



Bullying in Youth Sport: Knowledge and Prevention Strategies of Coaches

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Abstract

Coaches are key figures in tackling bullying that can occur in the context of formative sport practice. The aim of the study was to evaluate knowledge about bullying among a sample of coaches in Catalonia (Spain), as well as the prevention strategies available to them. The participants were 161 coaches (75.8% male and 24.2% female) from different sports, with a mean age of 20.3 years (SD = 3.15). They were provided with an *ad hoc* questionnaire with the following open questions: "How would you define bullying?", "What typologies of bullying exist?" and "What strategies do you use to prevent bullying in sport?". A content analysis was carried out through, on the one hand, a deductive process for the definition of bullying and its typologies; and, on the other hand, an inductive process for prevention strategies. In turn, the frequencies (%) of responses in each of the categories of the different areas were calculated. It was observed that the definition of the phenomenon was vague in terms of key concepts (repetition, intent to harm and power imbalance). The most frequently displayed typology was physical bullying, followed by cyberbullying. Prevention strategies related to promoting a positive climate among athletes were mentioned, and to a lesser extent those related to observation, awareness-raising, regulation, communication, emotional education and conflict intervention. In general, it was found that coaches had little knowledge about bullying, so it was considered relevant that they be given more specific training on the phenomenon.

Keywords: bullying, definition, preventive strategies, sport, typology.

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Introduction

The scientific and systematic study of bullying began in the 1970s and it is now considered a social problem that affects the whole world, with significant negative effects on mental health (UNESCO, 2018). The key aspects that characterise the phenomenon are threefold: the intention to harm a victim, the imbalance of power in favour of the aggressor and the repetition of these behaviours over time (Olweus, 1994). In terms of typology, we find so-called traditional bullying, which includes verbal bullying (name-calling, insults...), physical bullying (hitting, kicking, damaging personal objects...) and social bullying (excluding, ignoring...) (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). These typologies can be of a direct nature (face-to-face between victim and perpetrator) or of an indirect nature (no physical interaction between victim and perpetrator) (Olweus, 2006). In addition to these typologies, cyberbullying has emerged notably in recent years due to the increasing use of online information and communication technologies (Smith, 2019). Beyond the school environment, bullying can take place in any context where children and adolescents are together and interact, including spaces for sport (Shannon, 2013) and physical activity in general (Castañeda-Vázquez et al., 2020). Although it is understood that the practice of physical-sports activities has beneficial effects on the physical, psychological and social development of children and young people, bullying can turn it into a negative experience among athletes (Mattey et al., 2014). It has been observed that the occurrence of bullying in sport is lower than that observed in the school context, with incidence rates ranging from 10% to 48% (Mishna et al., 2019). These are some of the main risk factors for bullying in sport: having a disability, being obese, belonging to an ethnic minority, sexual orientation or lower motor skills (Nery et al., 2020). In terms of the consequences of bullying in sport, negative emotional effects have been observed among victims (Kentel & McHugh, 2015). It can also lead to a decrease in sporting and academic performance and premature withdrawal from sport (Nery et al., 2020).

Starting from the ecological theoretical framework proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), adapted to the phenomenon of bullying in the sporting context by Nery et al. (2020), the role of the coach is key in addressing the phenomenon. They can condition the behaviour of the players, as well as their moral development, acting as a reference or role model for them (Nery et al., 2020). In this sense, Vveinhardt et al., (2017) observed that a sample of basketball players who were victims of bullying, communicated their situation to coaches rather than to their own family. However, equally, it is possible that the coach may normalise certain negative behaviours, such as behaviours related to bullying, as inherent to sport culture

(Kowalski, 2017). For this reason, it is considered important that coaches receive training that goes beyond technical and tactical knowledge of the sport and that emphasis is placed on the physical, psychological and social development of the children and adolescents under their responsibility (Shannon, 2013). Specifically, in relation to training related to bullying, it is the coaches themselves who state that they have insufficient competences on the subject (Flores et al., 2020). Moreover, the problem is exacerbated when, in formative sport, these coaches are volunteers who lack solid pedagogical training (Kowalski, 2017).

It is important for the coach to act preventively when bullying situations arise, as well as to promote a positive and inclusive climate within the group of athletes (Nery et al., 2020). Similarly, it is necessary to promote a cooperative orientation towards the activities that are proposed in training (Shannon, 2013) and to participate in improving communication between all sporting agents (Nery et al., 2020). In the school setting, the way teachers define the phenomenon of bullying and the different forms it can take has been identified as a key element in its prevention and one that influences the way it is dealt with (DeOrnellas & Spurgin, 2017). Given the lack of research in this line in the field of sport, the objectives of this research were, on the one hand, to assess the knowledge of formative sport coaches on bullying in terms of its conceptualisation (definition and typologies) and, on the other hand, to analyse the preventive strategies they knew.

