

Advancing Safe Sport Through Occupational Health and Safety a Thematic Meta-Synthesis Exploring Abuse within Elite Adult Sport Contexts

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Occupational health and safety management systems (OHSMS) promote healthy workplace environments through regulating hazards and health promotion activities. Abuse within elite sports is one hazard that threatens the health and safety of elite adult athletes. Despite the widespread existence of evidence-informed guidelines to safeguard youth athletes, few safeguards have been developed for elite adult athletes, despite sport being their primary occupation. Through a critical realist lens, we used a thematic meta-synthesis to search, appraise and synthesize 20 articles conducted with elite adult athletes who have experienced abuse. We present three themes to highlight: (a) how abuse types (sexual, psychology, physical, and financial) are fluid and expand over time, (b) the contextual factors that influence abuse (individual, relational, structural, cultural), and (c) temporal impacts of abuse throughout athletes' early, late, and post-sport careers. The present work is discussed in relation to perceived advancement of OHSMS and safe sport through protecting athletes from the hazards present within their occupational environments.

KEY WORDS: Athlete abuse; Critical realism; Occupational health and safety; Qualitative research; Thematic meta-synthesis.

Elite sport environments are recognized as contexts where intentional (i.e., as non-accidental) and non-intentional acts of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse occur (Mountjoy et al., 2016). Quantitative researchers have highlighted the prevalence of abuse relative to type (e.g., psychologi-

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cal, sexual), sport levels (e.g., recreational, elite amateur), athletes' ages (e.g., youth, adult), country, and sport, with high prevalence rates reported within elite national, international, and professional contexts (e.g., 70% of active and retired national athletes disclosing psychologically abusive experiences, Leahy et al., 2002; Ohlert et al., 2021). Qualitative researchers have expanded beyond prevalence to understand how abuse develops and impacts athletes across amateur and professional sports contexts (Marsollier & Hauw, 2022; Seanor et al., 2023; Stirling & Kerr, 2009). One common observation is that the development of abuse is contextual, multi-dimensional, and unique to the relationships (see Stirling & Kerr, 2014), organizations (see Roberts et al., 2020), type of sport system (e.g., amateur vs. professional sports), and national and sport cultures (see Rodríguez et al., 2011) in which it develops. Prominent example includes the USA gymnastics scandal (Fisher & Anders, 2020), and more recently the Brazilian gymnastics scandal (Seanor et al., 2023), where abuse was prominent in staff-athlete relationships, occurring in the awareness of organizational members, yet covered organizationally. Abuse prevention and management are best approached as context-driven endeavors, unique to each case (Owusu-Sekyere and colleagues, 2022).

While introduced empirically almost 30 years ago by the late Celia Brackenridge (1994), ongoing public disclosures, media attention (Seanor et al., 2023), and empirical research (Salim & Winter, 2022) have created vast understandings of abuse. Researchers have compiled abuse literatures into comprehensive reviews to provide broad repositories (Mountjoy et al., 2015; 2016), and delimited review foci to develop nuanced understandings of its type, causes, and impacts within different contexts. Examples include reviews specific to emotional and sexual abuse within elite youth athletes (see Wilinsky & McCabe, 2021), abuse within para-athlete populations (Tuakli-Wosornu et al., 2020), and conceptual reviews through theoretical lenses, such as the organizational factors that facilitate abuse (Roberts et al., 2020). From a practical perspective, each review has the potential to inform evidence-based safeguards unique to these populations and contexts (Lachal et al., 2017). Researchers have yet to review abuse research within the context of elite adult athletes, where elite sport represents athletes' primary occupation, the purpose guiding this manuscript.

Elite Sport Organizations as Workplaces

Elite sport as a workplace is a relatively new conceptualization in sports psychology (See Chen et al., 2019; Schinke et al., 2022) but has been ex-

plored extensively within sports sociology (see Murphy & Waddington, 2007) and sports management (Roberts et al., 2020). Being a professional athlete is a full-time endeavor, constituting prolonged weekly engagement akin to a full-time job that provides financial remuneration (Schinke et al., 2022). Elite adult athletes are obliged to work under contracts that regulate the conditions under which they compete (Mayer & Thiel, 2018). Organizational expectations, namely that of high-performance, creates “hazardous workplace[s], replete with its own unique forms of ‘industrial disease[s]’” that pose risk to elite adult athletes’ health (Young, 1993, p. 3), inclusive of injuries (Mayer & Thiel, 2018), risk taking behaviors (Chen et al., 2019), and abuse (Marsollier & Hauw, 2022). Should elite adult athletes experience abuse within their environments, contractual, as well as personal (e.g., goals), forces render them unable to relocate (Adams & Kavanagh, 2020). In comparison to youth athletes who are able to depart their sports teams in search for ones more conducive to their health, elite adult athletes lack the agency to miss training and competition or join new teams until the termination of their contracts, which is controlled by the organizations (Murphy & Waddington, 2007). It is for these reasons that athletes require statutory protection and system-wide, organizational interventions that prevent and manage abuse *in situ* (Roberts et al., 2020; Roberts & Sojo, 2020). System-wide interventions are rooted in organizational sport psychology (Wagstaff, 2019), where sports psychology practitioners (SPPs) work with multiple stakeholder groups and attend to the dynamics of the system. System focused work accounts for psychosocial factors that influence histories, traditions, norms, sport levels, and sport systems (Stambulova & Schinke, 2017), reflecting the context-driven approach necessary for addressing abuse.

Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems

Recently, researchers have proposed safeguarding youth athletes through safety management systems, where planning and prevention initiatives, policies, incentives for safe behaviors, education, communication channels between organizational members, and monitoring and evaluation intersect to create safe working structures geared towards athletes’ protection (Owusu-Sekyere et al., 2022). Safety management systems stem from occupational health psychology as systemic, whole system approaches designed to protect employees from harm (Alli, 2008). However, while Owusu-Sekyere’s and colleagues’ work is influential in raising awareness of safety culture and resulting systems that organizations can utilize to promote it, their system represents a

fragment of existing occupational measures designed to protect employees and promote their health. These occupational measures exist at the organizational, relational, and individual levels as ways to protect employees as they work for their employers. For example, the safety management system proposed by Owusu-Sekyere and colleagues (2022) diverges from the occupational health and safety management systems (OHSMS) found in workplaces in that employee protection principles and practical interventions for those who refuse to engage in unsafe behavior, including employee rights, health promotion activities, and bi-directional safety responsibilities that inform the dynamic adaptation of policies to align with local workplace hazards, are not discussed (Alli, 2008). Sports psychology and sports medicine researchers have suggested the application of OHSMS within elite sport organizations to protect and promote elite adult athletes' health and well-being, given the similarities of elite sport organizations to workplaces and the risk of workplace hazards, including abuse (Chen et al., 2019; Schinke et al., 2022). OHSMS is a systemic and contextual endeavor that must align with organizations' macro- (i.e., national and cultural jurisdiction) and micro-contexts (i.e., organizational context, athletes' subjective needs), unique to the organizational, socio-cultural, and personal norms and histories embedded in workplaces (Schinke et al., 2022). To date, there has been little application of OHSMS principles and interventions within elite sports environments.

