



A REVIEW ANALYSIS OF SEXUAL AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE OF YOUNG ATHLETES

Anju bala Thakre

Research Scholar

Department of Physical Education

Kalinga University.

AnjubalaThakre124@gmail.com

Dr. Arun

Assistant Professor

Department of Physical Education

Kalinga University.

ABSTRACT

The co-occurrence of emotional and sexual abuse against children may have a variety of detrimental impacts on their development. In order to examine the dynamics and consequences of abuse in the elite sport context and to investigate characteristics of this context in which the coach-athlete relationship is central that make these athletes especially vulnerable to abuse, this narrative review synthesizes research on emotional and sexual abuse of elite child athletes by their coaches. The intensity and one-dimensionality of kid athletes' experiences at the top level are these qualities that this research offers to the literature by identifying. These traits are risky because they encourage isolation of the still-developing athlete and normalization of misuse. Important topics such as internalization and rationalization of the abuse, disruption of identity, and dynamics around disclosure are also covered in relation to the emotional and sexual abuse of elite young athletes.

INTRODUCTION

This narrative research describes coaches' exploitation of top child athletes, a particularly vulnerable group. Coaches must be aware of these dynamics of abuse to protect young athletes and prevent their exploitation. Athletes need a safe environment for coaching and sport growth.

Elite kid athletes are rare and talented. This narrative study defines "elite" as competing nationally or internationally. This definition of elite child athletes applies because participating at the national or international level demands young athletes and their families to sacrifice more than non-elite peers. Mountjoy et al. (2008) define a top child athlete as "...one who has superior athletic talent, undergoes specialized training, receives expert coaching, and is exposed to early petition" (p. 122). The IOC's definition of national or international competition is operational. Elite young athletes share experiences in all sports, distinguishing them from non-athletes. These athletes are typically habituated to self-care and have traveled far for competitions at an early age. Great young athletes grow up in a specific atmosphere. This is uncommon since abuse is sometimes condoned and even applauded when sportsmen succeed. High-level athletes are more susceptible to abuse. Risk factors for interpersonal violence in sports range from player age and sex to social variables like aggressive athletic and cultural standards (Parent & Fortier, 2018). Elite young athletes are susceptible because they lack regular childhood experiences. They become completely immersed in their sports environment and dependent on it for support. Due to the intensity of coach-athlete connection at the highest level (Stirling & Kerr, 2009) and the expectations of rising sports stars (Zurc, 2017), athletes are more exposed to abuse.

This narrative summary summarizes data on coaches abusing elite young athletes emotionally and sexually. This essay focuses on the coach for many reasons. First, coaches have more influence than athletes, especially in competitive sports. Power imbalance is different

amongst peers. Second, coach-committed sexual abuse is more severe than other sports-related offenses (Vertommen et al., 2017). Female athletes sometimes peak sooner than male athletes (Brackenridge & Kirby, 1997; Lauer, Gould, Roman, & Pierce, 2010), hence we gave them additional attention. Male coaches mistreat young female athletes more often. According to past research, most sports sexual violence victims are women, which is consistent with gender differences in sexual abuse in the general population. Despite repeated abuse underreporting, this is true.

Emotional and sexual abuse are considered child maltreatment (Garbarino, 2008). At its most basic level, sexual abuse is when an adult uses a child for their own sexual gratification or makes the child a participant in sexual behavior, while emotional abuse is when an adult causes emotional harm to a child, negatively affecting their mental, social, or emotional development ("What is Child Abuse," n.d.). This study examines emotional and sexual abuse because they commonly occur together and because emotional abuse may be as detrimental as other forms of abuse. The literature limits us to these abuse types. Physical abuse and neglect by coaches of top young athletes is less studied than emotional and sexual abuse.

This report highlights the top sports world's mechanisms that permit abuse and documents its developmental impacts, rather than evaluating the findings presented. Coaches and other sports authorities can better spot abuse and safeguard young athletes by understanding these qualities and dynamics. Recent research has shown that a developmental perspective is essential to understanding how trauma, especially child abuse, impacts people as they grow. Trauma impacts depend on developmental timing and prevalence found that as individuals become older, their perception of familial violence changes, supporting the use of a developmental approach to study child maltreatment. Various coping methods work well at various ages. Aadnanes and Gulbrandsen (2018) found that younger children hid, protected their abusive parent, and avoided provoking them, but older children often confronted their abuser.