Methodology

Participants

The sample consisted of 161 coaches ($n = 122$ - 75.8% men - and $n = 39$ - 24.2% women) from 24 different sporting areas, first year students of Physical Activity and Sport Sciences Degrees (CCAFD) at the National Institute of Physical Education of Catalonia (INEFC), Barcelona centre (University of Barcelona). These were the inclusion criteria for selecting participants: (1) they needed to be active coaches of athletes in their formative years (6-16 years old), (2) they needed at least one season of coaching experience and (3) they needed positive informed consent. The age range of the sample was between 17 and 41 years ($M = 20.3$ years, $SD = 3.15$), with an average coaching experience of 2.7 seasons ($SD = 1.72$), 55.3% had an official coaching qualification from the corresponding federation.

The Clinical Research Ethics Committee of the Catalan Sports Administration approved the study (009/CEICGC/2021).

Instruments

A questionnaire that had been *ad hoc* divided into two sections was used. The first collected socio-demographic data of the participant (age, gender, qualification, experience and type of sport of coached) and the second presented the following open questions, which aimed to collect information in three areas from the objects of study: "How would you define bullying", "What types of bullying exist" and "What strategies do you use to prevent bullying in sport? An open-ended data collection methodology was used, in line with previous studies in the school setting (Naylor et al., 2006).

Procedure

Prior to completing the questionnaire, participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the study, anonymity and confidentiality in the analysis of the data. Participants completed the questionnaire individually using the SurveyMonkey® platform at INEFC Barcelona, with the research team present.

Data analysis

A content analysis for the three question areas was carried out following the phases established by Bradin (1986). For the first area, an analytical-deductive approach was used (Martínez, 2004), coding responses according to the identification of the key concepts of the definition of bullying: a) *repetition*, b) *intent to harm* and c) *power imbalance* (Olweus, 1994). Category d) *consequences on the victim* was added due to the observation of the presence of actions linked to that category. Finally, a text search frequency query (Bryman, 2008) was conducted and four new categories were created: e) *harassment*, f) *discrimination*, g) *mistreatment* and h) *abuse*. The second area encompassed the study of the typologies of bullying, which were organised into a) *physical bullying*, b) *verbal bullying* c) *social bullying* and d) *cyberbullying* (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Smith, 2019). After consulting the text search frequency (Bryman, 2008), category (e) *psychological bullying* was included, as well as the typification criteria according to f) *reasons for bullying* and according to g) *place where bullying occurs*. The third area concerned preventive strategies for the phenomenon of bullying. It was carried out using an inductive approach, which facilitates the analysis of the categories that appeared during the study, without prior assumptions (Martínez, 2004). Responses were coded according to: a) *promoting a positive climate*, b) *communication*, c) *observation*, d) *awareness-raising*, e) *emotional education*, f) *regulation* and g) *conflict intervention*.

The Atlas.ti programme version 9® was used for coding. Responses from or to the same participant could fall into several categories described in each of the areas. The allocation of participants' responses to the different categories for further analysis was carried out with the participation of two expert researchers. The Kappa index was used to evaluate the inter-rater reliability, which, according to Landis & Koch (1977), yielded excellent agreement values (.845 for definitions, .932 for typologies and .854 for prevention strategies). For the quantitative analysis of the data, SPSS version 21® was used. The frequencies (%) of the responses in each of the categories were calculated, as well as the Chi-square test for the analysis of contingencies between the corresponding categories with respect to gender and the sports qualifications of the coaches, taking as a reference a significance level of $p < .05$.