Uncharted Territory

Reviews have been utilized to provide broad snapshots of abuse across populations (see Mountjoy et al., 2016; Roberts et al., 2020) or have been delimited to youth athletes within developmental stages of sport (from ages 6-17; Wylleman & Reints, 2010) in recognition of their relative vulnerabilities to adults (e.g., physical maturation, age, power status; Owusu-Sekyere and colleagues, 2022; Wilinsky & McCabe, 2021). These review foci, while influential in raising awareness of the broad context of athlete abuse, have informed the creation of universal safeguards (e.g., policies across all contexts) or those specific to youth sport (Mountjoy et al., 2015), masking the context needed to derive interventions unique to the elite adult levels. For example, while children under the age of 18 are legally protected under the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (see Mountjoy et al., 2015), elite athletes receive less statutory protection and rights. In a recent court case, an elite British athlete's claims of unwarranted dismissal (loss of athletic scholarship), sexual harassment, and victimization were dismissed because she was

not considered to be an employee of her national sport organization, despite being in receipt of a taxpayer Athlete Performance Award to support her progression towards the podium at the Olympic Games (cf. Roberts & Sojo, 2020). Elite adult athletes face significant and unique vulnerabilities to abuse (e.g., financial livelihoods, lack of career transition paths, see Adams & Kavanagh, 2020; Rutland et al., 2022; Wylleman & Reints, 2010), yet have little representation in extant policies, and about whom scholars and practitioners have little formalized knowledge in terms of how and why abuse occurs. Drawing on the OHSMS research in sport (e.g., Chen et al., 2019; Schinke et al., 2022), our purpose was to synthesize elite adult athletes' experiences of abuse and to propose OHSMS as a framework for statutory protection. In recognition of the multiple calls from international sports organizations for creating safe and supportive elite sports environments (Mountjoy et al., 2016; Schinke et al., 2022), the current work acts as a resource to inform evidence-based safe sport policies and interventions (Thomas & Harden, 2008) and adds to conceptual and practical understandings of how system-wide approaches rooted in OHS can be implemented within elite adult sports contexts, supporting organizations capacities to improve their working conditions. The thematic meta-synthesis was guided by two research questions:

- 1) What is the context (type, consequences, and mechanisms) of abuse occurring at the elite adult levels?
- 2) How can OHSMS principles and interventions apply to abuse literature and inform safeguards within elite adult sport contexts?

Methodology

This meta-synthesis is positioned within critical realism, where a mind-independent reality is constructed through human knowledge (Wiltshire, 2018). The distinction between reality and human construction is understood through intransitive and transitive domains, the former representing independent reality and the latter representing the theories, methods, and concepts used to explain reality (Danermark et al., 2019). Critical realists assume that generative mechanisms, such as coach behavior and social hierarchy within sport programs (see Fasting & Brackenridge, 2009; Roberts et al., 2020) *cause* abuse and safety to occur. Explaining generative mechanisms involves applying rational and practical theories to make sense of athletes' experiences (Wiltshire, 2018), as well as exploration into the elite sports contexts where events occur (Sousa, 2010). Theories are suitable for explanation when they are transferable to practice, as "knowledge, besides describing and explaining (hence enabling reference to) and constructing in part of the world, informs and guides practice within the world" (Sousa, 2010, p. 485). OHS has been researched and practiced across countries, continents, and cultures (see International Labour Organization, n.d.), making it a useful lens to support rational judgments and practical application in pursuit of safety. As an authorship team, we consider ourselves as scientist-practitioners (Blair, 2010), trained in knowledge, skills, and abilities pertinent to research,

education, and consultancy, including but not limited to: evaluating effective and empirically supported practice; bridging scientific theories with our professional practice contexts, and demonstrating practical relevance within our research (Schinke *et al.*, 2023). The abilities developed through our training has allowed us to rationally justify our decisions and apply knowledge within research and practice to ensure that action follows empirical investigations (Sayer, 2004). We bring understandings of safe sport (Cole), occupational health and safety (Cole, Robert, and Michel), cultural sports psychology and elite athlete mental health (Robert and Chris), organizational sport psychology (Chris), clinical sports psychology (Michel), experiences as national athletes (Robert and Yufeng), social work with vulnerable populations (Diana), and qualitative methodologies (Robert, Chris, Alessandro, and Diana), to our sports and workplace contexts, ranging from the varsity (Cole and Michel) to the national levels (Robert and Chris) with athletes and organizations to develop context-driven interventions (Stambulova & Schinke, 2017).

PROCEDURE

This synthesis was conducted through five stages, and we began by creating research aims to guide the project (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Relevant articles were then identified for inclusion. Articles that did not meet our inclusion criteria (e.g., peer reviewed) were excluded. Step three involved appraising those articles for research quality, followed by synthesizing the research findings into descriptive themes that resembled the data found in the included articles. We then interpreted the descriptive themes to present higher-order themes that extend the findings presented in the included studies.

Identifying Relevant Articles

An electronic database search was conducted to identify articles published from January 1992 to August 2022 in the following data bases: ERIC, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, SportDiscus, and Web of Science. These databases provided access to studies relating to sports, sports medicine, health, sport management, behavioral psychology, and social sciences in relevant academic disciplines such as sports, coaching, and educational psychology, where abuse occurs (see Middleton *et al.*, 2020). The date range coincided with increased attention surrounding athlete abuse, fueled by athletes' stories (e.g., Sheldon Kennedy), documentaries (e.g., *Fifth Estate*), harassment policies, and theoretical manuscripts (Brackenridge, 1994).

Keywords for our search related to: (a) the topic of interest (e.g., abuse, harassment), (b) the population of study (e.g., elite adult athletes, professional athlete), and (c) the qualitative methodologies and methods used to conduct research with elite adult athletes (Lachal *et al.*, 2017). The search terminology was developed by reviewing and documenting terms used within athlete abuse literature (see Mountjoy *et al.*, 2016; Roberts *et al.*, 2020). At the time of project development, Cole was completing his doctorate, which required in-depth readings of athlete abuse literature and the recognition

of the varying conceptualizations of abuse (e.g., non-accidental violence, interpersonal violence, maltreatment). These terms were included to capture the breadth of elite athletes' experiences. We operationalized the population using Swann et al.'s (2015) definition of an elite adult athlete, developed through a systemic review of sports psychology research with experienced athletes. To elaborate, Swann et al. delimited their search to elite adult athletes who made a living within their sport, suggesting remuneration stemming from sport organizations is criteria of elite status (Chen et al., 2019). Yet, Swann and colleagues did not define the age of an adult within their definition and suggested that the range of athletes' highest, sustained success (e.g., medal count), and rank at the national, international, professional, Olympic, and Paralympic levels are defining markers elite/expert athletes. In line with Swann and colleague's definition of elite athlete, we employed the World Health Organization's definition of adult (i.e., over 18 years; Bull et al., 2020) to delimit our search to abuse occurring in adult athlete populations reflecting mastery stages at ages 18 or older (Wylleman & Reints, 2010). Professional, national, international, Olympic and Paralympic athletes were included to reflect abuse occurring within the highest levels of sport, where increased specialization reflects athletes' occupations (Schinke et al., 2022). The search terms for qualitative methodologies and methods were informed through reading previous meta-syntheses (see Lachal et al., 2017; Middleton et al., 2020). An overview of the search terms can be found in Table I.