This study contributes to the literature by addressing the characteristics of elite sports culture that render young elite athletes vulnerable to abuse. The study synthesis revealed the one-dimensionality and intensity of these athletes' experiences, in which the coach-athlete connection is crucial and parents are typically sidelined. These attributes are especially harmful to young athletes because they isolate them, legitimize abuse, and limit their growth in more holistic and supportive environments. As athletes get more immersed in elite sport culture, they may be less likely to disclose abuse. Recognizing critical environmental factors may improve elite sports and protect players. No other book has identified such common, overarching qualities from the literature on abuse of top-level teenage athletes. This study further enhances Kerr and Stirling's (2019) descriptive work on sport abuse by specifying these qualities. The present study exclusively examines emotional and sexual abuse by a coach against a young elite athlete. This article focuses on elite sports and coaches, unlike Roberts et al. (2019), which examined athletics broadly. This paper extends Bjørnseth and Szabo (2018) work on sexual violence against child athletes by focusing on elite athletes, who are especially vulnerable to abuse due to their intense training, and discusses emotional abuse and the overlap between these two types of abuse.

This narrative review also examines top athlete abuse studies' geographical distribution. The US has less research on this topic than other countries with similar GDP and GDP per capita

(Kamal, Hudman, & McDermott, 2019). Despite much of the research on this subject being done in Europe, Canada, and Australia (see Table 1 in Appendix A), it is relevant to and needed in the US. Stirling (2008) and Kerr (2010) recognized this. "I've been working on this topic since 1985... and we got through the denial in Europe, but the U.S. is absolutely the most resistant of any country I've worked with" (Sturtz, 2014, p. 2), said pioneering athlete abuse researcher Brackenridge. The present narrative review (see Appendix A) has fewer US studies than European, Canadian, and Australian research. This matches Bjrnseth and Szabo's (2018) assessment of sexual abuse against young athletes, which includes seven European and Canadian papers but none from the US. Based on the lack of research and the inadequate ways in which many of the nation's national governing bodies of sport and other organizations have dealt with perpetrators in their sports, such as USA Gymnastics and the US Olympic Committee's mishandling of the Larry Nassar case (e.g., Hauser & Zraick, 2018), the US appears to have only sporadic and retroactive interest in this topic.

After reviewing the research, this narrative review highlights top-level coach-athlete interactions that make athletes vulnerable to abuse. This study then discusses emotional and sexual abuse in professional sports and their challenges.

Literature review process

This narrative review provides "narrative description of a body of research" (Levitt, 2019, p. 92). First, PsycINFO and PsycARTICLES were searched for "emotional abuse AND elite athlete" and "sexual abuse AND elite athlete." Scholarly and peer-reviewed journals were searched. The initial search results revealed the players' ages, physical abilities, and elite status. Coaching-related emotional or sexual abuse dominated the accounts featured. Next, the same keyword combinations were searched up with sport added. A Google Scholar search for "abuse of elite child athletes" yielded several relevant items. PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, and all Google Scholar databases were searched. This broadened the application of the findings. Articles on other perpetrators besides coaches or about physical abuse or neglect were excluded.

The search yielded a list of prominent researchers. Then, reference lists of these authors' main articles were searched for related papers. These authors' most recent works were evaluated, and their reference lists were used to find related material. This phase's organic search freed up the prior phase's keywords. As shown in Appendix A, the abuse of top-level young athletes research is retroactive and incorporates semi-structured interviews with retired players. This article discusses the causes of coach-athlete abuse, emotional and sexual abuse, and their ramifications.

Antecedents of abuse in the coach-athlete relationship

Current study examines outstanding child sports coach-athlete relationships. Athletes are abused by male coaches (Bjrnseth & Szabo, 2018). The coach-athlete relationship determines the severity and one-dimensionality of elite young athletes' maltreatment. Athletes' dependence on coaches makes coach abuse an important contact between people of unequal status (Mountjoy, 2018; Stirling, 2009; Stirling & Kerr, 2008, 2009, 2010). Coaching may include inappropriate interactions and abuse (Fasting, Sand, & Sisjord, 2018; Haney, Long, & Howell-jones, 1998). Coaches know these ethical issues. As long as sports abuse occurs (Alexander, Stafford, & Lewis, 2011; Parent, Lavoie, Thibodeau, Hebert, & Blais, 2016),

coaches may abuse athletes despite knowing the ethical issues.

