly views coping and emotion regulation as overlapping constructs within a broader 'affect regulation' framework, with Trudel-Fitzgerald et al. (2024) demonstrating that measures from both fields show "substantial overlap". Consequently, by limiting our search terms strictly to the 'coping'

literature, this review has almost certainly excluded relevant studies on athletes that may investigate identical psychological processes but label them as 'emotion regulation'. This decision was a pragmatic necessity to maintain a manageable scope for a master's thesis. However, it must be acknowledged as a significant boundary on the exhaustiveness of our findings. A future, large-scale review could produce a more complete synthesis by employing an integrated search strategy capturing high-quality research from both convergent fields.

Despite these limitations, the systematic mapping approach successfully identified key concepts, theories, and evidence while illuminating significant knowledge gaps. The structured methodology provides a transparent, replicable foundation for future research, serving as potential groundwork for more focused systematic reviews or primary empirical studies.

6.3. Future research directions

6.3.1. The developmental intervention window

The concentration of personality-coping findings within the critical developmental period of late adolescence and young adulthood presents compelling opportunities for future investigation. Because personality demonstrates greatest malleability during this "especially sensitive period for personality change" (Bleidorn et al., 2019), future studies should investigate whether targeted interventions that strengthen the personality-coping relationship in young athletes can enhance both well-being and competitive performance. Empirical support exists for coping enhancement intervention efficacy; Nicholls (2007) documented reduced ineffective coping and sustained effective strategies in an adolescent golfer, while Reeves and colleagues (2011) observed improved coping self-efficacy, effectiveness, and performance in academy soccer players following a theory-driven program. Given the co-development of personality and coping during this period, such sport-specific interventions may even yield benefits extending beyond athletic contexts.

Future investigations should prioritize understanding how established personality-coping relationships function in older athletes, where personalities have stabilized but athletic challenges differ from those faced by younger competitors. While longitudinal developmental research presents substantial logistical and financial challenges, future studies could eventually track personality-coping relationships across developmental stages, comparing association strength and stability in adolescent versus adult athlete populations to definitively establish whether the robust personality-coping links observed represent a developmentally specific phenomenon.

6.3.2. From traits to processes: Advancing analytical complexity

Future research could simultaneously advance along two dimensions to capture sport's nuanced personality-coping reality. First, studies should move beyond the broad Big Five personality dimension to examine specific facets, as advocated for achieving richer trait-outcome understanding (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010, p. 695; Guadalupe & DeShong, 2025).

Second, researchers should develop process-oriented analytical approaches explaining 'how', 'when', and 'for whom' personality-coping relationships operate. Future mediation research could identify psychological mechanisms beyond stress (Contreras et al., 2023), investigating pathways such as self-efficacy beliefs or outcome expectations. Moderation research should expand beyond inspirational motivation's buffering effects (Zhang et al., 2019) to systematically test environmental moderators, including coach leadership styles, team cohesion, and organizational climate factors.

This dual evolution from broad traits to specific facets and from simple associations to complex processes represents an ambitious long-term goal requiring substantial methodological resources. Future research could gradually progress toward examining how specific personality facets interact with sport-specific contextual factors using intricate analytical models.

6.3.3. Addressing methodological foundations: Standardization and rigor

The methodological limitations identified in this review suggest several directions for future research. Despite substantial coordination challenges, the field would benefit from gradual movement toward standardized approaches to stressor definition and coping categorization. Future studies should adopt consistent frameworks for characterizing stressor properties – including controllability, severity, duration, and domain-specificity.

Regarding coping taxonomy, the field would benefit from convergence toward unified theoretical frameworks rather than continuing to proliferate measurement approaches. This challenge extends beyond sport psychology, as taxonomic inconsistency represents a persistent problem throughout the broader coping literature, hindering theoretical advancement and empirical synthesis (Skinner et al., 2003). As discussed in chapter 1, frameworks like Nicholls et al.'s (2016) sport-specific taxonomy offer promising solutions for standardization. Future research should prioritize validation of existing taxonomies within sport contexts or development of sport-specific coping frameworks capturing unique competitive demands, building upon recommendations advocated for a decade (Crocker et al., 2015).

Future studies could also consider embracing methodological practices that match coping's dynamic, temporal nature (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The field's overwhelming reliance on quantitative questionnaires has produced theoretical coherence but limited insight into subjective experiences and real-time processes. Methodological diversity should incorporate both temporal and qualitative approaches. Ecological momentary assessment (EMA) approaches (as described in chapter 1), experience sampling methods, or daily diary studies could capture real-time coping processes rather than relying exclusively on retrospective recall, addressing memory and bias limitations. Simultaneously, qualitative approaches – interviews, focus groups, narrative analysis – should be integrated to understand the lived experience of personality-coping dynamics. Additionally, future research should explore alternative theoretical frameworks beyond the dominant Transactional Model. Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources theory, for example, might reveal unique insights about resource dynamics in competitive sport that current approaches miss.

The widespread lack of power analyses in current research represents a fundamental threat to replicability. Future studies should conduct a priori power analyses and ensure adequate sample sizes for detecting the small-to-moderate effects typical in personality research (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007). Additionally, researchers should adopt appropriate corrections for multiple testing and provide comprehensive reliability statistics for all measures.

6.3.4. Expanding demographic and methodological diversity

The demographic homogeneity of current research limits generalizability and represents a critical gap. Future research should prioritize female athletes, who remain significantly underrepresented despite potential sex differences in personality-coping relationships (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007, p. 1084). Studies should also expand beyond Western, European contexts to include diverse cultural populations, recognizing that cultural values may substantially influence both personality expression and coping preferences. Age diversity represents another priority. While the developmental focus has provided valuable insights, the field requires systematic investigation of personality-coping relationships across the full athlete lifespan. Such research could reveal age-related changes in coping flexibility and personality stability that influence intervention effectiveness.

