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## ROLE OF EMPHASIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF WINNING IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE AND TRAINING DESPITE PAIN

### Abstract

Given the presence of emotional violence in sports and its negative consequences on athletes, this study aims to examine the frequency of emotional violence against athletes in the City of Zagreb and to determine how the belief in prioritizing victory affects their perseverance in training despite exposure to emotional violence and pain. Through a questionnaire, 153 athletes from the City of Zagreb assessed their exposure to emotional violence, their perseverance in training despite pain, and the belief that victory is the only worthwhile factor. The results indicate that athletes from the City of Zagreb are exposed to various forms of emotional violence. Mediation effect analysis indicates that exposure to emotional violence and willingness to endure pain correlate with the belief that only victory is worthwhile, which drives athletes to persevere in training despite pain. The results underscore the importance of shifting sports away from victory and results toward the coaching process itself.

**Keywords:** mediator, motivation, sport, trainer

### 1. Introduction

Athletes today are often taken to physical and mental extremes to achieve athletic success, so the line between coaching and violence is often blurred. Standard methods of coaching in competitive sports often compromise athletes' physical and mental health, and some of the methods are an example of emotional violence against athletes (Stirling and Kerr, 2008). The literature suggests that too much attention is paid to victory and results in sports, and the methods used to achieve these results are often neglected.

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Despite the negative consequences it has on athletes, emotionally violent behaviour exhibited by coaches is considered integral to sports. This perspective is supported by the fact that it often happens in the presence of athletes' parents, peers, and other coaches (Kerr and Sterling, 2012). The presence and normalisation of the emotionally violent behaviour of coaches can be explained in different ways. Among them is the belief held by athletes and coaches that emotionally violent behaviour is not only an integral part of coaching but also a necessary means of achieving sports success (Kerr and Stirling, 2012; Stirling and Kerr, 2014). Additionally, violent behaviour of coaches is often justified by their position of authority, alongside the respect and trust athletes typically hold for them. Witnessing violence against other athletes, non-reaction of a third party in a violent situation and culturally accepted violence in a sports environment also contribute to the normalisation of emotional violence (Stirling and Kerr, 2014).

Given the prevalence of emotional violence in sports, this study aims to examine the extent to which athletes in the City of Zagreb are exposed to various forms of emotional violence. Additionally, the study aims to investigate whether the attitude that victory is the only worthwhile thing mediates the relationship between exposure to emotional violence and willingness of athletes to persevere in training despite pain.

## **2. Emotional violence in sports**

Among the many definitions of emotional violence in the literature, the definition of emotional violence in sports was offered by Stirling and Kerr (2008), who define emotional violence in sports as a pattern of intentional contactless behaviour within a critical relationship between an individual and someone responsible for their well-being, which can potentially be harmful (Stirling and Kerr, 2008). Such a vital relationship has a significant impact on an individual's sense of security, trust, and satisfaction of needs, which specifically refers to the bond between coaches and athletes (Stirling and Kerr, 2013). Emotional violence in training is defined by a coach's destructive behaviour towards an athlete, including attacks and continuous insults, as well as exerting pressure, stemming from the coach's pursuit of sporting success, often unattainable due to the athlete's psychobiological and sports developmental stages (Milanović, Čustonja, and Škegro, 2011).

The literature suggests that emotionally violent coaching methods are present in sports (Gervis and Dunn, 2004; Stirling and Kerr, 2008), and that emotional violence is the most common form of violence in a sports setting (Alexander, Stafford, and Lewis, 2011; Kirby, Greaves, and Hankivsky, 2000; Stirling and Kerr, 2008). Behaviours that characterise emotionally violent coaching methods include verbal comments (e.g. shouting, belittling, insulting), physical behaviour (throw-

ing objects to intimidate athletes), and denial of attention and support (Stirling and Kerr, 2008).

A coach's emotionally violent behaviour leaves negative psychological consequences on athletes, such as low mood, low levels of self-efficacy, low self-esteem, poor self-image, and anxiety (Stirling and Kerr, 2013). In addition to the psychological functioning of athletes, emotionally violent behaviour of coaches affects athletes' motivation to train in two ways, in addition to their psychological functioning. Still, for some athletes, this leads to decreased motivation, less enjoyment in activities, difficulty concentrating, and challenges in developing new skills (Stirling and Kerr, 2013).

