

Original Article

## The Prevalence of Emotional Abuse Among Adolescent Male Football Players

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**Abstract:** Emotional abuse is one of the most common types of abuse in sports. However, due to the lack of awareness of its harmful effects and hiding this abuse in the shadow of success, less attention has been paid to it. Objective: Emotional abuse is a repetitive pattern of intentional and non-contact behaviors performed to control a person and is detrimental to their emotional, cognitive, or physical health. The present study aimed to investigate the prevalence of emotional abuse among semi-professional adolescent male football players in Mazandaran province. Method: the present study is cross-sectional. 59 football players (aged 15 to 18 years old) participated in the study voluntarily. Semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data, and descriptive statistics and Spearman correlation coefficient were utilized at a significance level of 0.05 to analyze them. Results: The results showed that 37.25% of the participants had experienced emotional abuse, such as humiliation, insult, ignoring, ridicule, etc., by the coach during their sports career, which resulted in outcomes such as depression, eating disorders, anxiety, and low self-esteem. One may conclude that significant ratios of athletes have experienced emotional abuse that has adverse consequences and, in some cases, has led to quitting the sport. Therefore, teaching athletes appropriate coping techniques reduces the frequency of common emotional abuse and protects them from its harm in the future.

**Keywords:** Adolescent sports; psychological well-being; professional ethics; humiliation, ridicule.

## 1. Introduction

The coach-athlete relationship is often the most important and influential one that young athletes experience (Gervis & Dunn, 2004). Regarding children, the elite athlete may consider the coach more important than their parents (McCann et al., 1996). Athletes often focus on their sport only; they sacrifice other aspects of their lives for the sake of sport. When athletes become more, they spend more time with their coaches, leading to a more meaningful relationship with the coach since the coach can decide on the course of their sports career (Gervis & Dunn, 2004). However, the unbalanced coach-athlete relationship and the coaches' authority to make decisions on adolescent sports life can pave the way for intentional or unintentional exploitation from the coach's side. In this regard, research has shown that coaches who are well-known for successful training athletes can use harmful coaching methods without taking any responsibility (Smits et al., 2017; Stirling & Kerr, 2014). Recent research proposes that athletes are not secure against physical, sexual, or emotional abuse (Kirby et al., 2000).

One of the most common types of abuse in the sports field is emotional abuse, a repetitive pattern of intentional and non-contact behaviors in human relationships that are used to control individuals and are detrimental to the emotional, cognitive, or physical health of the person under abuse. Coaches may unintentionally use harmful coaching techniques; however, the effect of their behavior would be similar to the situation in an intention to harm exist. Therefore, the intention to harm a person is not necessary to define emotional abuse (O'Hagan, 1993; Moran et al., 2002; Stirling & Kerr, 2008a). However, it is important to know that to define behavior as abuse, it must be sustained and repetitive over a long period (O'Hagan, 1993). Emotional abuse behaviors were categorized under the twelve headings: humiliation, shouting, rejecting, isolation, threatening, ignoring, blaming, discrediting, insulting, criticizing, giving guilt, and ridicule (Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Glaser, 2011; Horne et al., 2001; Stoltenborgh et al., 2012; WHO, 2002; Hart & et al., 1996; Kirby et al., 2000). Emotional abuse often occurs when coaches prioritize athletes' performance over their well-being, and the only important thing for the coaches is winning (Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Parent & Demers, 2011). In fact, in elite sports, "suffering" is not uncommon, and consequently, sometimes unnecessary pressure or

suffering inflicted on children and adolescents seems necessary as a part of the collective experience to "create" elite athletes (Gervis, 2013).

Research shows that abusing young athletes is associated with increased psychological distress and decreased quality of life in adulthood (Vertommen et al., 2018). It has also been shown that emotional abuse can be associated with many long-term issues such as depression, eating disorders, anxiety, emotional instability, and low self-esteem and self-efficacy (Stirling & Kerr, 2013). In more severe cases, a secondary result of these conditions is likely self-harm and suicide (Gervis, 2013). However, in many cases, perceptions of abuse may differ (Stirling & Kerr, 2008b). Regarding this point, Stirling & Kerr (2008b) interviewed 14 retired elite female swimmers aged 19 to 29 who had participated in national or international competitions and retired 3 to 6 years before they attended the interview. The results showed that 13 out of 14 participants reported experiencing emotional abuse by their coaches.