TABLE I.
Search Terms

Topic	Terminology
Topic of Interest	"maltreat*" OR "mistreat*" OR "abus*" OR "harass*" OR violent* OR "non-accidental violence" OR "bully*" OR "harm*" OR "groom*" OR "neglect*" OR "haz*" OR "sex*" OR "physical*" OR "psych*" OR "verb*" OR "isolate*" OR "emotion*" OR "discrim*" OR "belittle*" OR "threaten*" OR "ignor*" OR "shout*" OR "humiliat*" OR "exploit*"
Population	"elite athlete*" OR "professional athlete*" OR "national athlete*" OR "international athlete*" OR "Olympic athlete*" OR "Para athlete*" OR "university athlete*" OR "varsity athlete*" OR "student athlete*"
Methodologies and Methods	"qualitative research*" OR "interview*" OR "focus group*" OR "life world*" OR "lived experience*" OR "participant observation" OR "ethnograph*" OR "thematic analysis" OR "content analysis" OR "conversation analysis" OR "phenomenolog*" OR "grounded theory" OR "mixed method*" OR "hermeneutic*" OR "interpret*"

The initial database search occurred on August 1, 2022, resulting in 2395 citations after the removal of duplicates, non-articles (e.g., dissertations), and non-peer reviewed sources. We conducted a second systematic search on February 14, 2023, to capture manuscripts published after August 1, 2022, yielding an additional 119 articles. The articles were screened for relevancy through four inclusion criteria: (a) the research was focused on elite adult athletes' experiences of abuse, (b) a qualitative methodology was used, (c) the study was published in a peer-reviewed journal, and (d) the full text was English, the first language of the authorship team and the dominant language for prevalent sport and exercise psychology journals in which abuse research was frequently published. The variability of athletes' ages posed difficulty during this stage. The ages of athletes at retirement and career length were presented, but the ages at which they suffered abuse were not. An average age was calculated using athletes' age of retirement (see Table 2) to reflect their age when departing sport, meeting criteria (a). Articles where researchers described athletes' experiences throughout their career (see Stirling & Kerr, 2009) were included because they reflected abuse experiences when sport represented athletes' occupations. Cole screened the articles by title, abstract, methodology, and full text, removing articles that did not meet the criteria ($n = 2492$). Seventeen papers met the inclusion criteria at this stage. Following a systematic search of the reference sections and the citations of each of the included article, a practice found in meta-synthesis (see Middleton et al., 2020), three additional articles were located, totaling 20 papers included within the manuscript (see Figure 1).

Quality Appraisal

Appraising the quality of included articles requires an acknowledgement of current dialogue on assessing quality within qualitative research, where universal criteria do not align with all researchers' philosophical positions (Thomas & Harden, 2008). We appraised the included literature through a flexible account, drawing on trustworthiness, theory, and practice, to compensate for the diverse philosophies, theories, and methodologies included in the synthesis. Trustworthiness relates to the ability of the researchers' study designs to answer the intended research questions (Garside, 2014). Cole read through the methodology and results sections to seek authors' justifications for the use of their methods relative to their research question(s) and the alignment between results and the research questions. Theoretical and practical merits relate to how well the studies connected to existing literature and

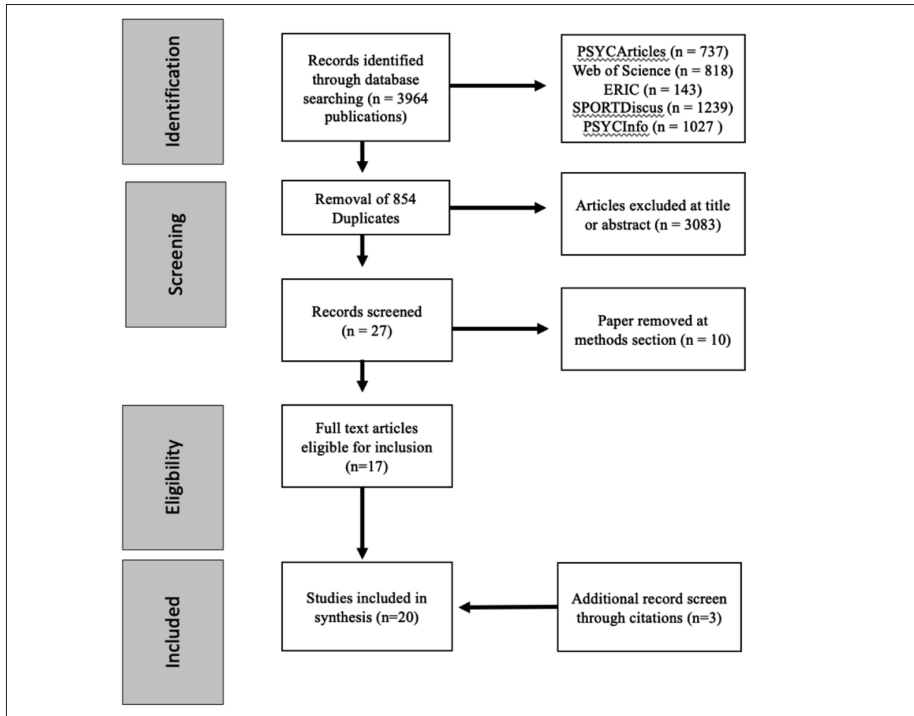


Fig. 1. - Flow Diagram.

how the findings informed practical implications (Garside, 2014), a seminal focus for scientist-practitioners (Schinke et al., 2023) and critical realists (Ryba et al., 2022). Within critical realism, theories are used to explain reality and inform practice (Sousa, 2010). Each theory offered a unique lens with which to interpret abuse within sport. We appraised theoretical contributions through seeking researchers' explicit references to overarching theories or bodies of literature. Contributions included theory creation through grounded theory methodologies to conceptualize emotional abuse in sport (see Stirling & Kerr, 2008b), and theory advancement, such as using theories from organizational psychology to explain why sexual abuse occurred (see Fasting & Brackenridge, 2009). The theories/literatures are presented in Table II to illustrate how abuse has been explained within elite sport. Practical considerations were sought through results explicitly connecting to practical application. All the articles demonstrated strength within at least one these merits and were included (Middleton et al., 2020).