### **3. Emphasis on winning in sports**

Excessive emphasis on victory and results creates an environment where shouting allows insulting and intimidating athletes. Additionally, athletes often train and play despite experiencing pain for fear of potential sanctions. Literature commonly refers to athletes' capacity to endure pain, adversity, and high levels of pressure as "mental toughness," an attribute coaches are expected to develop and strengthen (Kerr and Stirling, 2017).

Coaches often consider injuries and pain as necessary for success, leading athletes to internalize such an attitude and continue their activities despite the pain (Tynan and McEvily, 2017). Research has shown that athletes adapt to pain by learning to ignore it, making it more manageable over time (Deroche et al., 2011). Guided by the motto of "no pain, no gain," athletes often persist in training despite pain to show their strength of character and thus gain the respect of others and achieve success (Nixon, 1994). However, the attitude that victory should come despite all challenges is dangerous because of long-term consequences it can have on the physical and mental health of athletes (Andersen, 2011; Crust, 2008; Douglas and Carless, 2006; Levy et al., 2006).

Neglecting to address athletes' basic needs, such as rest and treatment of injury and pain, presents a form of emotional violence often overlooked in pursuit of bringing the game to an end and achieving a high score. Competitive sports therefore represent fertile ground for coaches' emotionally violent behaviour, driven by an overemphasis on winning and result rather than on the process and enjoyment of the game itself.

## 4. Method

### 4.1. Participants

A total of 153 adult athletes from both team and individual sports from the City of Zagreb participated in the research. The sample consisted of 74 male and 61 female athletes, with 61 involved in individual sports and 74 in team sports. The majority of participants (83.5%) were categorized as seniors, 11.3% as juniors, 1.5% as veterans, and 3.8% of the participants did not belong to any competition category. Participants spent an average of 12.39 hours per week in training ( $SD=7.500$ ), i.e. 2 to 35 hours per week in training. On average, participants began training at the age of 8.64 ( $SD=3.322$ ), with training durations ranging from 2 to 20 years. Regarding competition, participants competed for an average of 10.19 years ( $SD=3.942$ ), with the longest active competition participation spanning 21 years. About 43% of the participants are current members of the national team, 21.5% were once members, and 35.6% have never been members of the national team.

### 4.2. Instruments

The data analysed in this study was collected through a questionnaire developed within the project “Youth, Violence, and Sports: A Comparison of Croatia and Slovenia”.

The survey questionnaire examined the attitudes of athletes about sports and coaching. In this study, two statements from this section were analysed: “To avoid negative sanctions, I am ready to train despite the pain” and “Victory is the only thing that counts”. Participants expressed their attitudes using a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating “strongly disagree” and 5 denoting “completely agree”.

In addition to attitudes about sports and coaching, participants rated the frequency of encountering different training situations describing various forms of emotional violence on a five-point scale (1 – never, 2 – rarely, 3 – occasionally, 4 – often, 5 – very often). To examine the mediation effect, the emotional violence scale was converted into a composite result described as the average value obtained on all items related to emotional violence. The calculation of the composite result was performed after the factor analysis confirmed that all particles measured one factor – emotional violence.

Also, the questionnaire collected general sociodemographic data and data on athletes’ coaching habits: gender, type of sport, category in which they compete, number of hours spent in training, age of starting training, period of active competition, and national team membership.

### **4.3. Procedure**

The research was conducted as part of the Croatian-Slovenian project “Youth, Violence, and Sports: A Comparison of Croatia and Slovenia”. In cooperation with the Sports Association of the City of Zagreb, researchers reached out to athletes who voluntarily agreed to participate in the research. Before completing the questionnaire, participants received an explanation of the research’s aim and purpose, being assured of their right to withdraw from the research at any point and guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality of the responses. To further protect the anonymity of the participants, the analysis focuses solely on involvement in either individual or team sports, omitting any specific sport details.