Interviewing 18 athletes between the ages of 16 and 28, Stirling and Kerr (2014) showed that although the frequency and intensity of each athlete's experience of emotional abuse were different, initiating and sustaining it in the coach-athlete relationship was consistent. Athletes reported that they experienced emotional abuse from their coaches immediately after beginning to participate in sports activities, and the frequency of these behaviors has gradually increased. Yabe et al. (2018) examined coaches' characteristics of verbally or physically abused young athletes. In this study, 1283 coaches were interviewed regarding verbal and physical abuse. The interview results showed that the prevalence of verbal and physical abuse among young coaches was 64.7% (830 interviewees) and 6.2% (79 interviewees), respectively.

Studies in this field show that despite reporting many cases of emotional abuse, there are not enough statistics about its commonness. Notwithstanding identifying the negative effects of emotional abuse at an early age and continuing its effects in adulthood, most studies in this field have been conducted on adult or retired athletes who passed their professional activity many years ago. To prevent such abuses, it is better to identify the cases of emotional abuse in sports before the athlete reaches their professional career. Clarifying the atmosphere quality of the sub-elite sport, in turn, can predict the quality of the atmosphere of the sport of the elite shortly. To understand the prevalence of emotional abuse in



children and adolescent athletes, relevant quality studies are needed. Furthermore, obtaining primary information about the frequency and types of abuse in basic sports will pave the way for providing instructional advice for coach training programs and instructing coping skills for athletes.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Participants

The participants of the study were 59 semi-professional football players (15-18 years old) who played in junior leagues of Mazandaran province. They consented to voluntarily participate in this study. According to categorization criteria of the previous research (Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Stirling & Kerr, 2008a) that professional player is considered a national player and the elite player is considered an international player, the participants of this study are assumed to be semi-professional. The age and duration of sport activity of the participants are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demography of participants (age and duration of activity)

Variables	Mean	SD	Max	Min
age	16.5	1.16	15	18
duration of activity (year)	5.22	2.16	12	2

### 2-1. Instruments

To collect data, a semi-structured interview with three questions that have been previously employed by Stirling & Kerr (2008b) was conducted. Regarding the participants' age rate in this study, one of the questions was deleted and two other follow up questions were added (these additional questions were asked if it was necessary). To examine the content validity and functionality of the questions, the comments and opinions of four experts in sport psychology were taken into account and the validity of questions was confirmed. Moreover, before conducting the interviews, to pilot the study, 15 participants were interviewed in order to investigate validity and functionality of the questions. The interview questions were:

1. How is your relationship with your coach? Has there ever been a problem in this regard?
2. Has your coach treated you in a way that you did not like? What was the mistreatment? Has it been repeated? How often?
3. How did you feel when the coach treated you like this?
4. What was your reaction to this behavior? Why?

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that all the participants were inquired by questions number one and two, but questions number three and four were only applied for the participants whose response to question number two was affirmative; in fact, they experienced abuse in their teams.

### 2-2. Procedure

The present study is a cross-sectional survey and an applied study regarding its purpose. Given the sensitive nature of the research area, trust-building between participants and the researcher was necessary. As a result, all interviewees were informed completely and then consented to the forms; they were assured that their names would remain confidential. This study was approved by the ethics committee in University of Mazandaran with the code IR.UMZ.REC.1400.032. Simultaneously with the interviews and data collection procedure, coding the data was accomplished by using three common methods of grounded theory. This theory tradition assumes that knowledge is grounded in individual experiences and interpretations (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The grounded theory is an appropriate approach for conducting research with no strong theoretical basis (Pidgeon, 1996). Three methods of this theory include: A) Open coding in which the concepts within the interviews were categorized based on their relevance to similar subjects. B) Axial coding was done to establish a relationship among the generated categories (in the open coding phase). C) Selective coding, in which the obtained codes are integrated and systematized and the relationships among them are modified. Each interview lasted 20 minutes on average, and participants were authorized to quit the interview whenever they intend. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics index (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and frequency percentages) and correlation were used at a significance level of 0.05 that was performed with version 26 of SPSS software.