Results

Definition of the phenomenon of bullying

60.9% of the participants did not name any of the three key concepts (*repetition*, *intent to harm* and *power imbalance*), 35.4% referred to one of the key concepts, 3.7% to two concepts and none of the participants named all of the key concepts. According to the number of key concepts named, no statistically significant differences were observed in any category, neither in relation to the gender of the participants nor to the degree they held. The most frequently named key concept was *intent to harm* with 16.8%, and with statistically significant differences in relation to gender (20.5% male versus 5.1% female; $\chi^2(1.161) = 5$; $p = .025$). In this case, explicit reference was made to the aggressor's aim with his/her actions ("aim to", "intention to", "intentionally"). 13% of the coaches referred to the key concept of *repetition*, referring to "continuous behaviour" or doing something "constantly". In addition, 13% of the coaches mentioned the key concept *power imbalance*, referring to the consequence of the behaviour ("making someone feel inferior", "making someone feel inferior to the group"), to the motive of the aggressor ("showing superiority") and others referred to this power imbalance as a characteristic of the person being victimised, probably due to a previous hierarchisation of the peer group ("weaker individual"). 11.2% of the respondents alluded to the consequences suffered by the person being victimised in their definition. These consequences are linked to effects on the person in general ("negatively affecting one's way of being or living"), negative feelings ("loneliness", "vulnerability",

"sadness"), mental disorders ("depression") and other serious general consequences. However, in no case was reference made to the consequences that other actors involved might experience, naming only the effects on the person who is the victim of bullying. 26.7% of

coaches used the same concept of bullying to describe it. Bullying was also referred to as a form of *discrimination* (15.8%), *mistreatment* (11.8%) and *abuse* (8.1%). Table 1 provides concrete examples of definitions for each of the categories.

Table 1

Categories of the definition of bullying and coaches' responses justifying them.

Categories	Responses from participants
Repetition	"To belittle another person on a continuous basis" (basketball coach)
	"When a person is constantly subjected to criticism, mockery, derogatory comments from peers" (football coach)
	"Bullying is the constant harassment of a person for no reason" (swimming coach)
Intent to harm	"For me, bullying is when a child or group of children aim to tease or make fun of a peer" (padel coach)
	"The intention to cause a negative effect on a person or groups of people, thus making them feel bad or unhappy with themselves or with life" (athletics coach)
	"A way of intentionally harassing and hurting people" (multi-sport activity coach)
Imbalance of power	"It is the act of humiliating a person and making them feel inferior" (basketball coach)
	"Bullying for me is acts of exclusion by one child or several children to another child making him/her feel inferior to the group" (basketball coach)
	"Showing superiority over another person as a motive for personal satisfaction" (multisport activities coach)
Consequences for the victim	"Is a situation of rejection of a specific person that negatively affects their way of being or living, be it through verbal harassment, physical harassment, etc." (football coach)
	"A set of actions, usually directed from a group to a single person, that provoke feelings of loneliness, contempt, vulnerability, sadness, and even depression in the latter. The biggest effect it has on the person who suffers from it is lack of self-esteem, due to the influence of offensive behaviour and words from peers" (multisport activities trainer)
	"Abuse by a person or group towards a person or group that creates a state of discomfort for the victim and can affect them psychologically with serious consequences" (swimming coach)
Harassment	"Bullying is physical or psychological harassment that is carried out on a continuous basis towards an individual" (athletics coach)
	"Harassment of a person by one or more persons, both physically and psychologically" (artistic gymnastics coach)
	"It is harassment by a person or a group of people towards another individual" (basketball coach)
Discrimination	"Discrimination by a group or a person against another person because of some weakness that makes him or her vulnerable" (rugby coach)
	"Bullying is the discrimination by one or more persons against another person or persons, either physically or verbally, causing negative effects on the person who suffers it" (football coach)
	"Discrimination and marginalisation of another individual by a person or group of people" (roller hockey coach)
Mistreatment	"Physical or psychological abuse, by any person or group of persons, of another person, in any situation. It includes making jokes in bad taste, disrespect, discomfort, insults, etc." (football coach)
	"Abuse, both psychological and physical, to another person" (basketball coach)
	"Psychological and physical abuse, by an individual or a group, of a 'weaker' individual" (basketball coach)
Abuse	"Abuse by a person or group towards a person or group that creates a state of discomfort for the victim and can affect them psychologically with serious consequences" (swimming coach)
	"Abuse, by one person or group, of another who is believed to be inferior" (acrobatics coach)
	"Physical or psychological abuse" (indoor football coach)

Typologies of bullying

25.5% of the sample did not mention any of the four bullying typologies of reference (*physical*, *verbal*, *social* and *cyberbullying*). 56.5% of the sample mentioned physical bullying, 32.9% cyberbullying, 23% verbal bullying and 13.7% social bullying. In relation to gender, statistically significant differences were only obtained in the typology of social bullying, with a higher frequency of responses among female coaches (25.6% vs. 9.8% ; $\chi^2_{(1,161)} = 6.26$; $p = .012$). Regarding the number of typologies referred to, 39.8% mentioned only one typology, 19.9% two, 13% three and 1.9% mentioned all four. In relation to other typologies of bullying, it should be noted that 44.1% of the coaches referred to "psychological" bullying, 15.3% mentioned typology according to the place where these behaviours took place ("school", "work", "sport") and 11.8% according to the reasons for bullying ("physical appearance", "gender", "religious background").