6.3.5. Integrating multifaceted effectiveness outcomes

Ultimately, Current research typically investigates either performance optimization or psychological well-being outcomes, but rarely both simultaneously. This separation represents a missed opportunity for holistic understanding. Future research could adopt integrated designs examining P-C relationships across multiple effectiveness dimensions concurrently.

Such integrated approaches seem particularly relevant for identifying coping strategies that optimize multiple outcomes versus those creating trade-offs. While task-oriented coping linked to Conscientiousness appears beneficial across domains, future research could investigate whether certain personality-driven coping choices enhance competitive success at mental health expense, or vice versa. This appears important given that short-term performance demands may conflict with broader psychological well-being needs in competitive contexts.

Future research could track both performance and well-being trajectories simultaneously to understand how personality-driven coping choices influence sustainable athletic development. Such investigations could reveal optimal coping configurations for careers that maintain both competitive excellence and psychological health – a critical consideration for evidence-based sport psychology practice.

7. CONCLUSION

This investigation began with a simple observation: in the world of elite sport, mental fortitude is as critical as physical prowess. This scoping review was undertaken to systematically map the research landscape connecting two cornerstones of sport psychology: personality and coping. The central aim was to answer the question: "*What is the nature, extent, and characteristics of existing evidence regarding the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and coping in sports?"* By charting this territory, this master's thesis sought to consolidate a fragmented body of knowledge, identify its defining features, and illuminate pathways for future investigation to better support athletes.

The systematic synthesis of 16 empirical studies reveals a research field that is both established and in a state of dynamic evolution. The findings confirm a consistent and predictable relationship between personality and coping, largely mirroring patterns seen in general psychology. Neuroticism reliably predicts a reliance on maladaptive coping strategies like avoidance and disengagement, while Conscientiousness and Extraversion are consistently

associated with adaptive, task-oriented approaches. These foundational links provide a robust, evidence-based starting point for understanding an athlete's psychological predispositions. However, the research landscape is characterized by a notable demographic homogeneity, with a primary focus on young, male athletes from Western and particularly European contexts. Methodologically, the field is dominated by quantitative questionnaires and is almost universally guided by the Transactional Model, creating a theoretically coherent but methodologically narrow evidence base.

Beyond these broad strokes, a more nuanced picture emerges. The concentration of research on athletes in late adolescence and young adulthood highlights a critical developmental window where personality and coping repertoires co-evolve under the structured pressures of competitive sport. It is within this formative period that the link between who an athlete is and how they cope appears most direct. Yet, sport-specific complexities challenge simplistic interpretations, with factors like coaching style and trait interactions demonstrating that personality is not destiny. The field's analytical lens is sharpening, moving beyond simple correlations to embrace more sophisticated models of mediation and moderation that explore the precise mechanisms through which personality translates into action on and off the field. This evolution, however, is constrained by significant methodological limitations across the literature, including a lack of stressor standardization and a persistent fragmentation of coping taxonomies, which together hinder the synthesis of a truly cumulative science. This review, while systematic, is itself bounded by its necessary exclusion of the parallel field of emotion regulation and its reliance on a single reviewer, representing a snapshot of a vast and interconnected research ecosystem.

Ultimately, this review suggests that an athlete's personality provides a meaningful predictive framework for understanding their coping tendencies. It is a fundamental piece of the puzzle for any practitioner, coach, or organization aiming to foster resilience and optimize performance. The future of this field lies not in re-proving these foundational links, but in embracing the complexity. It requires moving toward more diverse samples, integrated methodological approaches that capture real-time processes, and analytical models that honour the dynamic interplay between the individual and the uniquely demanding world of sport. By doing so, we can move from merely understanding the athlete to truly empowering them, crafting interventions that are not just evidence-based but individually tailored to the person behind the performance.

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Ethical Statement on AI Use in This Scoping Review

To align with open science principles, this section transparently outlines the ethical use of AI tools in this project. Recent studies highlight both the potential and risks of AI in academic writing, specifically for literature reviews Kacena et al. (2024) emphasize that while AI tools like ChatGPT reduce writing time, they also risk inaccuracies (e.g., 70% of AI-generated references were incorrect in their study) and higher plagiarism similarity indices. Similarly, Mogoale et al. (2025) note that AI tools enhance efficiency in tasks such as literature screening, but require vigilant human oversight to address ethical concerns, including citation errors and content biases.

Guided by these findings, AI tools were used (DeepSeek, Gemini and Claude, free versions) strictly as aids under three safeguards. First, all AI-generated content was meticulously verified against original source documents to ensure fidelity and prevent inaccuracies. Second, original authorship was maintained to avoid plagiarism, with AI never generating novel content. Third, full comprehension was ensured, confirming that any AI-assisted reformulation used vocabulary and concepts fully understood by the author.

The application of these tools throughout this project revealed both their potential and limitations. AI has proven a powerful ally in automating laborious aspects of academic work, accelerating processes that allow researchers to focus more on critical analysis and synthesis. The potential for these tools to enhance the speed, scope, and efficiency of scientific inquiry is immense.

However, this potential is balanced by considerable risks. Writing this master's thesis revealed current AI limitations, including its capacity for generating fabricated information and the inherent biases within its training data. This underscores a critical, non-negotiable principle: AI is a tool, not a substitute for scholarly diligence. The responsibility for critical thinking, ethical integrity, and the ultimate validity of the research remains entirely with the human researcher. The future of science will undoubtedly be shaped by this partnership, but its success hinges on our ability to wield these powerful instruments with wisdom, scepticism, and an unwavering commitment to the truth.