## 3. Results

The findings of the present study were classified in five categories: Relationship with the coach, experiencing the abuse, reaction to abuse, athletes' feelings after experiencing abuse and correlation of variables:

### 3-1. Relationship with the coach

According to the obtained results in Table 2, 76.27% of the participants (n=45, age (m)=16.27, duration of



activity (m)=5.09) had a good relationship with the coach; 16.94% of them (n=10, age (m)=17.45, duration of activity (m) =8.25) had a normal relationship without any tension with their coaches; only 6.77% of them (n=4, age (m)=17.25, duration of

activity (m)=4.63) mentioned some problems in their relationships with their coach. However, the average age of those who had a good relationship with the coach was lower than the other two groups.

**Table 2.** Statistics related to the status of coach-athlete relationships

Variable's	n	%	age (m)	activity (m)
good relationship with the coach	45	76.27	16.27	5.09
bad relationship with the coach	4	6.77	17.25	4.63
normal relationship with the coach	10	16.94	17.45	8.25

### 3-2. Experiencing the abuse

Table 3 shows that 37.25% of the participants (n=19, age (m)=17.23, duration of activity (m)=6.22) experienced 9 cases of emotional abuse in all the years of their athletic activities as well as their current team. Most of the experiences were shouting

(%= 18.64, n=11, age (m)=17, duration of activity (m)=6.35), blaming (%=15.25, n=9, age (m)=17.11, duration of activity (m)= 6.66), and insulting (%= 8.47, n=5, age (m)=17.6, duration of activity (m)=8), and the rest of the abuses were almost the same.

**Table 3.** Statistics related to the experience of emotional abuse variables in teams

Variables	n	%	age (m)	activity (m)
humiliation	5	8.47	17	8.4
shouting	11	18.64	17	6.35
threatening	2	3.38	18	4.75
ignoring	2	3.38	17.5	3
ridicule	4	6.77	17.5	7.5
giving guilt	3	5.08	16.66	5
criticizing	4	6.77	16.75	6.33
blaming	9	15.25	17.11	6.66
insulting	5	8.47	17.6	8
<b>Total</b>	19	37.25	17.23	6.22

### 3-3. Athletes' feelings after experiencing abuse

The findings in Table 4 show that about 11% (of interviewees) (n=2) did not feel bad about the coach's misbehavior, and claimed that coaches' behavior did not affect their thoughts and feelings and sometimes

it increases motivation. In other 79% of the cases, the abuse causes negative feelings in the athletes, which in most cases manifests itself in the form of self-blame, feelings of sadness, and loss of pride.

**Table 4.** Statistics related to the athletes' feelings after experiencing abuse

Variable's	n	%	age (m)	activity (m)
*	1	5.26	17	4
**	3	15.78	18	7.33
Increase motivation	1	5.26	15	3
To be upset, frustrated and lose pride	6	31.57	17.66	7
Self-blame	8	42.10	16.62	5.75

\* The athlete tries to focus on his work and the coach's misbehavior does not matter to him

\*\* If he makes a mistake, he will be upset with himself, and if the coach's misbehavior is unreasonable, he will be upset with the coach.



### 1.2 Reaction to the misbehavior of coaches

The findings in Table 5 show that 31.57% ( $n=6$ , age ( $m$ )=17, duration of activity ( $m$ )=7.83) may occasionally resist his behavior and it depends on their mood and intensity of that behavior. 57.89% of the participants ( $n=11$ , age ( $m$ ) =16.72, duration of activity ( $m$ ) =5.63) remain silent due to respect for

their coach or fear of being fired from the team and consequently, ruining the future of their sports careers. Only 10.52% (of interviewees) ( $n=2$ , age ( $m$ ) =17.5, duration of activity ( $m$ ) =4) consider coach misbehavior normal for coaching; therefore, they do not react to it.