Power of coaches

Power over athletes

Coaches' capacity to influence and manage players shows their authority (Smits et al., 2017). Athletes typically see their coaches as their way to success, which adds to this influence and control (Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Smits et al., 2017; Stirling & Kerr, 2014; Tofler, Stryer, Micheli, & Herman, 1996). Coaches' actions, especially their language, may affect athletes' mental health and self-esteem (Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Stirling & Kerr, 2008). Because of this, coaches might misuse their relationship with athletes (Parent, 2011). Coaches affect athletes, making them vulnerable to abuse (Owton & Sparkes, 2017; Parent & Demers, 2011; Stirling & Kerr, 2009).

Coaches have several powers (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Stirling and Kerr examined how abused former top female gymnasts and swimmers saw their trainers in 2009. Their studies showed how coaches' influence prevented players from reporting coach abuse. Coach power was characterized by control, authority, and manipulation. Papatomas and Lavallee's (2012) narrative analysis of a former top junior tennis player whose coach sexually abused her shows how authority influences players. Her coach misled her into believing the assault was sexual.

Power over parents

Coaches may also have influence on athletes' parents (see, for example, Kerr & Stirling (2012) and Smits et al. (2017)). Parents of retired professional athletes who had experienced emotional abuse at the hands of their coaches participated in semi-structured interviews conducted by Kerr and Stirling in 2012. In order of increasing severity, they categorized the parents' reactions into five phases of socialization over their children's sports careers. These stages were talent recognition, abandoning of control, developing worry, acceptance/acquiescence, and guilt. These phases mirrored the athlete's parents' training by the coach. With each level, the coach's influence became stronger. For instance, during the talent show, parents spoke about how their child's coach had made them feel like stars, signaling the beginning of the coach's influence on athletes and families. Parents were invited to trust the coach and give up some control during the yielding control phase, which demonstrated the coach's growing influence. Some parents did see potential problems with this and, looking back, believed they may have given the coach too much power. The topics covered below, such as how an elite athlete's life revolves on their sport and coach, the importance of winning, and the ways in which successful coaches gain in authority, all represent the influence of coaches. Each of these topics illustrates a certain facet of the coach's authority and how this power leaves players open to mistreatment.

An unbalanced life

The all-encompassing nature of being an elite athlete, which contributes to the one-dimensionality of this context, makes the athlete vulnerable to abuse (Brackenridge & Kirby, 1997; Stirling & Kerr, 2009, 2014). Kerr and Stirling's (2012) "growing concern stage" exemplifies the beginning of this as it was characterised by multiple sacrifices on the part of the family and the fact that family life increasingly revolved around the sport, a dynamic also seen in Smits et al. (2017) when families' social endeavours centred on practice and competition schedules. Kerr and Stirling's (2012) growing concern stage seemed to mark the end of the coach's grooming and the stage in which abuse really begins. As athletes' careers

continue, they focus solely on their sport and make additional sacrifices in other areas of their life to do so (Stirling & Kerr, 2007). This narrowing focus of the elite athlete further exemplifies the one-dimensional nature of their world.

Prioritising performance and winning over well-being of athlete

Performance, success, and victory are often the most significant results in the realm of top athletics, regardless of the methods used to accomplish them, including questionable coaching techniques (Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Elite young athletes are often subjected to abusive coaches that put performance over wellbeing (Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Parent & Demers, 2011; Stirling & Kerr, 2009). The youngster becomes subject to maltreatment by their coach when winning is prioritized above everything else (Kerr & Stirling, 2012). Behaviors that are consistent with such prioritizing may be harmful even when a coach has the best of intentions (Stirling & Kerr, 2008, 2009). As stated by Cameron, Mcpherson, Atkins, Nicholson, and Long (2017), one aspect of this prioritizing is seeing the kid as an athlete first and a child second (Brackenridge & Kirby, 1997). Another aspect is objectifying the child athlete as a tool for coaches or organizations to use to achieve success. Even the athletes themselves may prioritize success and accomplishment (Stirling & Kerr, 2013). The intensity and one-dimensionality of the environment of the top athlete are influenced by this single-minded emphasis on achievement and victory.

