A Citation Network Analysis of Perfectionism in Sport

Helen Sullivan | Daniel J. M. Fleming | Travis E. Dorsch | Matthew Vierimaa

Introduction

Perfectionism in sport has received a large amount of attention in both the scholarly and popular domains. Early perfectionism research was conducted in clinical populations and students. Recently this moved towards a focus on athletes and the field has since grown exponentially. Citation network analysis provides a functional method for consolidating literature. More specifically, it allows us to examine the citation structure of a field and the characteristics of articles rather than content. This offers an alternate method of review when compared to a meta-analysis, for example. The present study attempts to highlight the citation structure and demographic characteristics in research on perfectionism in sport. In order to do this, multiple databases were searched using the term "sport", and the Boolean phrase "perfect*.

Methods

Specification of the Article Population

Relevant articles were identified to be included through utilizing general (i.e. PubMed & Google Scholar) and specific (i.e. PsychINFO & SportDiscus) electronic databases in August 2020. The search was restricted to these databases due to their comprehensive coverage of the sport perfectionism literature in the English language. To harvest an inclusive population of articles, a date range was not set when initially searching the databases. When specifying search parameters, we sought all academic literature targeting perfectionism in the context of sport. In doing so, a broad documentation of the extant literature on perfectionism in sport was collected.

Inclusion Criteria

In order to provide a guide for the article selection and retrieval process, three primary inclusion criteria were established. First, articles were to be peer-reviewed, academic journal articles written in the English language. Second, articles were required to contain material surrounding perfectionism in sport. For the purposes of the present study, there were no parameters on the participants age, or level of competition. All perfectionism in sport research was desired in order to create a complete picture of the existing literature in the field. Finally, the third inclusion criteria were that articles must include original empirical data. This acted to eliminate meta-analyses, systematic reviews, and theoretical pieces while including all empirical research available.
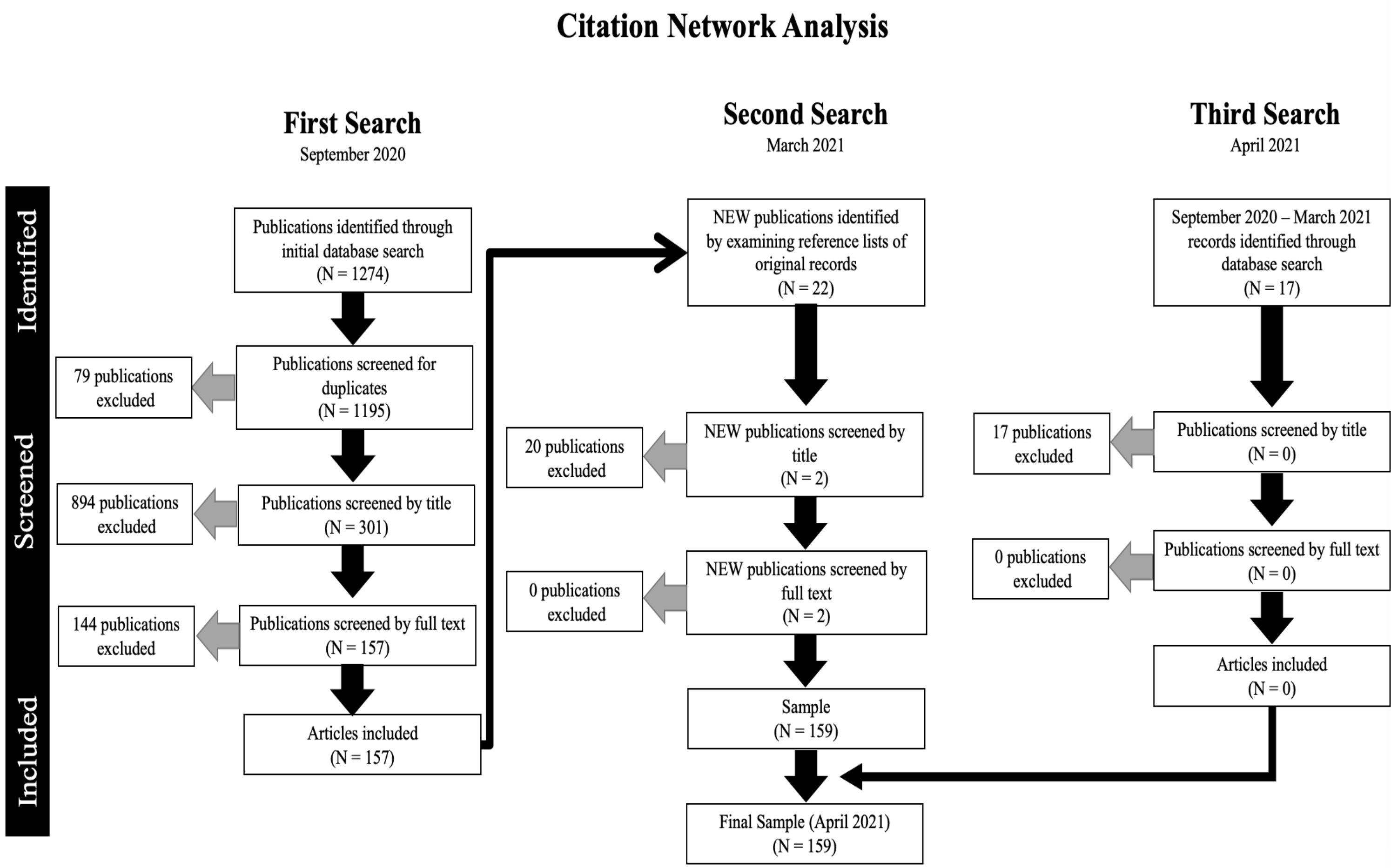
Figure 1