**Table 5.** Statistics related to the athletes' reaction to the coach's abuse

Variable's	n	%	age (m)	activity (m)
*	2	10.52	17.5	4
**	11	57.89	16.72	5.63
***	6	31.57	17	7.83

\*The athlete is silent because he considers the coach's behavior normal.

\*\*The athlete is silent out of respect for the coach and for fear of being fired from the team.

\*\*\*The athlete sometimes answers and sometimes does not. It depends on the mood of the coach and the intensity of his behavior

### 3-4. Correlation between variables

There is a significant and positive correlation between a good relationship with coaches and average age ( $p < 0.01$ ), meaning that the older the player become, the better relationship they establish with the coach. Also, there is a positive correlation between emotional abuse and the average duration of

activity ( $p < 0.05$ ) and the average age ( $p < 0.01$ ), which mean that with increasing duration of athletic activity and age, the rate of abuse experience increases, too. It was further shown that there is a significant and positive relationship between the reaction to abuse and the feeling after it with independent variables ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 6.** Statistics related to the correlation between the relationship with the coach, abuse, reaction to the coach's misbehavior, and the athletes' feelings after experiencing abuse, with the duration of athletic activity and agereaction to the coach's abuse

Variables	age	activity
Relationship with the coach	0.42**	0.12
Experiencing the abuse	0.36**	0.27*
Reaction to the misbehavior of coaches	0.35*	0.27*
Athletes' feelings after experiencing abuse	0.39*	0.28*

\* ( $p < 0.05$ ) \*\* ( $p < 0.01$ ).

## 4. Discussion

This study aims to investigate the prevalence of emotional abuse among male adolescent football players. According to obtained results, most participants reported good, normal, and no tension with their coaches. Only 6.77% of them mentioned some problems with their coaches. Nonetheless, more than half of the participants experienced 9 cases of emotional abuse throughout their athletic careers and on their current teams. The finding seemingly offers that although the athletes report some cases of their coaches' abuse, they describe

their relationships appropriately with them because the athletes do not reckon these misbehaviors as unusual; they may assume that these behaviors are necessary to their progress. On the other hand, they suppose these behaviors are ineffective in coach-athlete relationships; therefore, they try to ignore them. They may think that they do not have the power to deal with the misbehaviors of the coach, so the conclusion would be that it is better to focus on their performance.

Most participants have been emotionally abused or witnessed some abuse during their athletic careers. The most frequently observed behaviors were:





constant shouting at players, humiliating, blaming, and insulting. In line with these results, Gervis & Dunn (2004) also found that the most common forms of emotional abuse experienced in sports are shouting, threatening, and humiliation. Additionally, Gervis (2013), in a single case study of a 12-year-old female gymnast with impulsivity and trichotillomania disorder, found that the disorders occurred due to excessive anxiety when she experienced abusive behavior from her coach, including verbal abuse, shouting, or screaming at athletes, insulting, and humiliation in the training environment. The most emotional abuse used by coaches has often been verbal behaviors, such as shouting and giving negative feedback (G. Kerr et al., 2016). Hence, these results show that the cases of abuse experienced during different years are almost identical. Cases such as shouting at players or humiliating and ridiculing them are considered usual by coaches because coaches consider them necessary for achieving coaching goals.

The findings also show that more than half of the players who have experienced abuse have had bad feelings about it. In most cases, these behaviors are internalized, which causes feelings of self-blame, anger towards oneself, and loss of motivation. Only 5.26% of participants increase their motivation after abuse. This statistic shows that most athletes feel guilty if abused and cannot separate themselves from their feelings. They think they must have made a mistake, so they deserve it. In this regard, Papathomas and Lavalley (2012) showed that internalization resulted in many negative feelings, including guilt, shame, and blame in athletes. Another study found that emotional abuse causes adverse psychological effects such as low mood and self-esteem, as well as anger and anxiety (Stirling & Kerr, 2013). However, research has shown that the success or failure of athletes can affect their interpretation and feelings of abuse. For example, some participants in Stirling and Kerr's (2007) report noted that if athletes performed poorly or stopped improving, the emotional abuse was perceived as more harmful, including negatively affecting the athletes' mental health. However, if the athlete is to succeed, she will have a positive interpretation of the abuse. In this way, if they win and achieve success, athletes may consider the coach's misbehavior an essential factor in their success, or they may not care about these behaviors due to their high mood. Therefore, it can be said that the level of mood and success of the athlete is one factor that hides the

abuse in their shadow. As a result, individual differences and interpretations should be considered in research in the abuse field.