9. APPENDICES

9.1. Appendix 1: Search strategies

A. Tables with search terms for each concept and databases

For the *Big Five personality traits* concept:

Databases	Subject heading	Natural language
PsycINFO (via Ovid)	1. 'Agreeableness'/ 2. 'Conscientiousness'/ 3. 'Extraversion'/ 4. 'Neuroticism'/ 5. 'Openness to experience'/ 6. 'Five Factor Personality Model'/	1. 'Agreeableness' 2. 'Conscientiousness' 3. 'Extraversion' 4. 'Neuroticism'. 5. 'Openness to experience' 6. 'Five Factor model' 7. 'Big Five'
Medline (via Ovid)	1. 'Neuroticism'/	
SPORTDiscus (via EBSCOhost)	Intentionally not used	
Scopus	(no subject headings in Scopus)	

For the *coping* concept:

Databases	Subject heading	Natural language
PsycINFO (via Ovid)	1. 'exp Coping behavior'/	1. 'coping'
Medline (via Ovid)	1. 'exp Coping skills'/	
SPORTDiscus (via EBSCOhost)	Intentionally not used	
Scopus	(no subject headings in Scopus)	

For the *Sports* and *Sportsmen* concept:

Databases	Subject heading	Natural language
PsycINFO (via Ovid)	1. 'sports'/exp 2. 'exp Athletes'/	1. 'sport*' 2. 'athlet*'
Medline (via Ovid)	1. 'exp sports'/ 2. 'exp Athletes'/	
SPORTDiscus (via EBSCOhost)	Intentionally not used	
Scopus	(no subject headings in Scopus)	

B. Complete search strategies for each database

B. 1. Search strategy utilised in PsycINFO (via Ovid)

Database: APA PsycINFO <1806 to March Week 1 2025>

Search Strategy:

1 five factor personality model/ (5022)

2 openness to experience/ (2504)

3 conscientiousness/ (2837)

4 extraversion/ (5659)

5 agreeableness/ (1652)

6 neuroticism/ (6973)

7 five factor model.ti,ab,id. (4745)

8 openness to experience.ti,ab,id. (3629)

9 conscientiousness.ti,ab,id. (10074)

10 extraversion.ti,ab,id. (14986)

11 agreeableness.ti,ab,id. (7768)

12 neuroticism.ti,ab,id. (18694)

13 Big Five.ti,ab,id. (8968)

14 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 or 9 or 10 or 11 or 12 or 13 (41063)

15 exp coping behavior/ (59783)

16 coping.ti,ab,id. (104111)

17 15 or 16 (108513)

18 exp athletes/ (20979)

19 exp sports/ (49600)

20 athlet*.ti,ab,id. (28348)

21 sport*.ti,ab,id. (48530)

22 18 or 19 or 20 or 21 (69520)

23 14 and 17 and 22 (36)

Irrelevant keywords tested: neo personality inventory/ - openness.ti,ab,id. - five factor*.ti,ab,id. - OCEAN.ti,ab,id. - FFM.ti,ab,id. - "Stress and Coping Measures"/ - stress management.ti,ab,id. - psychological adaptation.ti,ab,id. - exp physical activity/ - competition/ - Soccer/ - exp football/ - physical activity.ti,ab,id. - exercise.ti,ab,id. - competi*.ti,ab,id. - soccer.ti,ab,id. - football.ti,ab,id.
[50 ti/ab checked for these tests]

B. 2. Search strategy utilised in Medline (via Ovid)

Database: Ovid MEDLINE(R) ALL <1946 to July 16, 2024>

Search Strategy:

1 neuroticism/ (2057)

2 openness to experience.ti,ab,kf. (1429)

3 conscientiousness.ti,ab,kf. (5236)

4 extraversion.ti,ab,kf. (6540)

5 agreeableness.ti,ab,kf. (3930)

6 neuroticism.ti,ab,kf. (11407)

7 Big Five.ti,ab,kf. (4235)

8 five factor model.ti,ab,kf. (2271)

9 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 (19785)

10 coping skills/ (816)

11 coping.ti,ab,kf. (83833)

12 10 or 11 (83843)

13 exp athletes/ (24579)

14 exp sports/ (234106)

15 athlet*.ti,ab,kf. (92777)

16 sport*.ti,ab,kf. (125660)

17 13 or 14 or 15 or 16 (69520)

18 9 and 12 and 17 (11)

Irrelevant keywords tested: neo personality inventory/ - openness.ti,ab,kf. - five factor*.ti,ab,kf. - OCEAN.ti,ab,kf. - FFM.ti,ab,kf. - "Stress and Coping Measures"/ - stress management.ti,ab,kf. - psychological adaptation.ti,ab,kf - exp Exercise/ - Soccer/ - football/ - physical activity.ti,ab,kf. - exercise.ti,ab,kf. - competi*.ti,ab,kf. - soccer.ti,ab,kf. - football.ti,ab,kf.

