

# Soccer and its unfolding in times of crisis Covid-19: Critical review

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**Keywords**— *soccer crisis, soccer and covid-19, soccer business, soccer and wellness, youth soccer*

**Abstract** — *Many unfolding's concerning the Covid-19 crisis within the soccer context, from the impact on the training of young footballers to high performance. In this paper, it was explored through a critical literature review, the strategic points, and scenarios within soccer and some of its main unfolding's. The aim of the study was to identify the main strands of study on the research developed during 2020 around the topic of Covid-19 and football and, to try to understand the impact that the absence of football practice has on the construction of skills in this generation of young footballers. A systematic literature review based on the PRISMA protocol was used as methodology. Through a deductive analysis three clusters were created: business, health, and wellness and socio-cultural. As main results, the professional soccer scenario had the largest number of studies, followed by professional and amateur soccer. In the field of study analysis area, the field of health and well-being was the one where more studies were found and, the subject's control and transmission and physiological impacts were the most highlighted. This study provides an opportunity to assess how processes within football are being studied in a period of crisis, which has quickly responded to the needs of professional soccer and little or no work force has been shifted to seek solutions for the resumption of soccer practice in the lower ranks. The study also highlights a window of opportunity for the development of studies in the typology of training soccer, it is suggested that in future research work can develop studies in this direction.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The (COVID-19) or coronavirus 19, was detected in December 2019 in Wuhan city in China (Huang, 2020). Considered a highly transmissible viral infection it is caused by the virus known as coronavirus severe acute respiratory syndrome (Lu et al., 2020) (SARS-CoV2), whose genomic analysis revealed that it is genetically related to the SARS2 outbreak that infected 8,098 individuals in 26 countries (Shereen, Khan, Kazmi, Bashir, & Siddique, 2020). At the very beginning of the year 2020,

the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the temporary closure of physical activity and sports facilities, and the widespread cancellation or postponement of sporting events, had a massive impact on social and economic development (Goncalves et al., 2020). Direct impacts on society were identified in the public health sector (Tisdell, 2020). Limitation of people's movement in public spaces, some lockdowns, closing of shops and the inability to

serve people were verified in the first moments of the Covid-19 pandemic's establishment (Mo, Cukier, Atputharajah, Boase, & Hon, 2020).

In sports in general it was no different, from high performance to athletic training sports and more, numerous major sporting events were impacted, cancelled or postponed due to Covid-19 (Grix, Brannagan, Grimes, & Neville, 2020). The North American big leagues were strongly affected economically (Ehrlich, Ghimire, Khraiche, & Raza, 2020). A scenario of opportunity for change had been in place since the beginning of 2020.

Soccer, not running away from reality, has also stopped in all spheres from the professional to the formation (Evli, Gidik, & Cerit, 2020; Fabre et al., 2020). The game of soccer has long ago ceased to be just an instrument of entertainment and leisure and has nowadays turned into goods and services and become a product that is marketed to the public and/or fans on a universal basis (Callejo & Forcadell, 2006; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2020).

Besides its economic dimension, there are specific physiological and psychological dimensions of athletes in soccer. The shutting down of major soccer leagues such as the Champions League, European national leagues, Libertadores of América, and other championships around the world had a direct impact on the economic and social relationship in the soccer world. (Reade & Singleton, 2020). The opportunity to see with new eyes the importance of the king sport as soccer is known, was one of the many issues raised in the current scenario (Black, 2020; Moore, 2020). The possibility of a renewed perspective on soccer has also been an issue in this current pandemic scenario (Moore, 2020).

Although many uncertainties still reside in the current moment of soccer, little by little a sign of resumption of activities opened throughout the year of 2020, through protocols met in detail (Polidori, 2020; Sousa, Sousa, Garcia, & Stancati, 2020). Even with small signs of occupation of the soccer fields by fans, who play an important role at this moment both in the economic and social aspects of soccer (Bond et al., 2020).