On the other hand, 5.26% of participants in this study reported that the coach's behavior did not affect their performance and did not care about it. These athletes consider this coaching behavior ordinary and necessary for their success. Most of them have mentioned that they have been told from the beginning that being an athlete means listening to whatever the coach tells them and following all the coach's instructions. Athletes may also normalize the abuse they experience, especially if a coach has a successful reputation; they believe their future is in the hands of the coaches (Cense & Brackenridge, 2001; Papathomas & Lavalley, 2012; Stirling & Kerr, 2009, 2013, 2014). Even abused athletes may normalize abuse in response to coaching power (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Athletes learn to expose themselves to anything that might help them win a medal. Ultimately, these behaviors contribute to an environment that normalizes abuse and makes the athlete passive against abuse (Bringer et al., 2001). These findings show that abuse is partly accepted as part of sports culture.

The findings also show that over half of the players who have experienced abuse remain irresponsive to the coaches' behavior. They considered the remonstrance against the coach's behavior as a kind of disrespect and intrusion into the coach's job, which may, in turn, lead to their dismissal from the team and ruin their future sports career. This study revealed that the average duration of activity of those who remained silent about their coach's behavior was less than six years. In contrast, the average duration of athletic activity which has complained or reacted to coach abuse is more than seven years. On the other hand, the players who remained silent out of fear and respect for these behaviors were younger than the other two groups. It seems that aging and increasing sports experience may raise the athlete's awareness about the nature of emotional abuse and their psychological abilities to deal with it. However, less experienced athletes do not resist abuse due to their inability to understand the abuse and fear of recounting it for their over-trusting to their coach. It has been identified that all players who have experienced abuse cope with these hardships and misbehaviors to progress in football and build a better future for themselves.

The correlation between variables also showed a positive correlation between aging and the coach-



athlete relationship; the older the athlete becomes, the better relationship is established. Maybe one of the reasons for this issue is increasing their experience and developing their adaptation to the difficulties of professional sports and coaches' behavior. They consider these behaviors necessary for improving their performance and progress and a typical manner for coaching. Hence, they attempt to adapt themselves to the coach's behavior. Also, examining the correlation between the experience of abuse, the average sports activity, and age showed that there is a significant and positive correlation among all of them, which demonstrates that with increasing duration of activity and age or generally increasing athletes' experience, they witness and encounter more cases of abusing. Younger athletes are likely to restrain themselves from reporting these behaviors due to the probable results of disclosing these events; they behave more cautiously comparing older players.

On the other hand, it seems that the higher the experience of athletes, the more information and awareness they gain about abusing; therefore, they become more confident and then report these behaviors, or at least categorize them as abusive ones. While in many cases, less-experienced athletes are not aware of this issue; hence, they do not consider their coaches' behaviors as abusive and do not report them. In this regard, Gervis & Dunn (2004), Smits et al. (2017), Stirling & Kerr (2014), Tofler et al. (1996) have shown that the power of the coach is evident in affecting athletes and controlling them, and this power is partly related to the fact that athletes are afraid of their coaches, seek their approval, and consider them as a means to succeed in their sports career. It has also been reported that athletes' parents are dominated by their children's coaches (G. A. Kerr & Stirling, 2012; Smits et al., 2017). Their children's coaches often influence parents, and due to the over-trusting, they leave control of the situation (Wilinsky & McCabe, 2021). However, in interviews with parents, they pointed out problems in this area and acknowledged that this overconfidence has made their child's life more and more centered around the coach and the coach seems to be the only determinant of the athlete's future (Smith et al., 2017; Stirling & Kerr, 2012). The results also showed a correlation between the reaction to abuse with age and duration of sports activity; there is a positive and significant relationship between them. These results showed that the older and more experienced people are, the more