[91 ti/ab checked for these tests]

B. 3. Search strategy utilised in Sportdiscus (via EBSCOhost)

Database: SPORTdiscus (July 18, 2024)

Search Strategy:

("Big Five" OR "Openness" OR "Conscientiousness" OR "Extraversion" OR "Agreeableness" OR "Neuroticism") AND ("coping") AND ("sport*" OR "athlet*") (35)

Irrelevant keywords tested: "five factor*" - "OCEAN" - "FFM" - "stress management" - "psychological adaptation" - "physical activity" - "exercise" - "competi*" - "soccer" - "football"

[24 ti/ab checked for these tests]

B. 4. Search strategy utilised in Scopus (via scopus.com)

Database: SCOPUS (July 18, 2024)

Search Strategy:

TITLE-ABS-KEY (("Big Five" OR "Agreeableness" OR "Conscientiousness" OR "Extraversion" OR "Neuroticism" OR "Openness") AND ("coping") AND ("sport*" OR "athlet*")) (51)

Irrelevant keywords tested: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("OCEAN" - "FFM" - "five factor*" - "psychological adaptation" - "stress management" - "competi*" - "exercise" - "physical activity" - "soccer" - "football")
[128 ti/ab checked for these tests]

C. Electronic search strategies: Commentaries

C. 1. Subject headings, free-text terms, Boolean operators and truncations

Subject headings = controlled vocabulary terms utilized in database indexing systems to categorize references systematically. These terms enable precise classification of research content and enhance search accuracy for users. Subject headings vary across databases and typically form hierarchical structures, with broader terms at higher levels becoming increasingly specific toward lower levels. They are identifiable in search equations as these terms are followed by a '/'.

exp = explode option for subject headings allows the inclusion of more specific related terms that stem from the broader heading, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the research domain.

Natural language terms = unlike subject headings, these terms are not controlled vocabulary and must appear within the abstract, title, or key concepts of references. They are recognizable in search equations by their concluding notation specific to each database platform (for example, in PsycINFO: .ti,ab,id).

Boolean operators:

- AND = results must contain both terms (example: "personality" and "coping" retrieves articles addressing both personality traits and coping mechanisms)
- OR = results must contain at least one term (example: "Big Five" or "five factor model" helps in obtaining articles on the Big Five personality framework)

Truncation (*) = enables retrieval of all term variations sharing the same root, maximizing search comprehensiveness while maintaining precision. (example: "athelt*" retrieves papers mentioning the words: athlete, athletes, athletic and athletics, but also: collegiate athlete, professional athlete, adolescent athlete, athletic population, etc.)

ti.ab.kf = field specification limiting free-text searches to title, abstract, and keywords only, ensuring targeted retrieval while excluding less relevant content from other record fields. This is for Medline but the ti,ab,id on PsycINFO brings similar results.

C. 2. Search Strategy Explanations

Each search equation was constructed to align with the specific database characteristics and indexing systems, incorporating both controlled vocabulary and free-text terms to ensure comprehensive retrieval. The strategies were systematically tailored to capture the three core PCC components: personality traits (specifically Big Five dimensions), coping mechanisms, and sport contexts, while accounting for the unique search functionalities of each platform.

Database-specific adaptations were essential given the varying indexing approaches and search capabilities across platforms. For instance, PsycINFO’s sophisticated psychological thesaurus enabled precise targeting of personality constructs through hierarchical subject headings, whereas SPORTDiscus required greater reliance on natural language approaches due to its more limited psychological indexing.

Building upon the theoretical framework established in the PCC criteria, different search terms were systematically integrated using Boolean operators and field restrictions to optimize retrieval efficiency. The fundamental approach involved combining personality-related terms with coping-related terms, subsequently restricted to sport contexts to maintain relevance to the research objectives.

Consider the PsycINFO search strategy as an illustrative example. The equation employed both subject headings (‘/’) and natural language terms (.ti.ab.id) to capture personality dimensions: "five factor personality model" was combined with individual trait terms like "openness to experience," "conscientiousness," "extraversion," "agreeableness," and "neuroticism." These personality components were then linked using Boolean ‘OR’ operators to ensure comprehensive coverage, before being combined with coping-related terms through ‘AND’ operators. The strategy concluded with sport-specific limiters to maintain contextual relevance, resulting in 36 retrievals.

Similarly, the Medline approach demonstrated adaptation to medical indexing conventions. Terms like "openness to experience.ti.ab.kf" and "conscientiousness.ti.ab.kf" were combined with coping terminology such as "coping skills" and sport-related limiters including "exp athletes" and "exp sports." This medical database perspective yielded different retrieval patterns, emphasizing the importance of platform-specific optimization.

The SPORTDiscus strategy adopted a more streamlined approach, directly combining Big Five terminology with coping and sport terms through a single comprehensive Boolean equation. This reflected the database’s specialized sport focus, allowing for more direct targeting without extensive medical or psychological indexing complications. Notably, this search strategy employed no field restrictions, searching across titles, abstracts, keywords, subject headings, and additional record fields simultaneously. Given the relatively low retrieval numbers even with this comprehensive, wide scope approach, the decision was made to maintain maximum sensitivity rather than impose restrictive field limitations. This exemplifies the fundamental search principle of preferring potential noise over silence – accepting some irrelevant results to ensure comprehensive capture of all relevant literature within the specialized sport domain.

Finally, Scopus employed a title-abstract-keyword restriction approach (TITLE-ABS-KEY), systematically combining personality dimensions, coping terminology, and sport-related terms through strategic Boolean operations. This interdisciplinary platform required a balance between comprehensiveness and precision, given its broad academic coverage.

A critical component of search strategy development involved iterative refinement through systematic testing of potentially relevant keywords. This process required empirical evaluation of search term effectiveness to distinguish between productive and non-contributory terminology. For each database, candidate keywords underwent preliminary testing through targeted searches, with retrieval assessment conducted through manual screening of titles and

abstracts to determine relevance rates. Terms demonstrating low precision – generating irrelevant results – were systematically excluded from final search equations to optimize retrieval efficiency and readability.