During the year 2020, the scientific community occupied a great part of its work force to perceive the impacts and how society would behave regarding the installed pandemic situation (Drewes, Daumann, & Follert, 2020; Pillay et al., 2020; Wong et al., 2020). Studies on soccer resumption, physical behavior of footballers, physiological effects, transmission and contagion levels in sports practice were also other subjects raised by the researchers (Carmody et al., 2020; Lopez-Carril & Anagnostopoulos, 2020; Mohr et al., 2020; Mon-Lopez,

Garcia-Aliaga, Gines Bartolome, & Muriarte Solana, 2020).

Starting in May, professional soccer in general restarted training activities with strict security and control norms (Sousa et al., 2020). Starting in June 2020, most of the major leagues will finally return to competition through stricter testing protocols on all soccer players and the application of best practices (Castagna et al., 2020).

On the other hand, non-professional or amateur soccer was left on the sidelines (Drezner, Drezner, Magner, & Ayala, 2021). By orientation of the institutions that regulate and supervise soccer, smaller clubs in the difficulty of adopting the requested measures and best practices, have simply chosen to close down their activities (Rico-González, Pino-Ortega, & Ardigò, 2021).

Because it is a collective and relational process among different agents within soccer, it is important for scientists to better understand the stakeholders involved within this takeover process. Thus, the stakeholder theory proposed by Freeman (1984), allows us to understand how individuals or groups are affected by decisions and attitudes of those in charge of organizations and soccer clubs. In this sense, it is necessary to understand how the interface was carried out and how it manifests itself among internal stakeholders, that is, among individuals who are inside the organizational environment, as well as among external stakeholders, corresponding to individuals or institutions that are outside the organizational environment (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2010; Miragaia, Brito, & Ferreira, 2016; Walters, 2011).

Thus, the studies carried out in soccer as of the definition of the pandemic by the WHO on March 11, 2020, indicate several analyzed aspects, whether social, economic or public health (Drewes et al., 2020; Hunter, 2020; Scoppa, 2021). Another line of research verified was the level of impact on the physical conditions of athletes and referees and the best practices for the return to soccer activities (Castagna et al., 2020; Mon-Lopez et al., 2020; Webb, 2020).

However, there was a gap regarding the impact that the pandemic has caused in training or grassroots sports (Grix et al., 2020). This can lead to the absence of the practice of the sport at the younger levels in the development of the so-called life skills (Kurak & AÇak, 2019; Mossman & Cronin, 2019).

According to the above, the purpose of this study is to identify the main strands of study on the research conducted during 2020 around the topic of Covid-19 and soccer. Considering the studies identified, the aim of this research is also to identify the main clusters in which the research on this subject was concentrated and to try to

understand the impact that this lack of soccer practice has on the construction of skills in this generation of youngsters.

## II. METHODS

### Search strategy

for this study, the methodology followed was a systematic literature review, through a process of agglutination of

data resulting from the review of primary studies (Ato, López-García, & Benavente, 2013). To ensure the quality of the study, the protocol recommended in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses statement was followed - PRISMA (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009). Figure 1 shows the selection strategy used.