Winning coaches are beyond reproach

Coaches gain influence when their athletes succeed more, which is closely tied to the preceding principle of prioritizing winning above all else. As a result, damaging coaching techniques may be used by abusive coaches who are known for developing successful athletes without being called out (e.g., Smits et al., 2017; Stirling & Kerr, 2014). The abuse of athletes may be covered up and kept secret by these coaches, who often put achievement above everything else (Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Parent & Demers, 2011; Smits et al., 2017; Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Coaches may reply to parents' questions by defending their practices and highlighting their personal significance to the child's career (Kerr & Stirling, 2012). Parents who attempt to raise issues with coaches may potentially face retaliation from them. As an example of this, parents in Kerr and Stirling (2012) claimed that after talking to the coach about their worries, the coach had a negative impact on or punished their children (e.g., by questioning the athletes' toughness or humiliating them). This shows that instructors may eventually become untouchable, as do the parents' consequent sentiments of failure. Coaches' influence on athletes in the coach-athlete relationship is greatly influenced by their perception of them as infallible. A sports organization may also be involved in the abuse by maintaining a culture of silence, according to Parent and Demers (2011), who found that it may alter how an organization approaches sexual abuse prevention.

Components of abuse

Emotional abuse of elite child athletes

This narrative review begins with emotional abuse. Coaches can emotionally abuse athletes by screaming, shouting, humiliating, scapegoating, ignoring, belittling, rejecting, isolating, threatening, criticizing, using derogatory language and comments, denying attention and support, expressing intense anger, and/or throwing equipment at or in the presence of athletes (Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Kavanagh et al., 2017; Stirling, 2009; Stirling & Kerr, 2007, 20).

(Kavanagh et al., 2017). Benching a player may also be considered abuse (Battaglia, Kerr, & Stirling, 2017). Below are details on emotional abuse results.

Prevalence of emotional abuse in sport

Even though emotional abuse is acknowledged and sometimes reported in sports, it still happens. Sports psychology consultants have allegedly worked with emotionally abused athletes the most, which is one indicator of how common emotional abuse is in sports (Stirling & Kerr, 2010). Research with child athletes in the UK found that 46% of athletes competing in their primary sport at the national level and 56% of athletes competing in their primary sport at the international level reported experiencing emotional harm from their coach or trainer (Alexander et al., 2011). This finding lends credence to the prevalence of this type of abuse.

Effects of emotional abuse perpetrated against athletes

Perceived negative effects of emotional abuse

Coach-inflicted emotional abuse harms athletes in many ways (Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Stirling & Kerr, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2013; Tofler et al., 1996). Stirling and Kerr (2008) and (2013) reinforce Gervis and Dunn's (2004) results on how coaches' abusive behavior impacts players. Stirling and Kerr (2013) categorize their results into psychological, training, and performance consequences of emotional abuse. Low mood, self-esteem, self-efficacy, anger, bad body image, and anxiety were negative psychological impacts. Negative training impacts included decreased motivation, pleasure, attention, and skill acquisition, while negative performance effects included decreased performance.

Perceived positive effects of emotional abuse

Early in their careers, athletes feel that emotional abuse is important for success (Stirling & Kerr, 2007, 2013, 2014), and this normalization of abuse typically lasts throughout mid-career. Some Stirling and Kerr (2013) participants reported positive impacts of emotional abuse connected to their three categories of findings, such as a feeling of success, greater motivation, and improved performance. Stirling and Kerr (2013) believe that participants claimed such positive impacts to explain their experiences or as a consequence of backward reasoning: they were successful in their sport, thus the coaching must have been beneficial. However, their retrospective reasoning is worrisome. This reasoning may indicate that athletes are detaching themselves from their emotions and objectifying themselves, like an aggressor (Tofler, Knapp, & Drell, 1998). This may also increase the likelihood that these athletes will use such coaching practices with athletes they coach in the future, especially since athletes are often preferred candidates for coaching positions in their sports academies to maintain their culture (Blackett, Evans, & Piggott, 2018).