Descriptive Analysis and Interpretive Synthesis

Descriptive data included the studies' aims, participants' demographics and performance levels, philosophical and theoretical positions, methodologies, and data collection, analytic, and representation methods (see Table II). We read each article and semantically coded the results and discussion sections to capture authors' observations and interpretations (see Middleton et al., 2020). During this step, codes followed the authors' intended research purposes, which ranged from understanding the effects of physical, financial, sexual, and psychological abuse and physical and emotional neglect (see Rutland et al., 2022); coping with abuse (see Kavanagh et al., 2017); and why abuse developed within athletes' sports contexts (e.g., the performance focus; see Stirling & Kerr, 2014). The codes were extracted into a Word document where we iteratively developed lower-order themes that occurred across manuscripts (Thomas & Harden, 2008), resulting in 10 lower-order themes. For example, the codes of inappropriate touching and sexist jokes were amalgamated into the theme of sexual abuse. Finally, we synthesized the lower-order themes into three higher-order themes. Our intention within this stage was to create themes that provide new interpretations of the context of the abuse literature (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

Results

The following section is used to present three themes that capture abuse with elite sport. We begin by presentation of the *Abuse Types are Fluid and Expand Over Time* to trace the understanding of different types of abuse across time, in understanding that as research becomes more popular, different abuses will become unearthed. What follows is an introduction to the *Contextual Factors that Interact to Influence Abuse*. Aligned with our critical realist positioning, we outline the interacting cultural, structural, relational, and individual contexts in which mechanisms contribute to the development of abuse (Wiltshire, 2018). We conclude with the *Temporal Impacts of Abuse*. Within this theme, we present how athletes' tolerability towards abuse differs relative to their positions within their careers.

Abuse Types Are Fluid and Expand Over Time

This higher-order theme is used to present how the types of abuse studied within sport literature have evolved over the last 30 years. It presents, in

TABLE II.
Descriptive Table

Authors	Aim	Participant Demographics	Sports Context	Philosophical Positioning	Theoretical Underpinning	Methodological Underpinning	Data Collection	Data Analysis / Representation
Adams & Kavanagh (2020)	Apply the Capability Approach to previous data set.	Three (two male, one female) national and international athletes.	Not disclosed.	Constructivism.	Capability Approach.	Narrative inquiry.	Narrative interviews.	Inductive and deductive thematic analysis; Block quotations.
Fasting et al. (2002)	To explore the impact of sexual harassment on the lives of female athletes.	25 national and international female (ages 15-33, m=23) Norwegian international athletes.	Athletes represented 11 individual, and 4 team sports.	Positivism.	Workplace/education sexual harassment literature.	Not disclosed.	Semi-structured interviews	Analyzed using WinMax software; Block quotations.
Fasting et al. (2007)	To examine athlete personal responses to sexual harassment.	25 national and international female (ages 15-33, m=23) Norwegian international athletes.	Athletes represented 16 individual sports and 9 team sports.	Cultural Feminism.	Coping literature.	Not disclosed.	Semi-structured interviews	Analyzed using WinMax software; Block quotations.
Fasting and Brackenridge (2009)	Classify perpetrators of sexual harassment into different roles to inform harassment education.	19 national and international female Norwegian international athletes (ages 15-33, m=23).	Athletes represented individual (n=10) sports and team (n=2) sports.	Positivism.	Sexual abuse profiles applied from organizational psychology.	Not disclosed.	Semi-structured interviews.	Analyzed using WinMax software and meaning interpretations; Block quotations.

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Authors	Aim	Participant Demographics	Sports Context	Philosophical Positioning	Theoretical Underpinning	Methodological Underpinning	Data Collection	Data Analysis/Representation
Johansson & Larsson (2017)	Explore how elite athletes negotiate the performance enhancement and romantic love discourses.	Four national and international Swedish female athletes (ages 26-30, m= 28). Two retired, two active.	Athletes represented individual (n=3) and team (n=1).	Not disclosed.	Elite sport and coaching, and romantic love literature.	Foucault's discourse analysis.	Semi-structured interviews	Thematic discourse analysis; Block quotations
Kavanagh et al. (2017)	Examine elite athletes' coping strategies in responses to emotional abuse.	12 national and international athletes from the United Kingdom (n= 7 female, 19-35, m=27) Six retired at the time of interviews.	Hockey, volleyball, archery, rugby, cricket, football, eventing, handball, beach volleyball, taekwondo, and tennis.	Interpretivist epistemology.	Coping literature.	Not disclosed.	Semi-structured interviews.	Inductive thematic analysis; Block quotations.
Kerr et al. (2020)	Explore the long-term effects of emotionally abusive coaching practices.	Eight former international female Canadian athletes (ages 24-29). Average time of retirement was 4.5 years from interview.	Individual and team sports.	Relativist ontology; Subjectivist epistemology.	Emotional abuse in sport literature.	Not disclosed.	Semi-structured interviews.	Reflexive thematic analysis; Block quotations.

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Authors	Aim	Participant Demographics	Sports Context	Philosophical Positioning	Theoretical Underpinning	Methodological Underpinning	Data Collection	Data Analysis / Representation
Marsollier & Haww (2022)	(a) describe the interactions between coaches and athletes (b) identify landmarks to help assess levels of risk of maltreatment (c) provide prevention and management guidelines to prevent and manage maltreatment.	One retired National Canadian female athlete (aged 30).	Boxing.	Not disclosed.	The biology of cognition and autopoietic systems.	Not disclosed.	Structured interviews.	Situated analysis.
McMahon and McGannon (2020)	Present the lived experiences of an athlete who experienced and managed abuse.	Former international female athlete.	Swimming.	Social constructionism.	Self-management/ Coping literature.	Narrative inquiry.	Storytelling.	Storyteller approach; Portrait vignettes.
McMahon & McGannon (2021)	To understand how athletes managed abuse experiences through self-injury.	Three former national and international female athletes. Retired 2-30 years.	Swimming.	Social constructionism.	Self-management/ Coping literature.	Narrative inquiry.	Semi-structured interviews.	Thematic narrative analysis; Portrait vignettes.