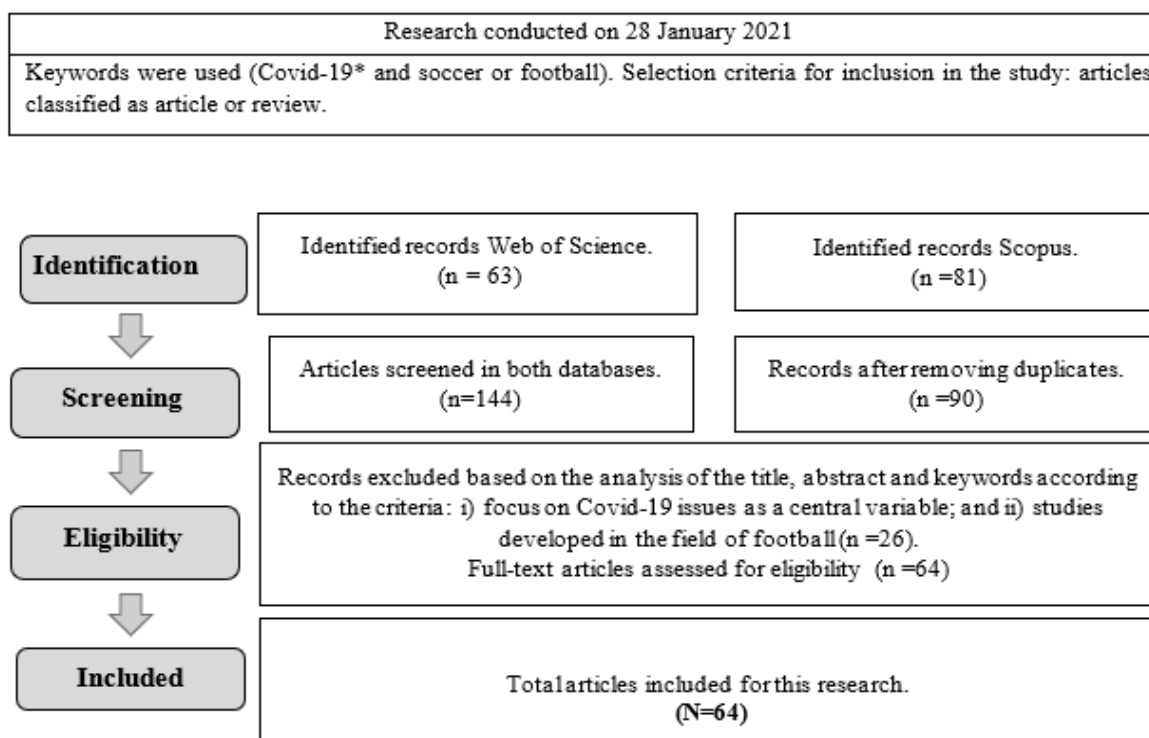


Fig.1: Diagrama Flow

### Data Collection

Due to their long history and scope of journals in the social sciences, we chose to use the Web of Science and Scopus databases (Ankrah & Omar, 2015). The review was conducted on January 28, 2021, using the following criteria (Cucciniello, Porumbescu, & Grimmelikhuijsen, 2017): through the search equation "Covid-19\* and soccer or football" in the field topic (title, keywords or abstract) and without time limitation (Feng, Zhang, Du, & Wang, 2015).

The first sample resulted in 67 articles in Web of Science and 85 articles in Scopus. Duplicate articles for example, (Bisciotti et al., 2020; Boschilia, Moraes, & Marchi Junior, 2020; Parrish & Lam, 2020; Waliaula & Okong'o, 2020) and articles outside the Covid-19 core study area and soccer for example, (Belleville, Cebula, Jolley, & Bone, 2020; Chen, Garcia, Arumugaswami, & Wirz, 2020;

Goldman & Hedlund, 2020) have been removed. After this process, a total of 64 scientific articles were identified for analysis.

The research protocols used here such as: inclusion and exclusion criteria, within a critical and expressed process was to provide a record for control and checking (Jones, Coviello, & Tang, 2011). As a way to certify the relevance of the studies, inclusion and exclusion criteria were also adopted (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003): i) excluding conferences, books, book chapters, editorials, and including only articles and reviews published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, due to the reliability of this source (Jones et al., 2011; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Bachrach, & Podsakoff, 2005); ii) inclusion of all journals within the selected databases, regardless of impact factor, due to the still introductory phase of development of the

theme to be studied (Jones et al., 2011; Tranfield et al., 2003).

The articles were submitted to the Nvivo software version 12, for a content analysis, as a way to give sustainability in the formation of clusters as shown in figure 2.



Fig.2: Word cloud from the software NVivo 12

*Data analysis procedures*

The three hundred (300) most frequent words were selected in the Nvivo12 Software, adding the derived words and with a minimum extension of four letters. To avoid repetition of words that could mask the result, it was decided with the software to prevent words such as: 2020, 2021 and http among others from entering this selection. From these indications, the word cloud was generated that served as the basis and support for the deductive formation of the thematic clusters for this study. Therefore, from the researchers' deductive analysis, three clusters were identified: i; **business** (where the subjects dealt with were management, economic and financial analysis, strategic communication and attendance at stadiums); ii; **health and wellness** (focused on issues of physiological effects on athletes, control and transmission

of the virus and best practices for safe return from activities) and iii; **sociocultural** ( focused on issues of gender, social inclusion, general behaviour and social responsibility).