### **4.4. Statistical data processing**

The results presented in this study were processed by SPSS Statistical Package for Social Sciences. In addition to descriptive analysis, exploratory factor analysis was performed to discern the factor structure of the emotional violence scale and reduce it to a composite result. Subsequently, to determine if there is a mediating effect of the attitude that victory is the only worthwhile thing on the relationship between emotional violence and the tendency to train despite pain, the model was tested with the attitude that victory is the only worthwhile thing acting as the mediator, the tendency to train despite pain as the dependent variable, and exposure to emotional violence as the independent variable. A unique extension of the SPSS software was used to implement this procedure.

## **5. Results**

### **5.1. Descriptive results**

Table 1 shows the descriptive results for items that measure emotional violence against athletes, i.e. the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and percentage of athletes who state that they experienced each of the examined forms of violence to some extent.

**Table 1.** Descriptive indicators of items that measure emotional violence against athletes

Emotional violence	M	SD	never		rarely		occasionally		often		very often	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Emotional blackmail	1.70	0.915	75	55.6	31	23.0	24	17.8	4	3.0	1	0.7
Telling a competitor that he/she is worthless	1.81	1.122	73	54.9	30	22.6	19	14.3	4	3.0	7	5.3
Threat of beatings (with a stick or some other object)	1.41	0.893	104	77.0	15	11.1	10	7.4	3	2.2	3	2.2
Ignoring competitors	1.98	1.069	59	44.4	33	24.8	29	21.8	9	6.8	3	2.3
Outbursts of rage	2.62	1.215	28	20.7	37	27.4	41	30.4	16	11.9	13	9.6
Blaming competitors for all problems	2.24	1.059	39	28.9	45	33.3	35	25.9	12	8.9	4	3.0
Lying	2.22	1.180	51	38.1	29	21.6	30	22.4	21	15.7	3	2.2
Jealousy	2.43	1.313	49	36.3	20	14.8	34	25.2	23	17.0	9	6.7
Supervision of the athlete's life outside the hall/court	2.19	1.125	44	32.8	44	32.8	30	22.4	9	6.7	7	5.2
Unethical unsportsmanlike conduct	2.22	1.174	49	36.6	31	23.1	35	26.1	13	9.7	6	4.5
Inappropriate comments	2.64	1.307	35	25.9	28	20.7	36	26.7	22	16.3	14	10.4
Improper comments	2.24	1.167	46	34.1	38	28.1	30	22.2	15	11.1	6	4.4
Humiliation of a person based on gender, physical appearance, or the like	1.66	0.932	78	57.8	34	25.2	16	11.9	5	3.7	2	1.5
Causing fear (threats, demands, etc.)	1.81	1.011	67	49.6	40	29.6	19	14.1	5	3.7	4	3.0
Swearing	2.87	1.424	34	25.4	20	14.9	33	24.6	24	17.9	23	17.2
Body-related comments	2.27	1.190	46	34.3	34	25.4	33	24.6	14	10.4	7	5.2
Using a stick or another object as a threat that could cause pain	1.16	0.516	120	88.9	11	8.1	3	2.2	0	0.0	1	0.7
Inappropriate comments based on stereotypes	1.56	0.928	88	65.2	28	20.7	14	10.4	1	0.7	4	3.0
Verbal violence, shouting	2.23	1.300	54	40.6	30	22.6	25	18.8	13	9.8	11	8.3
Mockery	2.07	1.278	65	48.5	23	17.2	27	20.1	9	6.7	10	7.5
Insults	2.14	1.339	61	45.5	31	23.1	16	11.9	14	10.4	12	9.0

The arithmetic mean values shown in Table 1 suggest that the estimated incidence of different types of emotional violence among the athletes involved in this study generally falls below the scale's average, indicating that athletes are more inclined to report experiencing certain forms of emotional violence rarely or never,

rather than often or very often. However, exceptions are the forms of violence related to outbursts of rage ( $M=2.62$ ,  $SD=1.215$ ), inappropriate comments ( $M=2.64$ ,  $SD=1.307$ ), and swearing ( $M=2.87$ ,  $SD=1.424$ ), whose arithmetic means indicate that athletes tend to perceive such forms of violence as occurring often or very often.