Emotional abuse and performance

Emotional maltreatment affects sports performance (Gervis et al., 2016; Stirling & Kerr, 2007), with good performance buffering the detrimental consequences. Stirling and Kerr (2007) found that if participants thought they had done well, the maltreatment was seen as good and justified. Emotional abuse was more detrimental when athletes performed badly or stopped improving, causing mental health issues and eating problems. Emotional maltreatment may have caused these performance impacts (Stirling & Kerr, 2007).

Gervis et al. (2016) revealed that successful athletes saw emotional maltreatment as increasing performance at all levels. When athletes failed, emotional abuse was blamed.

These results support the idea that emotional maltreatment affects athletic performance. Despite these performance results, participants regarded emotional abuse as adversely affecting well-being in all conditions (Gervis et al., 2016).

Coping with emotional abuse

As athletes age, develop, and become more involved in top sports, their responses to emotional abuse may shift (Kavanagh et al., 2017; Stirling & Kerr, 2007). The stage of athletic development (early, mid, or late career) has been found to influence female elite swimmers' responses to abuse, with athletes initially being socialized to accept abusive behavior from coaches but eventually rebelling against it (Stirling & Kerr, 2007). As athletes age, dealing with emotional abuse may take different forms (Kavanagh et al., 2017). Kavanagh et al.'s (2017) study¹ found that athletes' strategies for coping with emotional abuse evolved over time, improving their ability to manage their emotions and performance. Coping was seen as a way to survive and stay in their sport. However, athletes who quit or ceased participating internationally had more unfavorable views of their emotional maltreatment (Kavanagh et al., 2017). Later sports performance influenced understanding and accepting emotional abuse. Long-term coping was enhanced if athletes could look positively on their career, but those who felt they had not realized their potential in athletics showed despair. Though expected, this is disturbing. Maltreatment is justified if athletes who positively reframed their maltreatment did better in the long run. This is similar to Stirling and Kerr's (2013) participants' beneficial impacts of abuse. These studies also show a long-term relationship between emotional maltreatment and performance outcomes.

Sexual abuse of elite child athletes

The narrative review also covers sexual assault. As indicated, emotional and sexual abuse commonly co-occur, making it crucial to analyze both forms of abuse together to establish overall conclusions for top child athletes. Sexual abuse in sports includes having a sexual relationship with an athlete; improper sexual contact, including genital penetration; indecent exposure; rewards for sexual favors; sexually explicit comments, jokes, or gestures; sexual propositions; and showing an athlete pornographic images, videos, or other material. Male coaches regularly sexually abuse athletes (Cameron et al., 2017; Cense & Brackenridge, 2001; Fasting, Brackenridge, & Walseth, 2007). Kirby and Greaves (1997) showed that 1.9% of top Canadian child athletes were compelled to have sexual contact before 16 years old. Parent et al. (2016) revealed that 0.8% of 14–17-year-old Quebec athletes were abused by coaches. However, many incidences of sexual abuse go unreported, and study methodology and operational definitions vary, making it impossible to verify such figures in the literature.

Athletes' reactions to sexual abuse and harassment

After unwelcome sexual contact or provocative words, athletes might experience several emotions (Fasting et al., 2007). Fasting et al. (2007) examined female top Norwegian athletes who reported being sexually harassed in sports in a previous survey. Male coaches were the most common sexual harassers, although male players and sport management were also involved (Fasting et al., 2007). Some athletes were harassed as teens. Harassment usually included physical contact and frequent sexually provocative statements or stares. The athletes felt disgust, aggravation, rage, and fear, with fear usually associated with physical sexual harassment and sexual threats. Fasting and colleagues identified four responses to harassment

in athletes: avoidance, apathy, direct confrontation, and humorous confrontation. Harassment age affected response. Younger athletes were more passive, whereas older athletes were more forthright. This shows that development affected athletes' responses to unwelcome sexual attention.

Common sequelae of emotional and sexual abuse

Following the origins and components of emotional and sexual abuse, frequent consequences are examined. Emotional and sexual abuse of athletes may harm mental and physical health (Parent & Fortier, 2018). Abuse of young athletes increases psychological discomfort and lowers quality of life in adulthood (Vertommen et al., 2018). These shared predictors of athlete violence emphasize the need of analyzing many kinds of interpersonal violence. Since emotional and sexual abuse commonly co-occur, similar concerns connected to both forms of abuse become evident. The literature on emotional and sexual abuse of top child athletes raises many concerns worth discussing. These difficulties include internalization of abuse, identity disruption, eating disorders, normalization and rationalization of abuse, disclosure of abuse, and the power of victimization stories. Abused athletes face each of these difficulties mentioned.