**III. RESULTS**

The bibliometric analysis covered the period March 2020 to January 2021. Figure 2 shows the number of publications during this period when dealing with the three football scenarios: professional, amateur and professional/amateur. It is possible to observe through the graph below the emergence and development of this research topic due to the pandemic moment installed since March 2020.

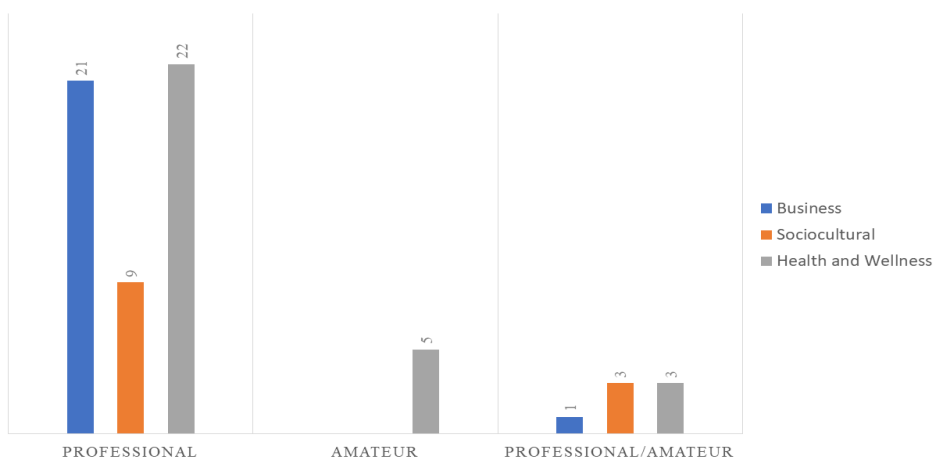


Fig.3: Graph of publications by football scenario within the clusters.

It was observed that most of the studies focused on professional football with 52 publications, followed by the professional/amateur scenario with 7 studies and in third place amateur football with only 5 publications in the period.

For the areas of analysis within the defined clusters as shown in table 1, there was a high concentration of studies

in the areas of control and transmission with 13 studies, physiological effects with 11 studies, both within the cluster health and wellness. With 11 other publications we have the area of economic/financial analysis within the business cluster. Within the area of behavioural analysis, referring to the sociocultural cluster, 6 publications were found, which represented 50% within this analysis group.

Table1- Cluster publications by area of analysis

Area of Analysis	Business	Healthandwelfare	Sociocultural	Total
Anxiety		2		2
Control and transmission		13		13
Physiological effects		11		11
Football ecosystem			1	1
Gender			2	2
Management	3			3
Social inclusion			1	1
Best practices		3		3
Injury prevention		1		1
Coach-athletes relationship			1	1
Social Responsibility			1	1
Economy/Finance	11			11
Behaviour			6	6
Contracts	2			2
Communication	4			4
Stadium attendance	2			1
<b>Total Geral</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>64</b>

For the analysis of stakeholders, divided by external (referees, associations, experts, fans, leagues) and internal (clubs, athlete and coaches), the research carried out observed that the largest number of publications was within the scope of internal stakeholders with a total of 40 studies, with athletes being the main target of these investigations with 31 publications, followed by clubs with 7 studies.

Regarding the external stakeholders, it was verified 17 studies through Table 2. It was also observed a greater number of studies with the fans with 5 publications, followed by referees and leagues with 4 publications each. When the studies were related to both external and internal stakeholders, 7 publications on the studied theme were verified.

Table 2-Publications by stakeholders and scenario in football.