Prevention strategies

83.8% of the coaches offered prevention strategies that were coded according to the categories outlined above: a) *promoting a positive climate*, b) *communication*, c) *observation*, d) *awareness-raising*, e) *emotional education*, f) *regulation* and g) *conflict intervention*. There were no statistically significant differences in terms of prevention strategies offered in relation to gender or the possession of a sports qualification. 61.5% of the total responses fell into a single category, 21.7% into two categories and 0.6% of the responses referred to three preventive categories. 16.2% of the responses did not fall into any of the categories, either because they left the question unanswered (11.2%), they explicitly specified that they did not know what to answer (1.9%), they referred to intervention rather than prevention strategies (1.9%) or they gave an answer that could not be included in any of the categories (1.2%). The results obtained for the categories analysed are presented below, and specific examples for each category are given in table 2.

Promoting a positive climate

60.9% of the coaches commented on the importance of creating and promoting a positive climate among athletes. This work was established on the basis of organisational criteria for sporting activities and the inclusion of cooperative dynamics in the tasks proposed. Some highlighted the importance of dynamic group activities that go beyond the timetable, training and competitions. However, the development of competences was essential in achieving such a positive climate.

Communication

Communication was mentioned by 14.3% of the respondents. For the coaches, it was important to organise personal meetings

with the athletes in order to understand the individual situation of each athlete, reinforcing coach/athlete trust. Communication with the athlete's environment, for example the family, was also mentioned.

Observation

Observation of athletes' behaviours, as well as of the relationship dynamics that can be established between athletes, was considered a bullying prevention strategy by 7.5% of coaches. It was important to keep this in mind from the beginning of the season and during training in order to detect any signs that one of the athletes might feel uncomfortable in the group, or to detect potential aggressors. Being alert to any anomalous behaviour in the relationship dynamics between players was also stressed. Finally, for coaches, the changing room was one of the spaces that required special attention, as it was a space where they had less control.

Awareness-raising

Awareness of the problem was mentioned by 5.6% of the coaches. Its aim was to increase athletes' knowledge about the issue of bullying and to raise their awareness of its importance. To this end, activities such as the organisation of talks with professionals on the subject or reflections using audiovisual resources were proposed.

Emotional education

5.6% mentioned the relevance of preventive action based on the development of activities explicitly linked to emotional education. These activities were aimed at working on empathy, making athletes reflect on the occurrence of violent actions against each other. The importance of pedagogically managing competitive activities during training and reinforcing self-confidence among the players was also expressed.

Regulations

5% of the coaches referred to establishing a policy as a preventive strategy. This regulation referred to the rules that regulated the internal dynamics among the group of athletes, in some cases involving the players themselves in its elaboration in order to reinforce acceptance and compliance with it. Other coaches did not explicitly refer to the drafting of written rules, agreed or not, but simply mentioned warning athletes of the consequences (punishments or penalties) if violent behaviour was witnessed.

Conflict intervention

Finally, 3.1% of the coaches referred to the importance of taking action in the presence of conflicts, avoiding possible future bullying situations.

Table 2*Categories of prevention strategies and coaches' responses justifying them.*