Eating disorders

Eating problems may indicate abusive coaching, although this study does not cover them. Elite junior athletics is competitive and stressful, hence eating problems persist (Tofler et al., 1996). Athletes may develop disordered eating to impress coaches and accomplish weight goals. Coaches' weight-related remarks and behaviors may contribute to these diseases. Eating disorders may develop during or after abuse (Papathomas & Lavallee, 2012; Stirling & Kerr, 2007) or render athletes more susceptible to abuse (Parent, 2011).

Normalisation and rationalisation

Abusive coaches may normalize their grooming and abuse (Owton & Sparkes, 2017). As said, players may normalize coach abuse, particularly if the coach is successful (Cense & Brackenridge, 2001; Papathomas & Lavallee, 2012; Stirling & Kerr, 2009, 2013, 2014). Because coaches have control, abused athletes may normalize the abuse (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Elite athletes may over-rationalize (Gervis et al., 2016).

Athletes don't challenge coaches' emotional abuse (Kavanagh et al., 2017; Stirling & Kerr, 2007). Athletes rationalize emotional abuse by believing it is required for success (Gervis et al., 2016; Kavanagh et al., 2017; Stirling & Kerr, 2007, 2013, 2014). In Kavanagh et al.'s (2017) research, participants weighed the costs and rewards of playing their sport, and some athletes were willing to abuse to reach the top. As previously mentioned, athletes justify emotional abuse by citing its perceived benefits (e.g., Stirling & Kerr, 2013). Popular sports movies commonly show coaches abusing athletes and bystanders doing nothing (Kerr, Stirling, & Bandy, 2016). This may normalize emotional abuse in athletics.

Parents' normalisation of abuse

The elite sports milieu may socialize well-meaning parents into accepting and ignoring questionable coaching techniques (Kerr & Stirling, 2012; Smits et al., 2017). During Kerr and Stirling's (2012) acceptance/acquiescence stage, parents accepted the abuse as normal and became complicit, though not maliciously, in the abuse by heeding their child's request to continue working with the coach and not saying anything to the coach. Kerr and Stirling (2012) call these parents silent onlookers. Some parents knew of unethical coaching but

trusted the coach. Parents remained quiet due to the coach's dominance, winning's significance, and abuse's normalization.

Delayed or non-disclosure of abuse

Athletes may not disclose abuse because of normalization. Some athletes may not realize they are being mistreated (Kavanagh et al., 2017; Papatthomas & Lavalley, 2012; Stirling & Kerr, 2009), making disclosure at the time improbable. Athletes may be too young to understand what is happening to them (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Young athletes may lack the language to articulate their mistreatment. Developmental perspectives explain why many young athletes don't realize they're being mistreated and explain disclosure patterns. The coach's power and manipulation, an athlete's fear of how reporting would affect their relationship with their coach and their athletic career, and the fear that they won't be believed are other factors in not reporting abuse or delaying disclosure in the athletic context (Bjørnseth & Szabo, 2018; Parent, 2011; Stirling & Kerr, 2009). When parents don't call it abuse, this dread is natural (Stirling & Kerr, 2010).

Parents

Sharing victimization tales helps parents of abused professional athletes (Kerr & Stirling, 2012). Kerr and Stirling (2012) discovered that parents wanted to share their children's sports abuse tales and were grateful for the opportunity, similar to Stirling and Kerr's (2009) retired athletes. Like athletes in other studies, some Kerr and Stirling (2012) parents felt angry, but none asked to halt the interview.

Conclusion

This narrative review synthesizes studies on emotional and sexual abuse of elite child athletes by coaches to identify the overarching characteristics of the elite sports world, in which the coach-athlete relationship is central, that enable abuse to spread. The one-dimensionality and intensity of elite child athletes' experiences are evident in the dynamics of the abuse discussed in this paper, including coaches' power and control over athletes in multiple domains, coaches' unquestioned authority, and the emphasis on winning. To our knowledge, this narrative evaluation is the first to generalize common, underlying features that render top young athletes vulnerable to abuse. These traits isolate the athlete, normalize the abuse, and prevent the athlete from developing in more holistic and nurturing contexts (e.g., such athletes are often home-schooled, negating the holistic context of middle or high school). This narrative review also highlights worldwide sport abuse research tendencies. This showed that the US has less research on this area than similar nations. The U.S. research and policies on athlete abuse trail dangerously behind other nations.