Stakeholders	Profesional	Amateur	Profesional/Amateur	Total
<b>External</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>
Referees	3		1	4
Association	2			2
Experts	1			1

Fans	5			5
Partnersof football	1			1
Ligas	3		1	4
<b>Internal</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>40</b>
Athletes	23	5	3	31
Athletesandcoaches	1			1
Clubs	6		1	7
Partnersoffootball	1			1
<b>Internal/External</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>
Partnersof football	6		1	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>64</b>

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The results indicate that the theme "covid-19 and soccer" is more centered in the "Business" and "Health and wellness" clusters, and less in the "Sociocultural" cluster. However, the three clusters coexist, and one influences the other. Considering the soccer typology, the results show that most investigations focus mainly on professional soccer, where 52 studies (81%) have professional soccer as their sole theme, while only 5 publications (8%) are directed towards amateur soccer and finally 7 studies (11%) where they involved both amateur/professional typologies. In fact, the moment that soccer is going through is differentiated, situations such as the lack of public, the behavior of internal and external stakeholders, the broadcasting of games on unusual days and times, and the lack of competitions in amateur and training soccer, are directly impacting the game and its direct stakeholders.

##### 4.1- Cluster Business

The results demonstrated clearly show a major focus of concern so that the return on professional soccer would be faster, with emphasis on the "business" cluster. On the one hand, the absence of spectators could be one of the factors for the direct impact on business in soccer, but revenues from other sectors helped maintain professional soccer. (Drewes et al., 2020; Horky, 2020). One can also identify that this is since the big sponsors and brands involved in the major leagues exert a certain pressure to return to the games and championships and thus try to achieve a balance in the process of the financial and economic balance of the businesses that involve soccer, whether they are contracts with athletes, maintenance of employees and other stakeholders involved. (Carrick, 2020; Hammerschmidt, Durst, Kraus, & Puumalainen, 2021).

The strength of the traditional media, the big sponsors and investors in professional soccer have done a strong job

behind the scenes for the return of the major championships (Fühner, Schmidt, & Schreyer, 2021). One of the main claims, was that soccer would be within the safest places, due to the protocols adopted, what many call the "soccer bubble". (Carmody et al., 2020; Castagna et al., 2020). However, we did not see this same commitment when the subject was amateur or training soccer. Perhaps because of the lack of financial investment by the authorities, this type of soccer ended up being left behind and on the margin of what was expected as a return for most young people to the sport, which impacted them directly (Doherty, Millar, & Misener, 2020).

It is important to realize here and that reinforces this difference in political and economic support is to understand as fundamental the role that training sport plays for the smaller clubs and the young people who play it (Doherty et al., 2020). Although society still perceives this type of sport as a "hobby" that comes after the "serious" business is over, the absence of sports practice can indeed bring unexpected consequences for future generations. The lack of opportunity and the importance of using evidence-based learning during these times is highlighted here, bringing together existing knowledge cases in various areas (assessment and competence development, the so-called soft skills ...), however needs policy guidelines from the top down to the local context with the challenges faced by sports clubs and the vast majority of young people (Doherty et al., 2020; Grix et al., 2020).

Another point to be analyzed was how the major European leagues and their clubs performed the strategic management regarding the pandemic, responses, turnover and action plans adopted (Górecka, 2020; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2020). On the other hand, according to a study by Hammerschmidt et al. (2021), numerous weaknesses of the clubs were revealed due to their financial structure and underdeveloped business and management strategies to

deal with the crisis, even though they are clubs considered healthy and from the five main European leagues from the economic-financial point of view. There is still a lot to evolve in this sense, but what is clear is the lack of a political-economic strategy to adjust actions for the return of amateur and training soccer.

#### 4.2 Cluster Health and Wellness

This was the cluster with the largest number of studies found, a total of thirty publications, most within the area of analysis of the control and transmission of the virus and the physiological effects during the pandemic on athletes (Buldu, Antequera, & Aguirre, 2020; Cohen et al., 2020). Because they are the players considered to be the front line in soccer, the players were the most tested in this period (de Albuquerque Freire et al., 2020; Gervasi et al., 2021). This is because there was the intention and the interest that the return of professional soccer was as soon as possible, which culminated in the attempt to create the so-called "bubble" of soccer with the creation of extremely demanding protocols that were met in detail (Côrte, Sousa, Sousa, Garcia, & Stancati, 2020; Rico-Gonzalez, Pino-Ortega, & Ardigo, 2021).