Categories	Responses from participants
Promoting a positive climate	<p>"Try to create as pleasant an atmosphere as possible for the relationship between colleagues" (football coach)</p> <p>"[...] always make teams and pairs so that everyone can get to know each other throughout the season" (acrobatics coach)</p> <p>"Extra-sports events for group members to interact as friends outside of training" (skating coach)</p> <p>"[...] to do trips, like camps" (football coach)</p> <p>"I make a lot of use of cooperative challenges and group dynamics where everyone's participation is required" (basketball coach)</p> <p>"Encourage respect, education, tolerance and helping others [...]". (football coach)</p> <p>"Ensuring that all the boys and girls in the team are included". (athletics coach)</p>
Communication	<p>"Talk to the children individually to see what emotional situation they are in". (volleyball coach)</p> <p>"[...] I try to talk to each of my players once a day so that they can explain to me how they feel in the team [...]". (multisport activities coach)</p> <p>"[...] stay in contact with parents to find out, as soon as possible, about possible problems at home or at school that could lead to such behaviour". (football coach)</p>
Observation	<p>"From the beginning, be attentive to any kind of situation and behaviour of the children [...]". (multisport activities coach)</p> <p>"Keep an eye on those who appear to be the aggressors". (football coach)</p> <p>"I pay a lot of attention to the way they behave towards each other [...]". (basketball coach)</p> <p>"I think it is important to observe at all times, both on and off the pitch [...] changing rooms are dangerous areas where there is not as much surveillance". (football coach)</p>
Awareness-raising	<p>"Give talks so that they can see what bullying actually is [...]". (football coach)</p> <p>"Awareness-raising talks [...]". (swimming coach)</p> <p>"Put on videos on these topics [...]". (football coach)</p>
Emotional education	<p>"Propose activities that allow them to get to know each other emotionally. Empathy and cooperation games to promote and develop emotional intelligence" (acrobatics trainer)</p> <p>"Empathy exercises to make them feel what their teammates feel in certain situations". (football coach)</p> <p>"[...] I ask them why they did it and how it might make the person they made the gesture or comment to feel". (skating coach)</p> <p>"Carry out activities that do not allow the continuous failure or triumph of any player". (Indoor football coach)</p>
Regulations	<p>"I currently have an internal regulation; the players have accepted it and have made proposals.... It says that in case of any disrespect towards a teammate, the aggressor will be expelled [...]". (football coach)</p> <p>"Warn them that there will be a punishment if any bullying situation is provoked, as it is not right to do so". (tennis coach)</p>
Conflict intervention	<p>"I intervene if I see any verbal or physical fights and resolve them before they escalate". (martial arts trainer)</p> <p>"I call out any person who makes a disrespectful gesture towards another person, on or off the rink". (skating coach)</p>

Discussion

The aim of this study was to evaluate coaches of formative sports' conceptualisation of the phenomenon of bullying, taking into account the basic elements of its definition as well as its taxonomic categorisation. The aim was also to find out what strategies they used to prevent bullying situations in the sporting context.

Generally, little agreement was shown in the definition of bullying among coaches, irrespective of whether or not they had a degree, as they based it on concepts related to violence, but without explicitly specifying the basic elements of the definition of bullying according to the literature (Olweus, 1994). Poor knowledge about the key elements of the definition was also observed by Baar & Wubbels (2013) in Dutch coaches. This fact may contribute to their negative management of bullying situations, as observed among teachers in the school context (Valdés et al., 2014). The only gender-related difference that was observed in the definition was the key concept of *intent to harm*, which appears more frequently among male coaches than among female coaches. In further studies, it would be interesting to investigate why these differences exist, perhaps by looking at elements of the moral atmosphere linked to the sporting environment. Some of the coaches included in the definition the consequences for health and well-being (sadness, loneliness, depression) that the victim may experience when in bullying situations, in line also with Baar & Wubbels (2013). However, none of the coaches made reference to the consequences that may develop for other actors, despite the fact that such acts have consequences for all involved (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017).

In terms of bullying typologies, coaches clearly identified physical bullying, although it is not the most frequent bullying typology in the sporting environment (Mishna et al., 2019; Nery et al., 2020). However, cyberbullying, which currently has little presence in sport (Nery et al., 2020), was mentioned quite frequently by coaches as a typology of bullying. This may be due to the current growth of this new type of violence and concern about the problem (Smith, 2019). Regarding verbal bullying, its identification can be explained by the fact that coaches do not identify derogatory comments, insults, name-calling, etc. between players as bullying behaviours, as they become normalised within the traditional sport culture (Flores et al., 2020). As regards social bullying, it is worth noting that it was female coaches who mentioned this typology more than male coaches. This is related to the fact that more bullying behaviour occurs among girls, which causes them to be more sensitive towards coaches (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). Moreover, as indicated by Slattery et al. (2019), the conceptualisation of bullying can be directly conditioned by situations that have been experienced, either directly

or from observation. Psychological bullying, although not considered a typology of bullying, as all bullying behaviours have an implicit psychological component (Hernández & Saravia, 2016), was the second most mentioned typology by coaches. The coaches' conceptualisation of this typology needs to be analysed in more depth in order to understand the set of behaviours that are included in it.

Regarding preventive strategies for the development of bullying behaviours, part of the sample, regardless of whether they had a degree or not, did not offer any. This could be related to the lack of training on the phenomenon that coaches face (Flores et al., 2020). In addition to the technical or tactical dimensions of the respective sport, coach training courses should take into account the holistic development of young athletes (Kowalski, 2017).