For example, in PsycINFO, tested terms proving irrelevant included "neo personality inventory/," "openness.ti,ab,id," "five factor*.ti,ab,id," "OCEAN.ti,ab,id," "FFM.ti,ab,id," "Stress and Coping Measures/," "stress management.ti,ab,id," "psychological adaptation.ti,ab,id," "exp physical activity/," "competition/," "socccer/," "exp football/," "physical activity.ti,ab,id," "exercise.ti,ab,id," "competi*.ti,ab,id," "soccer.ti,ab,id," and "football.ti,ab,id." These exclusions were determined through systematic relevance testing using the 'NOT' Boolean operator (which excludes specified terms from search results to compare retrieval effectiveness), followed by screening of all results, which were 50 titles and abstracts from each tested combination to assess whether terms generated relevant retrieval or exclusively noise. Similar iterative testing was conducted across all databases, with specific irrelevant keywords and screening numbers documented for each one to ensure methodological transparency.

Through these database-specific adaptations and iterative refinement processes, the search strategies ensured systematic coverage while accounting for the unique characteristics and indexing approaches of each platform, thereby maximizing the retrieval of relevant literature addressing personality-coping dynamics in sport contexts.

9.2. Appendix 2: Extraction grids

A. Description of extraction categories

Extraction Grid 1: Study Overview

The first extraction grid captured fundamental study characteristics essential for understanding the scope and nature of included research:

- Study: Author's names and publication year (complete bibliographic details provided in references).
- Country: Geographic Context or region where data collection occurred.
- Methodology: Study design classification (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods), along with specific data collection methods (surveys, interviews).
- Main Objectives: Primary aims addressed by each study.
- Key Findings: Main results specifically addressing personality-coping relationships in sport.

Extraction Grid 2: Study Methodology & Context

The second extraction grid focused on detailed methodological and contextual characteristics necessary for a nuanced analysis of personality-coping dynamics:

- Study: same as grid 1.
- Sample: Comprehensive demographic information including total sample size, age distributions (means and/or range), and gender composition.

- Sport Context: Details of the sporting environment, including the specific sport(s) studied, sport type classification (team vs. individual), and competitive level of participants (e.g., club, regional, national, international). The specific sport is indicated when there is sufficient space in the grid; otherwise, the number of different sports studied is stated.
- Personality Assessment: Documentation of the approach used to measure the Big Five, including the specific instrument (e.g., NEO-PI-R, BFI) and whether the full five-factor battery or select dimensions were assessed.
- Coping: assessment & theoretical framework: Capture of coping measurement methodologies, including the assessment tool used (e.g., COPE, ACSI-28). The coping taxonomies (higher-order dimensions or specific subscales) were specified as stated by the authors. Additionally, the underlying theoretical framework was identified. When a framework was not explicitly defined in a study, it was derived from the source article of the questionnaire used, and this is noted with an asterisk (*) in the extraction grid.
- Coping focus & timeframe: Classification of the coping assessment as dispositional or situational, intra or interindividual, along with its temporal framework (e.g., retrospective, daily diary). When authors were not explicit, the dispositional or situational focus was determined by analysing the questionnaire's source article, and this is indicated by an asterisk (*) in the extraction grid.
- Stressor Characteristics: Systematic documentation of stressor identification and characterization approaches, including whether stressors were researcher-defined or self-selected. Self-selected stressors involve participants choosing which specific stressor event or situation to consider when completing the coping questionnaire, whereas researcher-selected stressors involve the researcher defining a specific stressor category or type that all participants must consider. The key decision criterion was that if two participants in the same study could be reporting on entirely different events, the stressor was classified as self-selected.

When "not specified" appears in the extraction grid, it indicates that the study authors did not provide sufficient information to extract data for that particular category. The two data extraction tables were arranged chronologically, displaying references from oldest to newest.

B. Extraction Table 1: Study Overview

Table 1. Study Overview

Study	Country	Methodology	Main Objectives	Key Findings
1. Nicolas & Jebrane (2008)	France	QUANT: questionnaires	Examine consistency of coping (CS) and defence mechanisms (DM) across training / competition and time. Explore effects of disposition/situation on CS / DM. Investigate role of personality in CS / DM.	No correlation between Big Five traits and CS.
2. Woodman et al. (2010)	United Kingdom	QUANT: questionnaires	Examine additive/interactive effects of personality traits (Big Five) and performance strategies (goal-setting, emotional control) on training behaviours (including coping with adversity).	Low N → ↑ coping with adversity, with emotional control strengthening this relationship.
3. Allen, Greenlees, & Jones (2011)	United Kingdom	QUANT: questionnaires	Explore the main and interactive effects of the Big Five personality dimensions on sport-related coping and compare personality profiles of discrete groups of athletes.	High E x Low N x High O → ↑ problem-focused coping High C → ↑ emotion-focused coping High E x High O x High A → ↑ emotion-focused coping Low O / High N → ↑ avoidance coping
4. Allen, Frings & Hunter (2012)	United Kingdom	QUANT: questionnaires	Explore associations between personality dimensions and motivational states. Explore associations between motivational states and sport related coping. Explore associations between personality and coping.	High C → ↑ problem-focused coping High N / Low O / Low A → ↑ avoidance-focused coping No association between personality and emotion-focused coping.