In a first moment, due to a conjunction of factors and the stay-at-home campaign, the main drivers in the decrease of SARS-2 cases in stakeholders involved in soccer were considered with examples of studies conducted in the Bundesliga and the model adopted by the Croatian Football Association (Mack et al., 2020; Primorac, Maticic, Molnar, Bahtijarevic, & Polasek, 2020).

Because of the financial investment that professional soccer has, protocols could be made through clubs, federations, and associations to enable the return of the activities (Drewes et al., 2020; Meyer et al., 2021). However, for amateur and youth soccer the absence or high cost of protocols for smaller clubs has impacted and continues to impact the practice of soccer in this typology of soccer on the world stage (Fabre et al., 2020; Teran et al., 2020). Although, there are still doubts about the levels of transmission in soccer, a recent study monitored two measures of exposure, respiratory and interpersonal contact, two of those that players and referees are subject to during a soccer game, and the result indicates that soccer does not seem to be a high-risk sport (Goncalves et al., 2020). Perhaps one of the accessible situations for the safe return of amateur or youth soccer would be the adoption of best practices, studies already indicate that protocols of this nature have already been applied, since testing at all levels may be financially unfeasible (Côrte et al., 2020; Rico-Gonzalez et al., 2021).

One could perhaps talk about the negligence of the sport's administrators with amateur and youth soccer, however,

what seems to be transparent at this moment is the insecurity due to the risk of not being able to comply with the determinations of the main health agencies (Carmody et al., 2020; Drezner et al., 2021). On the other hand, it is still early to understand the impact that this absence of sports practice can cause in the future formation of citizens, given the importance of the development of the so-called life skills in these younger levels. (Kurak & Aak, 2019; Mossman & Cronin, 2019). The development of competencies such as time management, communication, leadership, cooperation, highlights the importance of the practice of soccer in the younger age groups (Cronin et al., 2019; Kurak & Aak, 2019).

Another important factor during this pandemic period of withdrawal from sports was to control anxiety levels in soccer athletes (Esteves et al., 2020; Evli et al., 2020). Obviously, athletes who are used to performing a daily training routine and the period of uncertainty about the return of soccer ended up intensely influencing all soccer players, especially the athletes (Evli et al., 2020). Although anxiety is one of the preponderant factors in the athletes' journey in general, in the pandemic context it can be seen from another perspective, which was the uncertainty of when they were supposed to return to their activities (Castro-Sanchez, Zurita-Ortega, Chacon-Cuberos, & Lozano-Sanchez, 2019; Esteves et al., 2020).

#### 4.3 Cluster Socio-cultural

In this study group 12 publications were found in the period, and concentrated on issues involving gender, social inclusion issues, the relationship of behaviors of athletes and direct players who are playing without the presence of an audience, and the theme of social responsibility of soccer (Mark D. Biram & Goellner, 2020; Brown, 2020; Parnell, Bond, Widdop, & Cockayne, 2020).

The pandemic moment was also an opportunity to review positions and especially growth opportunities for issues on gender and social inclusion (Mark D. Biram & Goellner, 2020; M. D. Biram & Martinez-Mina, 2020; Brown, 2020). The power imbalances that have marked politics and are rooted in the historical marginalization of women's sports were put on the agenda (Mark D. Biram & Goellner, 2020). Much due to the history in which women's soccer has always been left in the shadow of men's soccer when it comes to awards, income opportunities and better contracts (Mark D. Biram & Goellner, 2020; Norman, Rankin-Wright, & Allison, 2018).