they react to the coach's behaviors and the less they are silent. These results confirm the above results regarding the effect of age and experience on increasing awareness about and coping with abuse. It seems that the more stable athletes become in their sports careers, the more confident they will be in their future and the more courage they will have in the face of the power of coaches and their misbehavior. However, more research is needed to examine this effect, which can be a good ground for other research. A positive relationship was found between the feeling after experiencing abuse and the independent variables of the research. Moreover, as shown by the other questions, age had a stronger relationship with all the questions. According to the evaluation and coding of data in the analysis process, the results of this correlation revealed that with increasing experience and age of athletes, they had more negative feelings about the coach's behavior. More experienced athletes do not expect mistakes from themselves and are held accountable after the coach's behavior in the first stage. This study shows that although athletes become more aware of abuse as they progress in their sport and gain experience, they eventually attribute the abuse to themselves and internalize it. These cases indicate that there may be awareness of abuse among more experienced athletes, but there is no appropriate coping method to react to and appropriate adaptation to its harmful effects among them.

Overall, the results of the present study were consistent with Kavanagh et al. (2017), Kirby et al. (2000), and Alexander et al. (2011). Alexander et al. surveyed the United Kingdom, and more than 6,000 young athletes (aged 18 to 24) were interviewed. The results showed that 75% of participants reported that they experienced emotional abuse in their childhood. The results of another survey by Alexander et al. (2011) in the United Kingdom showed that 46% of athletes competing nationally and 56% competing internationally reported experiencing emotional abuse by their coach. Kirby et al. (2000) interviewed 266 Canadian Olympic athletes through another survey. The interview results showed that 19% experienced sexual harassment, and 25% referred to emotional abuse in sports, such as insulting, ridiculing, and verbal abuse, as common behaviors.

Moreover, all athletes reported some emotionally abusive behavior from their coaches in their childhood; most experienced feelings such as stupidity, worthlessness, sadness, lack of self-confidence, humiliation, depression, fear, and anger



caused by their coaches' behavior. Kavanagh et al. (2017) studied the experience of elite athletes coping with emotional abuse through the coach-athlete relationship. All study participants experienced some types of emotional abuse while competing in performance settings, including verbal misbehaviors such as shouting, screaming, insulting, and humiliating. The results of this study and previous ones illustrate the prevalence of emotional abuse at all national and international levels.

So far, most research on the detection of emotional abuse has been utilized in the context of the family to address parental abuse and neglect regarding their children. Research in sports has also been conducted chiefly on elite and retired athletes who retired many years ago. Therefore, the obtained information is out of date. To justify their behavior that is considered emotional abuse, many coaches assume it as a means to increase motivation in the player and necessary for their success (Stirling & Kerr, 2013). At the same time, previous research has shown that experience of verbal or physical abuse was significantly associated with loss of motivation (Yabe et al., 2019). These coaches know that no one will blame them for their behavior if they succeed. Athletic success is often determined by performance. Thus, the concept of 'the goal justifies the means' is often actual for many coaches and athletes, and consequently, the abuse is hidden under the shadow of success (Gervis et al., 2016). Hence, many reasons highlight the normality of coaching methods combined with emotional abuse (G. Kerr et al., 2016). As a result, athletics can provide a context in which behaviors considered abusive in other areas become ethical and necessary in the sports field. Research also shows that athletes do not report the abuse due to the fear of the coach's reaction or doubts about the admissibility of protesting against coaches' behavior. They also assume that no one would believe their report of abuse due to the coach's reputation in achieving success (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Another reason they do not report the coach's emotional abuse is the fear of being fired from the team and ruining the future of their sports career. In this regard, it has been observed that athletes who follow the superiority in sports fields are forced to exercise excessively, which blurs the line between training and abuse (Tofler et al., 1996).