Promoting a positive climate among the athletes was the most indicated strategy by the coaches, in line with Shannon's (2013) proposal. School is also a place where the promotion of a positive climate has been found to reduce the prevalence of bullying situations (DeOrnellas & Spurgin, 2017; UNESCO, 2018). It is important to promote this positive climate not only by proposing specific tasks in training, such as the development of cooperative games, but also by proposing extra-sports activities (camps, excursions, etc.), based on pedagogical models that promote the development of civic values and the prevention of violence (Mattey et al., 2014; Sánchez-Alcaraz et al., 2020). The way in which the grouping of athletes in different activities is established, as a preventive strategy, was also mentioned, understanding that, as in the school environment, the methodology used by the teacher to group athletes can become a catalyst for victimisation and exclusion (Healy, 2014). Coaches also mentioned communication, in line with the results obtained by Baar & Wubbels (2013), as a strategy to be taken into account, highlighting the two-way and positive relationship to be established between coaches and players (Nery et al., 2020). This communication aims to build trust with athletes, as a basic element for understanding the dynamics that a player may be experiencing inside or outside the sporting context (Nery et al., 2020), an aspect that has also been taken into account in the school context (DeOrnellas & Spurgin, 2017). It is also important to articulate good communication with families, due to their direct influence on the behaviour of children and adolescents, as they are a very important agent and of vital participation in programmes to address the phenomenon (Mattey et al., 2014; UNESCO, 2018). In relation to this, work on emotional education was considered by the coaches an appropriate strategy, as has been observed in the educational context with positive results (Méndez et al., 2019). Regarding observation and being alert to behaviours or relationship dynamics between players, the behaviours (signs and symptoms) that need to be observed were not

explicitly detailed, perhaps due to the few competences that stand out when it comes to identifying bullying situations (Kowalski, 2017). However, this observation should not only focus on players who may become victims, but also among potential aggressors, as well as on the general dynamics between athletes within the group. Nonetheless, the changing room was highlighted as the space where bullying situations were most present, as demonstrated in recent research (Flores et al., 2020; Kowalski, 2017; Nery et al., 2020). There was little reference to awareness-raising as a fundamental prevention strategy, although it is one of the basic pillars of any anti-bullying programme (Nery et al., 2020). There were also few references made by coaches to the development of regulations or coexistence codes in sports clubs as a preventive strategy, reaffirming the study by Stefaniuk & Bridel (2018), conducted in Canada to evaluate the presence of anti-bullying policies in various sports organisations, which found an absence of coexistence codes that provide explicit guidelines to prevent bullying. Therefore, it is necessary that the public administrations responsible for sports, as well as sports federations and clubs, promote regulations and codes of coexistence that include, among others, the issue of bullying. On the other hand, the use of punishment as a coercive measure to avoid possible bullying situations in the future was also mentioned, although, as has been demonstrated in the school environment, its effectiveness is low (DeOrnellas & Spurgin, 2017). Finally, some coaches linked the role of competition as a possible catalyst for bullying behaviour in formative sport and proposed strategies to reduce its value, in line with recommendations in the literature (Shannon, 2013).

Finally, it should be stressed that, although coaches play a very important role in prevention, it is important to address the issue across the board. From an ecological point of view, it is necessary to involve all the agents linked to the sports community: athletes, families, sports management, etc. (Nery et al., 2020).

As a possible limitation of the study, it should be noted that the coaches were students of Physical Activity and Sport Sciences Degrees. In the future, it would be interesting to analyse the knowledge and strategies offered by coaches who are not part of this group, as the level of education could become a variable to be taken into account. It would also be necessary to know whether the different preventive strategies they propose are actually applied in training and to assess their effectiveness.

Conclusions

This study highlights the lack of knowledge on the part of formative sport coaches about the phenomenon of bullying in terms of the key elements in its definition (repetition, intention

to harm and power imbalance). In relation to the typologies of bullying, there is a clear identification of the category of physical bullying and cyberbullying, and verbal and social bullying are not identified very often. A typology that is often mentioned is psychological bullying, although it is not considered part of the taxonomies proposed by the literature. As far as prevention strategies are concerned, promoting a good climate in the group or team of athletes is frequently mentioned, although there are few proposals that go beyond this. In general, it is considered necessary to articulate training programmes among coaches where the conceptualisation of bullying and the dynamisation of preventive strategies to be carried out are addressed, either directly with the group of athletes or by proposing actions in their club or sport entity.

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