Citation Network Analysis

Figure 2

Number of Articles Published on Each Continent

■ North America ■ South America ■ Europe ■ Africa ■ Oceania ■ Asia

Figure 3

Articles Published in Academic Journals

■ Other
■ Personality predictors of yips and choking susceptibility.
■ International Journal of Sport Psychology.
■ Journal of Applied Psychology
■ Journal of Sport & Exercise psychology
■ Journal of Sport Behavior
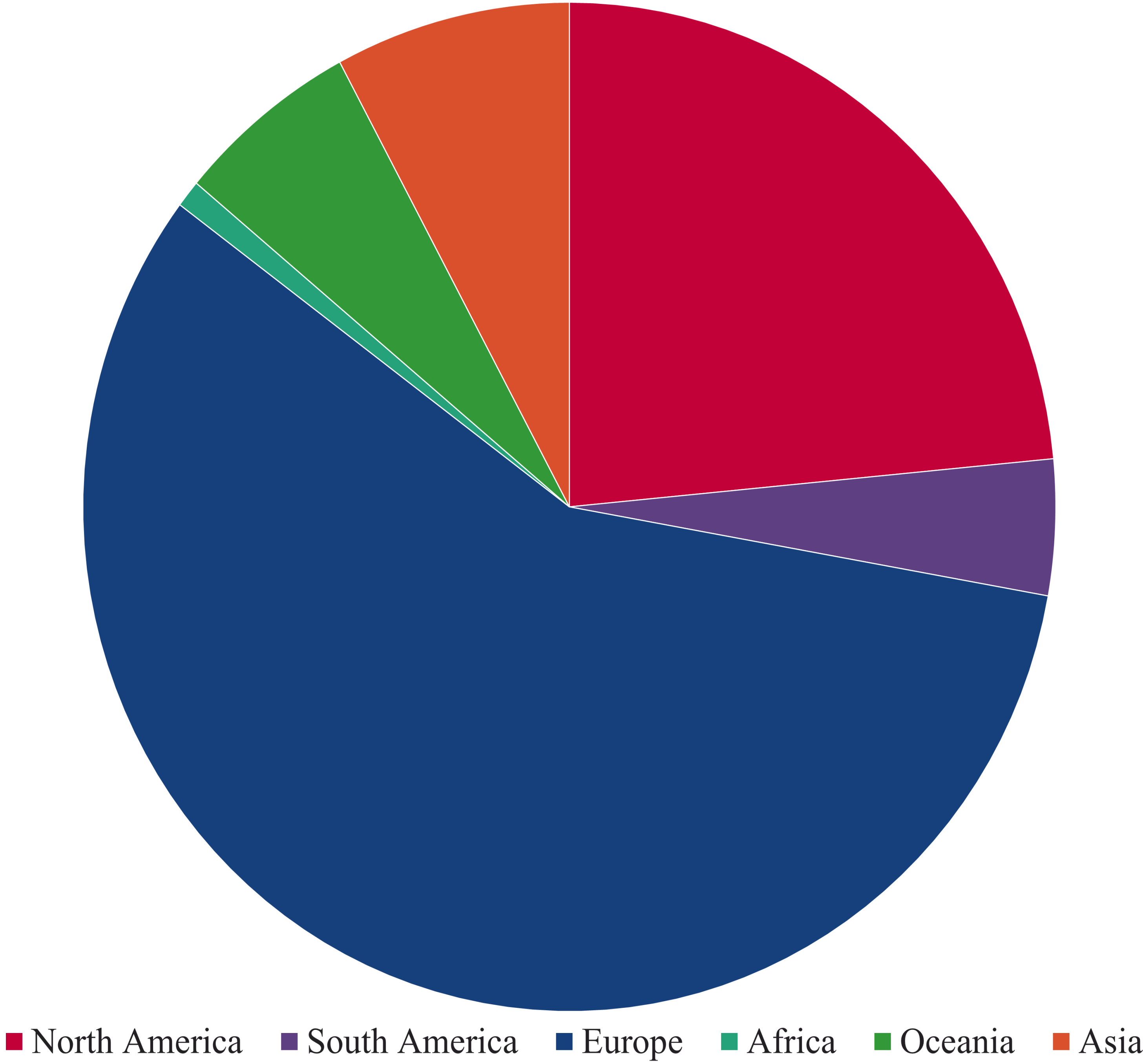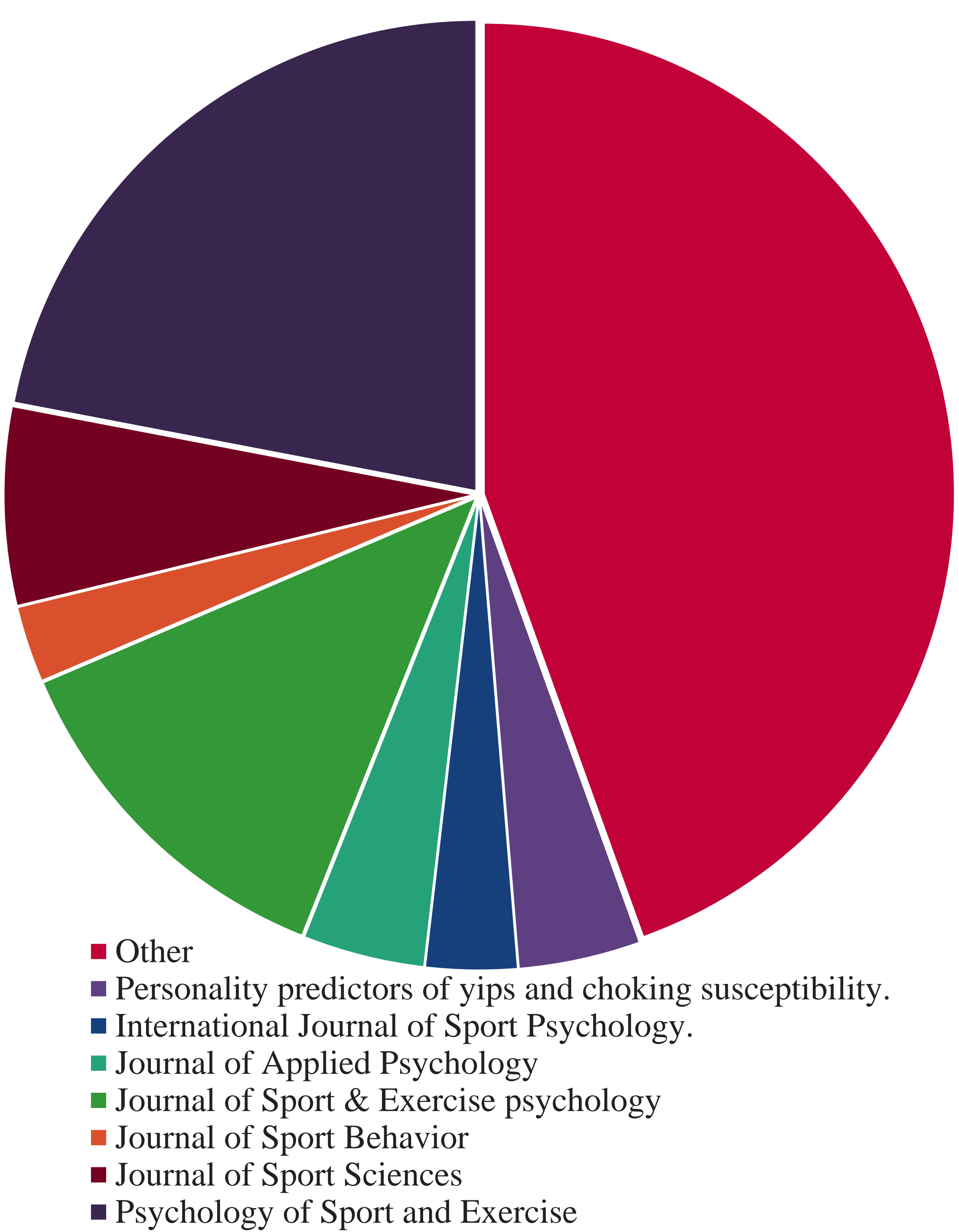■ Journal of Sport Sciences
■ Psychology of Sport and Exercise

Discussion

Gender and sport. Many of the participants in each study were male, average age of 18.64, and participated in soccer, football, or basketball. Future research may wish to focus on a broader range of sports, female athletes, and of different ages.

Limitations

Research Methods. Many articles being published relating to perfectionism in sport use a quantitative approach. There are very few studies that use qualitative, mixed, or longitudinal research methods. The field may benefit from broadening these methodological approaches in future work.

Conclusion

The research conducted contributes significantly to better understanding what are the most prominent articles related to perfectionism in sport, how these articles are interlinked across the rest of the field, and which participant and publication demographics are most and least understood across the published literature regarding perfectionism in sport. The present study efficiently synthesis's a rapidly growing literature base associated with perfectionism in sport.