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Authors	Aim	Participant Demographics	Sports Context	Philosophical Positioning	Theoretical Underpinning	Methodological Underpinning	Data Collection	Data Analysis / Representation
Moola & Krahn (2018)	Investigate how retired professional ballet dancers experienced power, emotional abuse, and injury.	20 retired professional ballet dancers (age 20-41). Retirement age not disclosed.	Semi-professional/professional	Not disclosed.	Emotional and sexual abuse; overtraining literature.	Phenomenology.	Semi-structured interviews via telephone.	Phenomenological analysis; Block quotations.
Rodriguez & Gill (2011)	Explore Puerto Rican female athletes' experiences and coping strategies for sexual harassment within sport.	Six former national and international female athletes (31-54, m=43). Four athletes retired from sport between 20-28, two athletes retired between 32-38.	Participants' sport disciplines were not disclosed to protect anonymity.	Not disclosed.	Cultural sports psychology.	Phenomenology.	Semi-structured interviews.	Van Kaam method of analysis; Block Quotations.
Rutland et al. (2022)	To understand the perceptions and experiences of abuse from para-athletes from lower resourced countries.	National and international: Brazilian athletes (five male, six female) Ghanaian athletes (four male, two female) Indian athletes (five male, four female)	Athletics, Tennis, Football, Swimming, "among others" (p. 563)	Interpretivism.	Abuse in sport literature.	Not disclosed.	Semi-structured focus group interviews, seven groups of 2-6 participants.	Framework method.

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Authors	Aim	Participant Demographics	Sports Context	Philosophical Positioning	Theoretical Underpinning	Methodological Underpinning	Data Collection	Data Analysis / Representation
Salim & Winter (2022)	Understand athletes' experiences of maltreatment.	12 retired national and international female gymnasts (m=29). Retired 7-20 years.	Artistic gymnastics.	Ontological relativism, epistemological constructivism	Attachment theory; abuse in sport literature.	Not disclosed.	Semi-structured interviews	Reflexive thematic analysis; Block quotations.
Stirling & Kerr (2008a)	Investigate elite athletes' experiences of emotional abuse within their sport environments.	14 retired national and international female athletes, ranging from 19-29 (m = 22.9), retired 3-6 years.	Swimming.	Not described.	Child abuse literature.	Grounded theory.	Semi-structured interviews.	Comparative analysis; Block quotations.
Stirling & Kerr (2008b)	Investigate athletes' experiences of emotional abuse.	14 retired, national and international female swimmers (22.93) Retired 2-6 years.	Swimming.	Constructivist and symbolic interactionist philosophical position.	Child abuse literature.	Grounded theory.	Semi-structured interviews.	Comparative analysis; Block quotations.
Stirling & Kerr (2009)	To investigate abused athletes' perceptions of the coach-athlete relationship.	Nine retired national or international athletes, ranging from 21-26, retired for 2-6 years.	Gymnastics (n=4) and Swimming (n=5)	Not disclosed.	Child abuse literature.	Grounded theory.	Semi-structured interview.	Comparative analysis; Block quotations.

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Authors	Aim	Participant Demographics	Sports Context	Philosophical Positioning	Theoretical Underpinning	Methodological Underpinning	Data Collection	Data Analysis / Representation
Stirling & Kerr (2013)	Explore athletes perceived effects of emotional abuse in the coach-athlete relationship.	14 national and international athletes (six male, eight female, <i>m</i> age = 23, <i>m</i> retirement age = 20.5	Hockey, Rhythmic gymnastics, artistic gymnastics, figure skating, lacrosse, kayak, swimming, dance.	Not disclosed.	Emotional abuse in sport literature.	Grounded theory.	Semi-structured interviews.	Comparative analysis; Block quotations.
Stirling & Kerr (2014)	Explore the process of how emotional abuse occurs and is sustained within the coach-athlete relationship.	18 retired national and international athletes (8 male, 10 female, <i>m</i> retirement age =20).	Athletes competed within hockey, rhythmic gymnastics, figure skating, lacrosse, artistic gymnastics, tennis, kayak, and swimming/	Post-modernism.	Developmental-ecological model of child maltreatment.	Grounded theory.	Semi-structured interviews.	Comparative analysis; block quotations.
Tibbert et al., (2015)	To investigate how subcultural norms, traditions, ideals, and imperatives influenced an athlete's attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors.	One footballer (19)	Second rookie year in at a professional club competing in the Australian Football League (AFL)	Not disclosed.	Acculturation literature	Longitudinal case study design.	Open-ended interview approach.	Inductive content analysis; Block quotations.

chronological order, (a) sexual, (b) psychological, (c) physical abuse and neglect, and (d) financial abuse. Early abuse researcher focused almost primary on sexual abuse within European (Fasting & Brackenridge, 2009; Fasting et al., 2002; 2007) and North American contexts (Moola & Kraun, 2018; Rodríguez & Gill, 2011). Athletes who experienced sexual abuse competed within individual female sports such as swimming, gymnastics, and ballet. Sexual abuse was pre-meditated and involved coaches selecting, isolating, and abusing athletes when competing at tournaments and in video rooms, suggesting that motivation to abuse is a risk factor (Fasting et al., 2002). Behaviors that characterized sexual abuse included harassment and sexist jokes (Moola & Kraun, 2018; Rodríguez & Gill, 2011) flirting (Stirling & Kerr, 2009), and massages (Fasting et al., 2002; Fasting & Brackenridge, 2009).

Psychological and emotional abuse were used to define patterns of non-deliberate and non-contact behaviors occurring within critical relationships, namely coach-athlete relationships, that have potential to harm the victims (Kavanagh et al., 2017; Stirling & Kerr, 2008a; 2008b, 2009; 2013; 2014). In this literature, harm was presented from the subjective perspectives of the victims; for instance, some athletes described yelling as abusive while others described it as motivating and encouraging (Stirling & Kerr, 2014). Here, an emphasis on subjectivity is salient and aligned to the interpretive methodologies that the researchers used to understand psychological abuse. That is, while early sexual abuse research was conducted within positivist epistemologies with the aim of understanding the occurrence of sexually abusive events (see Fasting et al., 2002), psychological abuse was understood through interpretivist positions that stressed the importance of athletes' descriptions (see Table 2). Psychological abuse occurred in public conditions, was directed towards individual athletes and groups, and was witnessed by teammates, spectators, and parents (Stirling & Kerr, 2008b; 2009; 2013; 2014). In this way, psychological abuse may be best characterized as a psychosocial hazard, at it occurs within the nexus of the athletes' subjectivity and organizational conditions (Chirico et al., 2019). Psychologically abusive behaviors were categorized as verbal and non-contact physical (Kerr et al., 2020). Verbal behaviors included yelling (Stirling & Kerr, 2008b), belittling (Kerr et al., 2020; Moola & Kraun, 2018), intimidation (Stirling & Kerr, 2013), body shaming (McMahon & McGannon, 2020), constant comparison and criticism (Salim & Winter, 2022) and threats (Stirling & Kerr, 2014); non-contact physical behaviors included throwing objects in athletes' vicinities (Stirling & Kerr, 2009), punching walls (Stirling & Kerr, 2014) and watching teammates being punished (Salim & Winter, 2022).