Although there are still many kinks to work out, one can already see greater visibility for women's competitions, fairer salaries, and some prominent positions held by women in the soccer context (Meier & von Uechtriz, 2020). At this point, this change is due to the fact that

sports policies have been created in this sense to minimize these gender differences in soccer, one of them and perhaps the most important is the creation of competitive teams within clubs(Meier & von Uechtriz, 2020; Pfister, 2015). With the stoppage of the major women's leagues due to the pandemic, the subject gained important contours for the discussion of the evolution of women's soccer (Desjardins, 2021; Valenti, Scelles, & Morrow, 2020).

Another subject much discussed in this cluster was related to the social behavior of soccer's main stakeholders(Moore, 2020; Scoppa, 2021). The change in the behavior of the referees, for example, with the absence of the public, reflected directly in the lower number of cards applied during the games draws everyone's attention(Bryson, Dolton, Reade, Schreyer, & Singleton, 2021; Sors, Grassi, Agostini, & Murgia, 2020). It is assumed and even accepted that the absence of the public may have brought greater tranquility to the decision making of the referees, this can also be reflected in the results in which the home team had a lower number of wins in this period, different from what it was before the pandemic installed (Inan, 2020; Matos, Amaro, & Pollard, 2020; Sors et al., 2020).

As soccer is a relational social structure that involves several stakeholders, be them internal or external, the pandemic directly affected the whole structure (Parnell et

al., 2020). Of course, the issue of confinement has affected a lot, but the return of only part of this structure, also affects the possibilities of global service of the whole structure, how to explain to the fans that there are games, but you cannot watch them in person? In this sense, many clubs have readjusted their way of communicating with fans through digital social media platforms such as instagram, twitter, facebook, broadcasting games through streaming, among others(Lopez-Carril & Anagnostopoulos, 2020; Parnell et al., 2020).

Last and not least, was the possibility to reflect on the importance of soccer in this environment, where the speech of Liverpool's manager Klop resonated positively and made countless reflections come from it: "soccer is the most important thing of the least important things.The truth is that a total stoppage of leagues and championships had never been seen before, not even during World War II, which shows that we still have a lot to evolve for a more efficient crisis management that can respond in a more agile manner(Tovar, 2020).

It was also possible through the data analyzed here, to develop a framework about the areas, stakeholders that were most impacted in the period studied. It can be seen in the figure 4. This can be a subject for future studies on how to deal with crisis situations.

