Barnidrott i ett barnrättsperspektiv - Emotional abuse in Swedish children’s sport

Background
As sport is a highly child-populated domain, you might assume that empirical research about child athlete protection would exist in large numbers, but this is not the case (Kerr, 2010). Academic literature on children’s rights and the extent of child abuse in sport is limited, certainly from the Swedish sport context. While a growing body of work conducted internationally, for example in UK, Canada and Norway, about the nature and prevalence of abuse of in sport, this is still not well understood.

There are studies of sexual abuse in child sport, however more prevalent but less researched is emotional abuse which makes this study highly relevant. Due to the large amount of children in Sweden spending their time in sport there is a need to understand the existence, experiences and effects of emotional abuse in child sport, important for children, adults, sport organizations and society at large.

Aim
The overall aim of this research project is to investigate questions related to the phenomenon of emotional maltreatment and abuse in child and youth sport in Sweden. The aim is to describe and analyse the experiences and effects of emotional maltreatment and abuse among 13-18 years old athletes and their coaches. Further, the aim is to problematise how gender discourses as well as the competitive level of the athletes are influencing the emotional maltreatment and abuse expressed in athlete-to-athlete and coach-to-athlete relationships in various sport contexts.

Implications
One important implications for practice is that the study will provide valuable knowledge about the experiences of young athletes, which can be used for developing strategies to prevent and deal with maltreatment and abuse among girls and boys in sport clubs. The challenges of understanding the complexity of how to define and deal with abuse will be made visible, which can be included in various coach education programs, thereby strengthening the quality of Swedish child sport.

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