Table 1. *Continued*

Study	Country	Methodology	Main Objectives	Key Findings
5. Kaiseler et al. (2012)	United Kingdom	QUANT: questionnaires	Explore the relationships between the Big Five personality dimensions and appraisal, coping, and coping effectiveness of a self-selected stressor in sport.	High N → ↑ avoidance-focused coping, with stress intensity strengthening this relationship. High E / High A / High C / High O → ↑ problem-focused coping
6. Tomczak et al. (2013)	Poland	QUANT: questionnaires	Characterize personality traits / stress coping styles in Polish cadet wrestlers. Define relations between personality and coping.	For women: High N → ↑ emotion-oriented coping Low A → ↑ task-oriented coping For men: High C → ↑ task-oriented coping
7. Coulter, Mallett & Singer (2018)	Australia	Mixed QUANT: questionnaires QUAL: interview	Develop a psychological portrait of a mentally tough athlete. Demonstrate utility of three-domain personality analysis (traits, adaptations, narrative identity) for understanding athletic complexity.	Low N → ↑ emotion-focused / problem-focused coping High C → ↑ problem-focused coping High A → ↑ maladaptive coping
8. Altamura et al. (2019)	Italy	QUANT: questionnaires	Test mediation effects of Neuroticism/maladaptive coping on genetic factors and symptoms of anxiety in elite athletes.	High N → ↑ anxiety symptoms mediated by maladaptive coping
9. Kaiseler et al. (2019)	United Kingdom	QUANT: questionnaires	Explore the independent and the interaction effects of the Big-Five factor model on a sport-specific dispositional coping taxonomy and coping effectiveness.	High E / High A / High O → ↑ task-focused coping High N → ↑ distraction & disengagement coping / ↓ coping effectiveness High A / High C / High E → ↓ distraction-coping High A / High C → ↓ disengagement-coping High N x High O / High E x High N → ↑ task-focused coping High A x High C → ↑ distraction-coping

Table 1. *Continued*

Study	Country	Methodology	Main Objectives	Key Findings
10. Kaplánová (2019)	Slovakia	QUANT: questionnaires	Explore the relationship between personality structure and coping strategies to manage stress.	High N → ↑ coping with adversity / ↑ freedom from worry Low E → ↓ coping with adversity / ↓ coachability High O → ↑ concentration / ↑ confidence / ↑ peaking under pressure
11. Preet & Shourie (2019)	India	QUANT: questionnaires	Explore the influence of personality on the appraisal process, coping and perceived effectiveness among athletes from a variety of aiming sports.	High N → ↓ problem-focused coping / ↓ coping effectiveness Low N → ↑ emotion-focused coping High E / High C → ↑ problem-focused coping
12. Zhang et al. (2019)	United Kingdom	QUANT: questionnaires	Examine if transformational leadership moderates negative effects of extraversion/neuroticism on training behaviours (distractibility, coping with adversity, preparation).	High N → ↓ coping with adversity, but inspirational motivation buffers this effect.
13. Kalinowski et al. (2020)	Poland	QUANT: questionnaires	Explore the relations between personality traits and performance effectiveness through coping with stress as a mediator.	Low N → ↑ effectiveness mediated by task-oriented coping High C → ↑ effectiveness mediated by task-oriented coping High E → ↑ effectiveness mediated by task-oriented coping
14. Vesković, Orlić & Nešić (2021)	Serbia	QUANT: questionnaires	Explore direct/interactive effects of Big Five traits on dispositional coping strategies.	High C → ↑ task-oriented coping High N → ↑ emotion-oriented coping High A → ↓ emotion-oriented coping No interactive effects of personality traits.

Table 1. *Continued*

Study	Country	Methodology	Main Objectives	Key Findings
15. Prochniak & Prochniak (2021)	Poland	QUANT: questionnaires	Examine how personality-temperament traits predict future-oriented coping.	High A / High C → ↑ Preventive coping High E → ↑ Proactive coping N / O not significant predictors
16. Contreras, Granquist & Martin (2023)	United States	QUANT: questionnaires	Examine relationships between stress, sport anxiety, neuroticism, and coping in student-athletes.	High N → ↓ emotion-oriented coping Stress fully mediated the relation between neuroticism and dysfunctional coping No significant links to problem-focused coping

Legend. '/' = and ; 'O-C-E-A-N' = Big Five personality dimensions ; '→' = predicts ; '↑' = increases ; '↓' = decreases ; 'x' = interaction between dimensions

C. Extraction Table 2: Study Methodology & Context

Table 2. Study Methodology & Context

Study	Sample	Sport context	Personality assessment	Coping: assessment & theoretical framework	Coping focus & timeframe	Stressor characteristics
1. Nicolas & Jebrane (2008)	N = 26 athletes (19 men, 6 women), age M = 16.5 years	Individual (canoeing/kayaking) International (n=26)	NEO-PI-R	Abbreviated WOCQ (Problem / Emotion / Avoidance) Transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)	Situational Intraindividual Retrospective	Researcher-defined Specific responses to stress in pre-competition and stress training
2. Woodman et al. (2010)	N = 93 gymnasts (59 men, 34 women), age M = 16.57	Individual (gymnastic) Collegiate/regional (n=11), national (n=33) and international gymnasts (n=49)	IPIP Focus on E / Neuro / C	Subscale of QTI (Broad coping measure: Coping with adversity) Transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)	Dispositional Intraindividual Retrospective	Self-selected Typical responses to training-specific stressors
3. Allen, Greenlees, & Jones (2011)	N = 253 athletes (187 men, 66 women), age M = 21.1 years	Individual and team (34 different sports) University (n=21), club (n=90), regional (n=89), national (n=27), and international (n=13)	NEO-FFI	CFQ (Problem / Emotion / Avoidance) Transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)	Dispositional Intraindividual Retrospective	Self-selected Typical response to stressors in broad competition