Physical abuse and neglect were less explored topics relative to psycho-

logical and sexual abuse, with only a single research team focusing their research on neglect (Salim & Winter, 2022). Physical abuse involved individuals using physical force, such as throwing objects at athletes (Stirling & Kerr, 2009), forcing injured athletes to train (Moola & Kraun, 2018), and punishing athletes with extra conditioning for making mistakes (Salim & Winter, 2022). Physical neglect referred to failing to meet athletes' physical or emotional needs (Mountjoy et al., 2016) and was more conspicuous in that it was (a) used intentionally against athletes (e.g., the silent treatment; Marsollier & Hauw, 2022), or (b) developed because sport staff lacked knowledge of athletes' physical and emotional needs (e.g., injured athlete's identity challenges; Tibbert et al., 2015). For example, Rutland and colleagues (2022) described how coaches and trainers overtrained athletes because they misunderstood their physical limitations, resulting in hazardous training conditions.

Financial abuse was the newest form of abuse and was described as the restriction of "essential monetary resources and therefore denying the means to improve a person's economic status," and occurred through direct and indirect methods (Rutland et al., 2022, p. 562). Direct financial abuse included withholding athletes' funds, such as payment or reimbursement (Rutland et al., 2022), while indirect examples included threats to athletes' contracts if they could not compete because of injury (Tibbert et al., 2015) or chose not to compete because of unfair treatment (Adams & Kavanagh, 2020). Athletes' dependence on income for daily living is a vulnerability that can be deliberately exploited by coaches and leaders (Rutland et al., 2022) and such misuses of power are a potentially salient line for future research exploration.

Contextual Factors that Interact to Influence Abuse

This higher-order theme is used to present the contextual factors that influenced the development of abuse within elite sport organization. Interacting (a) individual, (b) relational, (c) structural, and (d) cultural factors influenced abuse within elite sports contexts. Abuse occurred within the close and ambiguous relationships between the coaches or senior athletes (abusers) and athlete victims. Athletes required coaches' knowledge to excel, and coaches required athletes' success for the furtherance of their reputation and growth (Stirling & Kerr, 2009), creating conditions where close relationships fostered mutual success. Coaches' hierarchal positions within organizations and reputations for performance enhancement created power imbalances where their behaviors were perceived as benevolent (Stirling & Kerr, 2008a; 2009; 2013; 2014). Extended closeness within these relationships eroded in-

terpersonal boundaries and created ambiguous and dual relationships, leading to the normalization of social outings such as movies, hugs and kisses, and regular phone calls (Stirling & Kerr, 2009; 2014). Sport organizations offered little oversight into close coach-athlete relationships, and once fostered, they continued to develop, sometimes into loving, consensual relationships (Johansson & Larson, 2017). More common relationships were those characterized by dependence where athletes were conditioned to respond to coach instructions out of a desire to improve (Adams & Kavanagh, 2020; Tibbert et al., 2015) or fear of punishment, such as potential deselection (Rodríguez & Gill, 2011). Power imbalances were compounded by gender (Fasting & Brackenridge, 2009; Moola & Kraun, 2018; Rodríguez & Gill, 2011), desire for sport progression (Stirling & Kerr, 2009), and financial security (Adams & Kavanagh, 2020).

Coach-athlete relationships existed within sport organizations, wherein structural hierarchies subordinated athletes (Stirling & Kerr, 2009) and cultural norms subordinated 'rookie' athletes (Rutland et al., 2022; Tibbert et al., 2015). Moreover, abuse developed when organizations were negligent of misused power differences. Tibbert and colleagues (2015) offered an example of this misuse through the experience of "Tim", a young first-year professional soccer player who assimilated to the sub-cultural norms of mental toughness, playing through pain, and internalizing abuse. Tim described surrendering his individuality to trust the staff and senior players on his team, who reinforced abuse. Negligence also occurred when organizational leaders (i.e., high-performance directors) failed to act on, or intentionally hide, complaints of abuse (Adams & Kavanagh, 2020). Coaches can intentionally abuse athletes when sporting organizations lack structural safeguards, such as appropriate oversights and reporting mechanisms (Rodríguez & Gill, 2011; Seanor et al., 2023) or fail to supervise conditions where individuals may be physically isolated, such as national tournaments and training camps (Fasting et al., 2007; Stirling & Kerr, 2014).

The performance culture of elite sport, socio-cultural and sports context, and masculine norms of elite sports contributed to abusive environments. The performance culture, a "single-minded dedication to performance over everything else" (Carless & Douglas, 2013, p. 702), was reflected through the perceptions that yelling, belittling, and throwing objects out of frustration, were conducive with increasing performance (Kerr et al., 2020; Moola & Kraun, 2018; Stirling & Kerr, 2008; 2014). In turn, Johansson and Larson (2017) noted that athletes accepted these behaviors in order to progress within elite sport, with one athlete in these authors' study stating that they "didn't give a s*** [about anything else], [she] was gonna be World

Champion” (p. 828). In other instances, athletes made sacrifices relative to their socio-cultural and national sport contexts to increase their likelihood of selection for major competition (Adams & Kavanagh, 2020; Moola & Kraun, 2018; Tibbert et al., 2015). For example, British athletes described leaving post-secondary education, jobs, or competing while injured to demonstrate determination and live up to the performance culture (Adams & Kavanagh, 2020), while Para athletes from Ghana, Brazil, and India, lower income countries relative to the European and North American countries where most of the abuse research took place (see Table 2), worked secondary jobs outside of sport to afford to pay for their competition expenses (Rutland et al., 2022). While, masculine ideals, such as gender-based jokes and viewing pain as weakness were a precursor to sexual abuse within North American and European contexts (see Moola & Kraun, 2018; Tibbert et al., 2015), Puerto Rican athletes shared how a hyper-masculine national culture led to sexual violence from male coaches:

It's like part of our culture, be the man, the macho. I think that it is part of our macho culture. In front of a group [sexist] jokes are made, and the audience must laugh to be part of that macho group. If a male does not laugh, he is gay, a homosexual. His sexuality is questioned if he does not harass someone. (Rodríguez & Gill, 2011, p. 332)

Further to this hyper-masculinity, sub-cultural norms within sports influenced the types of abuse and how they were normalized. For instance, elite hockey players cited frequent vulgar language from coaches and athletes' aggression within hockey (Stirling & Kerr, 2014); ballerinas normalized injury and sexual abuse because the culture of ballet sexualized female bodies (Moola & Kraun, 2018); and artistic gymnasts referenced the ideal for petite bodies as influencing physical (e.g., training without proper nutrition) and emotional abuse, such as body shaming (see Salim & Winter, 2022). While presented here as individual contexts of abuse, each of these cases were impacted by abuse type, coaching style or disposition, relationship between coaches and athletes, structural conditions within sport organizations, subcultural norms, elite sport norms, and broader national culture. It follows that SPPs seeking to develop safer environments through whole-systems approaches (Roberts et al., 2020) might benefit from examining how these factors interact within their sport organizations.