Child athletes must be protected from abuse. This study does not address prevention, but the traits found may guide elite sport environment changes to prevent abuse. Elite sports must alter to protect athletes (Kerr & Stirling, 2019). Coach-elite athlete relationships must be altered. Elite kid athletes must be protected first and foremost.

References

1. Aadnanes, M., & Gulbrandsen, L. M. (2018). Young people and young adults' experiences with child abuse and maltreatment: Meaning making, conceptualizations, and dealing with violence. *Qualitative Social Work*, 17(4), 594–610.
2. Alaggia, R., Collin-Vézina, D., & Lateef, R. (2019). Facilitators and barriers to child sexual abuse

(CSA) disclosures: A research update (2000–2016). *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, 20 (2), 260–283.

3. Alexander, K., Stafford, A., & Lewis, R. (2011). *The experiences of children participating in organised sport in the UK (Rep.)*. <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/experiences-children-participating-organised-sport-uk-summary-report.pdf>
4. Battaglia, A. V., Kerr, G., & Stirling, A. E. (2017). Youth athletes' interpretations of punitive coaching practices. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 29(3), 337–352.
5. Bjørnseth, I., & Szabo, A. (2018). Sexual violence against children in sports and exercise: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 27(4), 365–385.
6. Blackett, A. D., Evans, A. B., & Piggott, D. (2018). "They have to toe the line": A Foucauldian analysis of the socialisation of former elite athletes into academy coaching roles. *Sports Coaching Review*, 8(1), 83–102.
7. Brackenridge, C. (2001). *Spoilsports: Understanding and preventing sexual exploitation in sport*. London: Routledge.
8. Brackenridge, C., & Fasting, K. (2005). The grooming process in sport: Narratives of sexual harassment and abuse. *Auto/Biography*, 13(1), 33–52.
9. Brackenridge, C., & Kirby, S. (1997). Playing safe: Assessing the risk of sexual abuse to elite child athletes. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 32(4), 407–418.
10. Cameron, N., Mcpherson, L., Atkins, P., Nicholson, M., & Long, M. (2017). Child athletes and athletic objectification. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 41(3), 175–190.
11. Cense, M., & Brackenridge, C. (2001). Temporal and developmental risk factors for sexual harassment and abuse in sport. *European Physical Education Review*, 7(1), 61–79.
12. Dierkhising, C. B., Ford, J. D., Branson, C., Grasso, D. J., & Lee, R. (2019). Developmental timing of polyvictimisation: Continuity, change, and association with adverse outcomes in adolescence. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 87, 40–50.
13. Fasting, K., Brackenridge, C., & Walseth, K. (2007). Women athletes' personal responses to sexual harassment in sport. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 19(4), 419–433.
14. Fasting, K., Brackenridge, C. H., & Kjølborg, G. (2013). Using court reports to enhance knowledge of sexual abuse in sport. A Norwegian case study. *Scandinavian Sport Studies Forum*, 4, 49–67.
15. Fasting, K., Sand, T. S., & Sisjord, M. K. (2018). Coach–athlete sexual relationships: Coaches' opinions. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 13(4), 463–470.
16. Garbarino, J. (2008). *Children and the dark side of human experience*. NY: Springer.
17. Garbarino, J. (2011). Not all bad treatment is psychological maltreatment. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 35, 797–801.
18. Gervis, M., & Dunn, N. (2004). *The emotional abuse of elite child athletes by their coaches*. *Child Abuse Review*, 13(3), 215–223.
19. Gervis, M., Rhind, D., & Luzar, A. (2016). Perceptions of emotional abuse in the coach–athlete relationship in youth sport: The influence of competitive level and outcome. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 11(6), 772–779.
20. Gould, D. (1993). Intensive sport participation and the prepubescent athlete: Competitive stress and burnout. In B. Cahill & A. Pearl (Eds.), *Intensive participation in children's sports* (pp. 19–38). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.