Table 2. *Continued*

Study	Sample	Sport context	Personality assessment	Coping: assessment & theoretical framework	Coping focus & timeframe	Stressor characteristics
4. Allen, Frings & Hunter (2012)	N = 31 athletes (24 men, 7 women), age M = 25.3 years	Individual and team (13 different sports) Club (n=13), regional (n=9), national (n=5), and international (n=4)	NEO-FFI	CFQ (Problem / Emotion / Avoidance) Transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)	Dispositional Intraindividual Retrospective	Self-selected Typical response to stressors in broad competition
5. Kaiseler et al. (2012)	N = 482 athletes (305 men, 177 women), age M=20.4	Not specified Club/university (n=175), county (n=220), national (n=60) and international (n=15)	BFI	Modified COPE (Problem / Emotion / Avoidance) Transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)	Situational Intraindividual Retrospective	Self-selected Most intense sport stressor experienced in last 14 days
6. Tomczak et al. (2013)	N = 20 athletes (10 men, 10 women), women age M = 15.6, men age M = 16.5	Individual (wrestling) National (n=20)	NEO-FFI	CISS (Problem / Emotion / Avoidance) Transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)	Dispositional Intraindividual Retrospective	Not specified
7. Coulter, Mallett & Singer (2018)	N = 1 man mid-20s	Team (Australian football) National (n=1)	NEO-PI-3	COPE (Problem / Emotion / Maladaptive) Transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)*	Situational Intraindividual Retrospective	Self-selected Injury and subsequent time out from the game
8. Altamura et al. (2019)	N = 133 elite male athletes between the ages of 18-36, age M = 23.36	Team National and international	NEO-FFI Focus on Neuro	COPE (Problem / Emotion / Maladaptive) Transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)	Situational* Intraindividual Retrospective	Self-selected Specific response to stressors in competition

Table 2. *Continued*

Study	Sample	Sport context	Personality assessment	Coping: assessment & theoretical framework	Coping focus & timeframe	Stressor characteristics
9. Kaiseler et al. (2019)	N = 400 student-athletes (237 men, 163 women), aged 18-48 years, age M = 22.97	Team (n=315), individual (n=85) Beginners (n=24), club/university, (n=225), county (n=119) and national (n = 30)	BFI	DCICS (Task / Distraction / Disengagement) Transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)	Dispositional Intraindividual Retrospective	Self-selected Typical response to stressors in broad competition
10. Kaplánová (2019)	N = 56 athletes (16 men, 40 women), aged 15-26 years, age M = 19.34	Individual (gymnastic) National and international	NEO-FFI	ACSI-28 (Coping with adversity / coachability / concentration / confidence and achievement motivation / goal setting and mental preparation / peaking under pressure / freedom from worry) No explicit theory*	Dispositional* Intraindividual Retrospective	Not specified
11. Preet & Shourie (2019)	N = 200 athletes (100 men, 100 women), aged 16-25 years, age M = 20.43	Individual (aiming sports) National and international	BFI	Modified COPE (Problem / Emotion / Avoidance) Transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)	Situational Intraindividual Retrospective	Self-selected Most intense sport stressor experienced in the previous three months
12. Zhang et al. (2019)	N = 99 athletes (99 men), age M = 20.60	Team (7 different sports) University level (n=99)	TIPI Focus on E / Neuro	Subscale of QTI (Broad coping measure: Coping with adversity) Transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)*	Dispositional Intraindividual Retrospective	Self-selected Typical responses to training-specific stressors

Table 2. *Continued*

Study	Sample	Sport context	Personality assessment	Coping: assessment & theoretical framework	Coping focus & timeframe	Stressor characteristics
13. Kalinowski et al. (2020)	N = 122 male student-athletes, aged 16-19	Team (soccer) National (n=122)	NEO-FFI Focus on E /Neuro / C	CICS (Task / Emotion / Avoidance) Transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)*	Dispositional Intraindividual Retrospective	Self-selected Typical response to stressors in a competitive soccer match
14. Vesković, Orlić & Nešić (2021)	N = 166 youth-athletes (166 women), age M = 15.01	Team (volleyball) Level not specified	NEO-FFI	DCICS (Task / Distraction / Disengagement) Transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)*	Dispositional Intraindividual Retrospective	Self-selected Typical response to stressors in broad competition
15. Prochniak & Prochniak (2021)	N = 209 (113 men, 99 women), age M = 21.20	Individual (mountain hiking) Recreational (n=209)	NEO-FFI	Preventive and Proactive Coping with Bad Weather Scale (14-item custom scale) (Preventive / Proactive) Transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)	Dispositional Intraindividual Retrospective	Researcher-defined Typical response to dealing with adverse weather
16. Contreras, Granquist & Martin (2023)	N = 86 student-athletes (39 men, 47 women), age M = 19.62 years	Not specified National (n=86)	BFI Focus on Neuro	Brief COPE (Problem / Emotion / Dysfunctional) Transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)*	Situational* Intraindividual Retrospective	Not specified

Legend. 'N' = total sample size ; 'M' = mean ; 'n' = specific group size ; '/' = and ; 'O-C-E-A-Neuro' = Big Five personality dimensions ; 'n' = specific group size ; '*' = found in the questionnaire source article

9.3. Appendix 3: Reasons for article exclusion

Table 2 *Table of excluded references and reasons for exclusion during full-text reading*