The Temporal Impacts of Abuse

This higher-order theme is used to present how the impact of abuse may differ relative to athletes' (a) early, (b) later, and (c) retirement career stag-

es. Athletes in the early stages of their career, marked by having potential for national/international success but not yet having experienced that levels (see Stirling & Kerr, 2008), reported a range of psychological impacts, such as depression, burnout, anxiety, lowered self-efficacy, suicidal ideation (Kerr et al., 2020), and lowered self-confidence (Marsollier & Hauw, 2022; Stirling & Kerr, 2014); emotional impacts, such as disgust, fear irritation, discontent, shame, anger, blame, embarrassment, betrayal (Fasting et al., 2002; 2007; Rodríguez & Gill, 2011; Stirling & Kerr, 2008); cognitive consequences that resulted from altered ways of thinking, such as uncertainty, doubt, and feelings of hopelessness (Salim & Winter, 2022; Stirling & Kerr, 2013); and physical impacts, such as eating disorders and repeated injuries (Adams & Kavanagh, 2020; Moola & Krahn, 2018; Salim & Winter, 2022). Influenced by the performance culture, athletes tolerated these impacts during their early careers due to dependence on coaches' knowledge for performance success (Kavanagh et al., 2017; Stirling & Kerr, 2014; Tibbert et al., 2015). Stirling and Kerr (2013) reported that athletes who retired from sport at the peak of their careers perceived abusive behaviors as conducive towards their success.

Athletes who progressed through their sports careers without frequent success at the elite levels, described as the subjective perception of poor performance (Stirling & Kerr, 2008), appear to have either accepted the impacts of abuse and continued competing, in part due to a collection of factors, such as a lack of reporting mechanisms, fear of retaliation for reporting, or a lack of trust in disclosing abuse to members of the organization, including their SPPs (Kerr et al., 2020; Rodríguez & Gill, 2011), or retired prematurely (Fasting & Brackenridge, 2009; Stirling & Kerr, 2008; 2009; 2013; 2014). Athletes who accepted abuse that was embedded within the sport subcultures encountered in their early careers, such as training through injury to achieve extended contracts, reproduced abuse with younger athletes transitioning into the organization (Tibbert et al., 2015). Athletes for whom abuse was embedded within the culture of their sport organization reported using emotion-focused management strategies, such as relaxation, breathing exercises, and visualizing safe spaces, to manage their emotional responses throughout their careers (Kavanagh et al., 2017). One athlete described to Kavanagh and colleagues how she masked the sadness and anger caused by her coach by "focusing on the lines on the court" (2017, p. 408), allowing her to re-direct focus, yet also acting as a form of distraction from her abuser. Most athletes who continued their sport careers in the hope of achieving success experienced deteriorated performance (Adams & Kavanagh, 2020; Fasting & Brackenridge, 2009; Moola & Krahn, 2018; Stirling & Kerr, 2008). Indeed, coaches' abusive behaviors impact performance directly, by distract-

ing their athletes and teams' performance (Kerr et al., 2020), and indirectly through athletes redirecting their focus towards avoiding ridicule from the coach (Moola & Kraun, 2018). In response, some athletes took a stand against their abusers, such as through physical force (Fasting et al., 2007) or leaving their practice environments (Stirling & Kerr, 2008). Such findings indicate that beyond the emotional trauma caused by abusive behaviors, there may also be organizational consequences through decreased athlete and team performance.

Following retirement, athletes described the lingering symptomatic effects of abuse as resembling those associated with post-traumatic stress disorder, including nightmares, maladaptive coping mechanisms that caused additional consequences (e.g., alcohol abuse extending into liver failure), negative self-concept, and disruptive relationships (Fasting et al., 2002; McMahon & McGannon, 2021; Salim & Winter, 2022). The effects of overuse injuries, including disrupted sleep and medication (Moola & Kraun, 2018), resulted in chronic pain (Salim & Winter, 2022). For many athletes, the love for their sport that they experienced as they developed their athletic identities in their early careers (Rutland et al., 2022) gradually dissolved and was replaced by hatred. If given the choice to participate in sport again, some athletes would "never do it again" (Kerr et al., 2020, p. 86). However, it is also important to note that a small subset of athletes, if taken the time to reflect and find meaning within their experiences, demonstrated characteristics of growth (see Howells et al., 2017 for indicators of growth in sport), including acceptance (Kerr et al., 2020), finding inner strength (Kavanagh et al., 2017), and hope for positive cultural change in sport (Salim et al., 2022).

Discussion

The above results are used to present three themes that capture the types, causes, and impacts of abuse within elite adult sport contexts. Influenced by our scientist-practitioner lenses (Schinke et al., 2023), we position this discussion as one that bridges the existing knowledge base with practical outputs that can be expanded and applied within sports psychology research and practice. It is important to note that OHSMS will not be effective without shared values, perceptions, and beliefs conducted safety (i.e., safety culture, Chen et al., 2019; Owusu-Sekyere and colleagues, 2022) With this in mind, the practical suggestions described below are designed to address individual, relational, organizational and occupational (sport type) levels, providing a whole-system response to abuse within elite sport.

Iterative, Sport Specific Education

One finding within this review is that as research has expanded over the last 30 years, so too have the different types of abuse within elite sports. Researchers began with developing understandings of sexual abuse, and have since expanded to include psychological/emotional, physical and neglect, and financial abuse, the latter unique to elite sport occupations. Abuse may also take the form of media abuse (Seanor et al., 2023) and virtual abuse (Litchfield et al., 2016). These types of abuse may be more or less frequent relative to athletes sports sub-cultures, with hockey players experiences more aggressive yelling (Stirling & Kerr, 2014) and swimmers more food restriction (McMahon et al., 2021). Education plays a vital role in stimulating awareness of the hazards, relevant to athletes' organizations and occupations, as well as athletes' developing skills to respond to those hazards *in situ* (Alli, 2008; Owusu-Sekyere and colleagues, 2022). However, education must also be developed iteratively to highlight ongoing hazards and risks unique to athletes' sport occupations. Overtime, recurring education develops athletes' capabilities to recognize and act on hazards in situ, unique to their contexts (Glasø et al., 2011). Such a sport-specific approach can contribute to recognition of the sub-cultural norms that contribute to the normalization of different forms of abuse relative to athletes' sports.