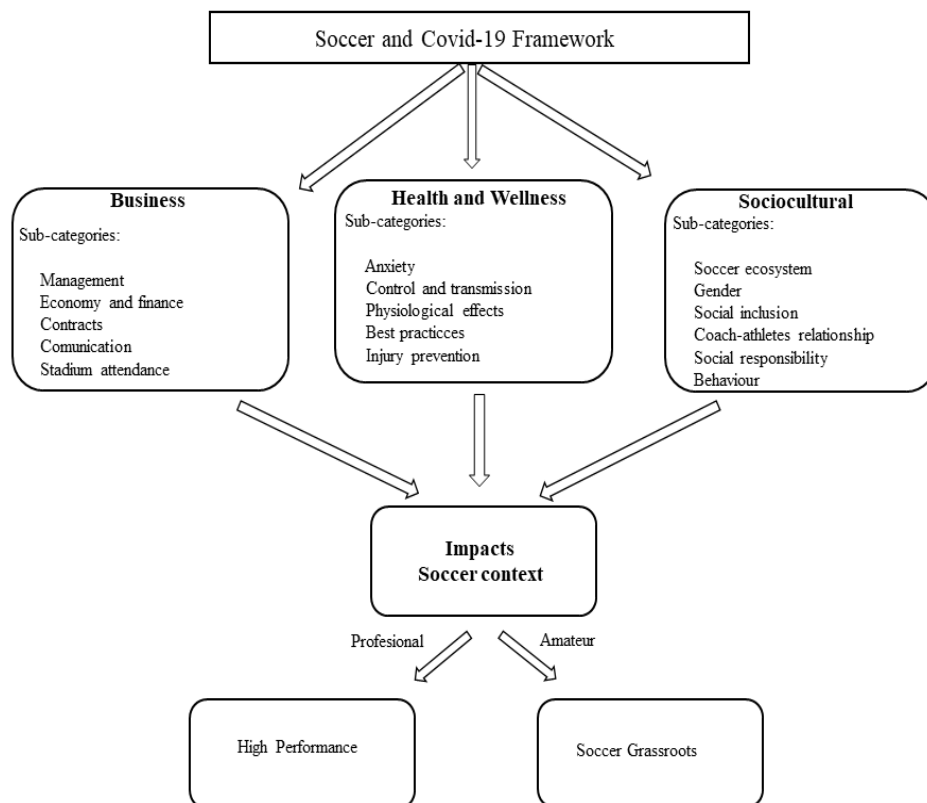


Fig.4: Framework of impacts on soccer areas and stakeholders



## V. CONCLUSION

The present study performed a critical analysis of the pandemic moment and soccer and used as methodology a systematic literature review in the Web of Science and Scopus databases. It was developed in the period from March 2020 to January 2021, which comprised the onset of the pandemic, referring to the Covid-19 topic in soccer, and the direct impact on its stakeholders. The importance of better understanding how the scientific community has conducted its studies on this topic was highlighted. Furthermore, for the research criteria used, it was evidenced that the major focus of the studies was on professional soccer while amateur and training soccer was sidelined during this period.

Three thematic clusters around the topic "Covid-19 and soccer" were identified deductively (Business; Health and Wellness and Sociocultural), and it was found that most of these studies were concentrated in the "Health and Wellness" cluster, and had their research focused on a specific internal stakeholder, the athletes. In turn, the smallest number of publications was gathered in the "Sociocultural" cluster. By analyzing the results of this study, it is possible to realize the importance of a broader observation in the sense that it involves both internal and external stakeholders in the soccer field. In this study it became evident that more studies related to internal stakeholders have been developed, particularly with athletes, which to some extent can be considered normal, since athletes are the main players in this process. Another important aspect is to verify the possibility of returning to soccer activities with the main focus on training athletes. Clearly left aside during the pandemic. In this way, the study offers an opportunity to evaluate how the processes within soccer are being studied in a period of crisis, which quickly responded to the needs of professional soccer and little or almost nothing was shifted to seek solutions to resume soccer practice in the lower ranks. This absence of sports practice may have a future impact on these generations who have been deprived of the possibilities of developing the skills that soccer provides. In this sense, sports public policies should be the front line for the resumption of sports practice in the lower ranks, because it is one of the essential points, due to its importance in several scenarios within soccer, especially because of the possibility of developing both hard skills and soft skills. This opens an important window of study on this safe and effective resumption at these levels of training when in crisis situations. Therefore, this study is an important tool in the analysis of the evolution and development of possibilities to increase and rescue the practice of soccer in a uniform and safe way even in a

pandemic situation through well-structured protocols for everyone's safety.

## VI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the methodological rigor used in this study, there are some limitations that can be pointed out because of the inclusion/exclusion criteria defined in the sample selection, which end up conditioning the results of this type of study. When only studies published as articles or reviews were considered, the final sample size turned out to be smaller. Thus, in future investigations, the criteria can be extended to published studies by including books and book chapters.

Since the results showed that the studies on Covid-19 and soccer, have had professional soccer as their focus, it opens a window of opportunity for the development of studies in the typology of training soccer, it is suggested that in future research work can develop studies in this direction. Thus, analyzing how to safely resume activities in these levels, and what are the best practices to be adopted to work efficiently in the youth soccer levels, is a need for future research.

Following the same approach, it is fundamental to analyze how the Federations, Football Associations, and Public Power can be the main partners and responsible for the validation and control of the practices adopted by clubs, coaches, and athletes. And last and not least, try to explore the covid-19 and soccer theme in more depth with external stakeholders, since there are still few studies. One such example can be the study of the relationship and interface between clubs and their fans through the media, since due to the digital transformation that society is going through, the use of digital technologies is often used as a means of approaching these two actors. In addition, other external stakeholders such as members, parents, sponsors, should be part of new lines of research, in order to understand their influence on the internal processes of the so-called soccer world.

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