	Reference	Main exclusion reason
1	Zsheliaskova-Koynova, Z. (1993). The relationships between different personality characteristics and styles of coping with stress in elite orienteers. *Scientific Journal of Orienteering*, *9*, 43–48.	Not Big Five
2	Musa, R. M., Abdullah, M. R., Juahir, H., Eswaramoorthi, V., Alias, N., Hashim, M. R., & Alnamat, A. S. F. (2019). An exploratory study of personality traits and psychological coping skills on archery performance. *Indian Journal of Public Health Research & Development*, *10*(3), 630. https://doi.org/10.5958/0976-5506.2019.00572.2	Not Big Five
3	Nicholls, A. R., Perry, J. L., Jones, L., Morley, D., & Carson, F. (2013). Dispositional coping, coping effectiveness, and cognitive social maturity among adolescent athletes. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 35*(3), 229–238.	Not Big Five
4	Polman, R. C. J., Clough, P. J., & Levy, A. R. (2010). Personality and coping in sport: The big Five and mental toughness. In A. R. Nicholls (Ed.), *Coping in sport: Theory, methods, and related constructs* (pp. 141–157). Nova Science Publishers.	Not Big Five
5	Küçükalpelli, F., Gülşen, D. B. A., Akyol, G., Duman, S., & Yildiz, Y. (2025). Stress, anxiety and personality in male windsurfers. *Journal of Men's Health*, *21*(5), 69–78. https://doi.org/10.22514/jomh.2025.070	Not Big Five
6	Cox, T., & Kerr, J. H. (1990). Self-reported mood in competitive squash. *Personality and Individual Differences, 11*(2), 199–203. https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869(90)90016-K	Not coping
7	Smith, N., Kinnafick, F., Cooley, S. J., & Sandal, G. M. (2017). Reported growth following mountaineering expeditions: The role of personality and perceived stress. *Environment and Behavior*, *49*(8), 933–955. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916516670447	Not coping

	Reference	Main exclusion reason
8	Stevens, M. J. (2007). Mood states and personality. In M. L. Andrew (Ed.), *Mood and human performance: Conceptual, measurement and applied issues* (pp. 153–164). Nova Science Publishers.	Not coping
9	Thiessen, B., Sullivan, P., Gammage, K., & Dithurbide, L. (2023). Choking susceptibility and the Big Five personality traits. *The Open Psychology Journal*, *16*(1), e187435012301130. https://doi.org/10.2174/18743501-v16-e230116-2022-75	Not coping
10	Smith, B., Hanrahan, S., Anderson, R., & Abbott, L. (2015). Predicting homesickness in residential athletes. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, *9*(2), 138–155. https://doi.org/10.1123/jcsp.2014-0025	Interaction not studied
11	Carlstedt, R. A. (2004). Line-bisecting performance in highly skilled athletes: Does preponderance of rightward error reflect unique cortical organization and functioning? *Brain and Cognition*, *54*(1), 52–57. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0278-2626(03)00259-8	Interaction not studied
12	Mitic, P., Mitrovic, M., Bratic, M., & Nurkic, M. (2011). Emotional competence, styles of coping with stressful situations, anxiety and personality traits in judokas. *Serbian Journal of Sports Sciences*, *5*, 163–169.	Interaction not studied
13	Meyers, S. (2025). *Measuring the relationship between emotional stability and coping abilities among elite athletes* (Publication No. 2025-25063-096) [Doctoral dissertation]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.	Dissertation
14	Arguelles, R. (2008). *Race-car driver psychology and personality* (Publication No. 2008-99240-105) [Doctoral dissertation]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.	Dissertation
15	Harmon, A. S. (2020). *The correlation of personality traits and coping functions for injured student-athletes* (Publication No. 2020-04055-294) [Doctoral dissertation]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.	Dissertation

10. RÉSUMÉ

La relation entre la personnalité et le coping est cruciale pour comprendre la résilience et la performance des athlètes. Malgré un corpus de recherche croissant, la littérature demeure fragmentée en raison de conceptualisations et de méthodologies variées, compliquant les efforts de synthèse des résultats pour la pratique appliquée. Cette fragmentation souligne la nécessité de cartographier systématiquement les données probantes existantes afin de consolider les connaissances et d'identifier clairement les lacunes de recherche.

Cette *scoping review* visait à cartographier la nature, l'étendue et les caractéristiques des données probantes existantes concernant la relation entre les traits de personnalité du Big Five et le *coping* dans le sport. La revue a été menée selon la méthodologie JBI et les directives PRISMA-ScR. Une recherche systématique des bases de données SPORTDiscus, PsycINFO, Medline et Scopus a été effectuée, complétée par un suivi des citations de sources fondamentales. Les critères d'éligibilité ont restreint l'inclusion aux études empiriques évaluées par les pairs en anglais ou en français qui examinaient quantitativement ou qualitativement l'association entre au moins un trait du Big Five et le *coping* clairement défini dans des contextes sportifs.

L'analyse finale a inclus 16 études publiées entre 2008 et 2023. La base de données probantes est principalement quantitative, s'appuie largement sur le *Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping* de Lazarus et Folkman (1984) et provient principalement de contextes européens avec un focus sur de jeunes athlètes masculins. Les résultats associent systématiquement le Neuroticisme à des stratégies de *coping* inadaptées (par exemple, évitement, désengagement), tandis que la Conscienciosité et l'Extraversion prédisent de manière fiable des stratégies de *coping* adaptatives et orientées vers la tâche. Les lacunes clés identifiées incluent un manque de diversité démographique, une homogénéité méthodologique et des définitions incohérentes des stresseurs à travers les études.

Les données probantes confirment que la personnalité d'un athlète fournit un modèle prédictif cohérent pour ses tendances de *coping*, offrant une base précieuse pour les praticiens. Cependant, la généralisabilité du domaine est limitée par sa portée démographique et méthodologique restreinte. Les recherches futures devraient prioriser des échantillons diversifiés, intégrer des méthodologies qualitatives et axées sur les processus, et progresser vers une plus grande standardisation des taxonomies de *coping* et des définitions de stresseurs afin de construire une science plus cumulative et applicable.