Leadership Training

Building from strong education platforms, leadership provides a vital role in ensuring that safety is pursued by all organizational members, contributing towards a safety culture (Alli, 2008; Owusu-Sekyere and colleagues, 2022). Leadership within OHSMS involves having the awareness and competence to address unsafe behaviors as they occur (Alli, 2008). However, within elite sport, coaches and other staff within leadership positions have described confusion on best practices to follow when promoting safety (Gurgis & Kerr, 2021) and may act with athletes' best interest in mind, yet employ harmful methods perceived by athletes as psychologically abusive (Stirling, 2013). Providing opportunities for leaders to cultivate the interpersonal skills and promote safe environments is one pathway to build a safety culture (Clarke, 2006). Effective safety leadership training should involve principles from both transactional and transformational leadership, the former influential for ensuring compliance with policies and regulation, and the latter essential for encouraging athletes' and sports staff compliance in safety participation

with particular focus on athletes' individual needs (Clarke, 2013), a recommendation encouraged by elite athletes (Willson et al., 2022). Likewise, these training platforms will be most engaging if undertaken through hands-on, practical activities that move beyond the online education modules (Burke et al., 2006). Education platforms equip staff with skills for working safely with athletes, which in turn will be reproduced by athletes as they enter senior and/or coaching roles to progressively enhance organizations' safety cultures (see Tibbert et al., 2015).

Roles, Responsibilities, and Rights

We recognize that leader training is not standalone option to address situations where staff purposely used their hierarchical (See Stirling & Kerr, 2014), gendered (Moola & Kraun, 2018), knowledge (Stirling & Kerr, 2009), and financial power (Rutland et al., 2022) to take advantage of athletes. Instead, a systemic shift is needed to rebalance power between staff and athletes. This rebalance could first involve the clarification of roles and responsibilities within organizations, with those with increased power shouldering legal responsibility for structuring and adhering to safe working conditions for athletes (Alli, 2008). For example, high-performance directors or heads of coaching would be responsible for creating safety structures and overseeing support staff and coaches, and they would therefore have a duty of care to develop, share, and monitor the adherence to safety responsibilities within their daily operations. When these responsibilities are disregarded or the potential for harm is perceived by athletes, complaints can be made through internal communication channels (Owusu-Sekyere and colleagues, 2022), such as athlete feedback systems. In the recognition that there are factors (e.g., isolation, lack of oversight) that increase the risk for abuse or exploitive relationships (see Johannsson & Larson, 2017), and subjective perspective of safety and harm (Stirling & Kerr, 2014), such a system would allow a bi-directional feedback cycle for organizational members to improve their working conditions. For situations where this reporting is impractical, such as an athlete having to report abuse to an abuser, complaints could be directed towards current safeguards, such as the safe sport hotline or safety officers, for external investigations. Indeed, in some countries, such as Canada and the United Kingdom, independent integrity services have been created to offer elite adult athletes an independent mechanism for such complaints. A second related approach involves legally positioning athletes as employees of sport organizations, allowing them to adopt employee rights, such as the

right to refuse unsafe work. Although this process may differ relative to the OHS standards within one's country, prompting the right to refuse unsafe work protocols would trigger multiple safety representatives inspecting the workplace/context for factors that influence athletes' safety. Expanding the utility of this avenue may be best approached through multi-disciplinary research teams, including researchers in sports psychology, organizational psychology, and sports sociology, organizational leaders, athletes, and coaches, to providing diverse views on the topic.

Joint Health and Safety Committees and Workplace Inspections

Athletes are willing to tolerate abusive behaviors relative to their positions in their careers, with early-career elite athletes tolerating abuse to progress to higher levels and late-career athletes adopting retributive or activist behaviors to change their sports system. Such a finding is reflected in OHS literature, where economic, personal, cultural, and social factors influence whether safety is pursued or ignored (Tchiehe & Gauthier, 2017). Resultingly, despite the availability of reporting resources, we as researchers must accept that there will be factors that prevent athletes from disclosing their experiences, and that context-driven interventions are needed to support athletes relative to their career stages. For example, the creation of local safety committees might be a useful approach for later-career athletes passionate about creating organizational change. Joint health and safety committees (JHSC) are effective at creating safe workplaces, so long as they empower employee representatives (Yassi et al., 2012). Likewise, workplace inspections, inclusive of organizational tours and interviews with athletes, might be a suitable intervention to help capture the perspective of early-career athletes unwillingly to disclose abuse on their own accord (Alli, 2008).

Health Promotion

Health promotion activities that focus on adaptive coping skills might be necessary for managing the effects of abuse within and after elite sport (Kavanagh et al., 2017; Marsollier & Hauw, 2022; McMahon & McGannon, 2021). This is not to suggest that health promotion takes the place of effective reporting agencies, but that promotion activities could provide athletes with the skills necessary to manage the impacts of abuse during reporting to alleviate distress and find meaning of their abuse following retirement. Likewise, adequate referrals to counsellors, nutritionists, and physiothera-

pists might be needed to heal from the psychological and physical impacts of abuse for retired athletes.

Limitations and Future Directions

One finding within included studies was that athletes who were able to construct meaning following their experiences (see Kerr et al., 2020; Kavanagh et al., 2017) demonstrated characteristics of personal growth (see Howells et al., 2017) that fostered their healing from abuse. Qualitative methodologies can be one avenue to support athletes' meaning making through methods that empower autonomy and the reframing of their abuses (Madge, 2016). Future researchers might consider moving beyond the dominant semi-structured interview format (used in of the included 17 studies, see Table 2) and approach research through methods, such as arts-based drawing, mobility methods, and photo-elicitation, that supports personal understanding and provides opportunities to make meaning.

Researchers recruited female athletes for inclusion within abuse research due to their vulnerability within elite sport (Fasting & Brackenridge, 2009; Kerr et al., 2020). A second area of future exploration involves diversifying research populations to included elite male athletes' experiences of abuse. Male athletes' experiences showcase different mechanisms of abuse, such as grooming through alcohol and being showed pornography (Parent & Bannon, 2012), overtraining resulting in physical injury (Adams & Kavanagh, 2020) and the desire to continue training while injured (Tibbert et al., 2015). Highlighting elite male athletes' experiences of abuse offers opportunities that may encourage male athletes to share their experiences of abuse, de-stigmatizing the notion of appearing weak when speaking of pain and spurring perspectives of how abuse can be mitigated through context-specific safeguards.

Conclusion

Through a thematic meta-synthesis, we provided context to abuse at the elite adult levels. Abuse is facilitated by interacting cultural, structural, individual, and relational mechanisms that differ between contexts, including the subcultures of sports and athletes' cultural contexts, necessitating a holistic and situational lens when developing and implementing safeguards. The integration of OHSMS to the organizational and national sports culture, sport level, norms and histories, and athletes' cultural iden-

tities can contribute to protection and promotion interventions that help address the conditions that cause abuse. While this review is used to situate OHSMS within the context of abuse, the application of OHSMS within elite sport requires further practical and legal investigation, given that elite athletes are not considered employees of their organizations and they form athletic identities that make them susceptible to normalizing abuse and its effects throughout their careers. We do not suggest that safeguarding take precedence at the elite level, but rather that safeguards would be most effective when aligned to the contextual differences present within varying sport levels.

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