For this reason, emotional abuse has received the least clinical and research attention, probably due to the cultural acceptance of psychological aggression

in sports, the lack of malicious intent of the perpetrator, and the lack of diagnosing the urgency of intervention (Brassard & Donovan, 2006). Talking to coaches often does not lead to positive results because they usually deny their behavior. Literature has shown that when abuse increases, its internalization disrupts the structure of an athlete's identity structure and may cause many negative emotions such as guilt and shame (Wilinsky & McCabe, 2021). Therefore, the first step in preventing emotional abuse would be recognizing these behaviors and researching the ways that athletes perceive these behaviors. This happens when athletes from the basic levels possess the skills of distinguishing abuse from other common difficulties in sports. Therefore, it seems that there should be an organization in all sports fields to instruct athletes and familiarize them with cases of abuse. It also should consider their grievance about this issue so that players can report these behaviors without fear or worry and continue their sports activities without mental threat. Educating coaches about emotional abuse and its probable effects on their psychological and social development should also be included as a high-priority activity of this organization.

#### **4-1. Limitations of the study**

The data of the present study were collected through interviews. Although the researcher used standard and ethical methods to build trust and confidence and reassured the athlete that their statements would remain confidential, there was still the possibility of self-censorship due to fear of the consequences of reporting abuse.

#### **4-2- Future research**

Our knowledge about the prevalence and the ways of emotional abuse in Iran is insufficient. For example, there is no available information on the prevalence of emotional abuse in sports in large industrial cities of the country having different socio-cultural contexts. Furthermore, our knowledge of the quality and quantity of emotional abuse in women's sports is minimal. The relationship between the prevalence of emotional abuse and the type of sport, the level of sports competition, and the coach's characteristics are also significant and will be examined in this research area. In addition, designing a scale to measure emotional abuse in specific sports or compiling an instruction for qualitative research into emotional abuse on a larger scale will help promote researchers' ability to investigate emotional abuse in athletes.





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## شیوع آزار عاطفی در بین پسران فوتبالیست نوجوان

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**چکیده:** سوء استفاده عاطفی یک از شایع ترین انواع سوء استفاده در ورزش است. اما به دلیل عدم آگاهی از آثار زیان بار آن و پنهان شدن این سوء استفاده در سایه موفقیت، توجه کمتری به آن شده است. سوء استفاده عاطفی الگویی تکراری از رفتارهای عمدی غیر تماسی است که به منظور به کنترل در آوردن فرد انجام می شود و برای سلامت عاطفی، شناختی، یا جسمی او مضر است. هدف از پژوهش حاضر، بررسی شیوع سوء استفاده عاطفی در بین فوتبالیست های نوجوان پسر نیمه حرفه ای استان مازندران بود. پژوهش حاضر زمینه یابی - مقطعی است. تعداد ۵۹ فوتبالیست (۱۵ تا ۱۸ سال)، داوطلبانه در این مطالعه شرکت کردند. از مصاحبه نیمه ساختار یافته برای جمع آوری داده ها و از آمار توصیفی و همبستگی اسپیرمن برای تحلیل آنها استفاده شد. نتایج نشان داد ۳۷/۲۵ درصد شرکت کنندگان در طول حرفه ورزشی خود سوء استفاده عاطفی مانند تحقیر، ناسزا، انکار توجه، تمسخر و غیره را از سوی مربی تجربه کرده اند که با پیامدهایی مانند افسردگی، اختلال خوردن، اضطراب و کاهش عزت نفس همراه بوده است. درصد قابل توجهی از ورزشکاران سوء استفاده را تجربه کرده اند که پیامدهای نامطلوبی به دنبال داشته و در برخی موارد موجب ترک ورزش شده است. به نظر می رسد، آموزش روش های مقابله ای مناسب به ورزشکار، فراوانی سوء استفاده عاطفی را کاهش و فرد را از خطرات آن در آینده مصون دارد.

**واژه های کلیدی:** ورزش نوجوانان؛ بهزیستی روان شناختی؛ اخلاق حرفه ای؛ تحقیر، تمسخر؛

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این نماد به معنای مجوز استفاده از اثر با دو شرط است یکی استناد به نویسنده و دیگری استفاده برای مقاصد غیرتجاری.