Based on the frequencies and percentages concerning the estimates of the occurrences of certain forms of emotional violence, it is evident that the distribution of athletes' results is mostly positively asymmetric, meaning that most results are grouped around lower scale values. Specifically, athletes predominantly report never experiencing certain forms of violence. However, exceptions emerge in cases like outbursts of rage (30.4%) and inappropriate comments (26.7%), where a significant portion of athletes experiences them occasionally; or in contrast, blaming competitors for all problems, which is rarely reported by the largest share of athletes (33.3%). Nearly 90% of athletes said they never experienced a threat involving physical pain using a stick or any other object, 77 % of athletes said they never experienced a threat of beating, and more than half stated they never experienced inappropriate comments based on stereotypes, humiliation based on gender or physical appearance, emotional blackmail, or comments suggesting they were worthless. Conversely, the smallest proportion of athletes, as indicated by the highest arithmetic mean values, reported never experiencing outbursts of rage (20.7%), swearing (25.4%), and inappropriate comments (25.9%).

Of all forms of violence, the largest share of athletes stated that they often experienced swearing (17.9%), jealousy (17.0%), and inappropriate comments (16.3%). None of the athletes claimed they often experienced threats involving objects like sticks, while one athlete said they experienced such a threat very often. The most commonly experienced form of violence was swearing (17.2%), followed by approximately one in ten athletes experiencing inappropriate comments (10.4%) and outbursts of rage (9.6%) very often. Additionally, one athlete mentioned experiencing emotional blackmail very often.

## **5.2. Factor structure of the Emotional violence against athletes scale**

To be able to address the research aim and problems, it is necessary to reduce the items that measure emotional violence to a composite result. Before that, it is essential to examine the scale's factor structure, which is why an exploratory factor analysis was performed using a given single factor on all items that measure emotional violence against athletes. However, since the primary exploratory factor analysis with all items measuring emotional violence revealed that "Supervision of the athlete's life outside the hall/court" had a load lower than 0.3, this specific item was excluded from further analysis. Subsequently, exploratory factor analysis was conducted without this item, and the results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Matrix of the exploratory factor structure of the Emotional violence against athletes scale with a given single factor

	Factor 1
Insults	.836
Improper comments	.801
Inappropriate comments	.783
Mockery	.781
Swearing	.748
Unethical unsportsmanlike conduct	.746
Verbal violence, shouting	.732
Body-related comments	.717
Causing fear (threats, demands, etc.)	.714
Telling a competitor that he/she is worthless	.685
Blaming competitors for all problems	.679
Lying	.656
Inappropriate comments based on stereotypes	.649
Humiliation of a person based on gender, physical appearance, or the like	.631
Jealousy	.614
Outbursts of rage	.549
Ignoring competitors	.478
Threat of beatings (with a stick or some other object)	.454
Using a stick or another object as a threat that could cause pain	.451
Emotional blackmail	.360
Extraction method: Analysis of the main components.	

The exploratory factor analysis conducted indicates that all items have a factor load above 0.3 on a single factor, suggesting they all measure the same factor – emotional violence. Factor loads represent the correlation between the item and the factor. Among the items, “Insults” displayed the strongest correlation with the factor ( $r=.836$ ), while “Emotional blackmail” showed the weakest correlation ( $r=.360$ ). This factor accounts for 44.33% of the variance in the results. Moreover, the scale exhibited high reliability, as indicated by the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of  $\alpha=.931$ .

The results of the factor analysis justify the use of a composite score for the Emotional violence against athletes scale, given that the items used measure the same factor, i.e. emotional violence.



### 5.3. Mediating effect of the attitude that victory is the only worthwhile thing on the relationship between emotional violence and the tendency to train despite pain

The study aimed to determine if an athlete's attitude that victory is the only worthwhile thing mediates how emotional violence affects the athlete's tendency to train despite pain. The model testing conducted confirmed the attitude that victory is the only worthwhile thing as the mediator. The procedure described by Hayes (2013) verified the mediation effect, and the analysis was done using a special extension in the SPSS program.

Before conducting mediation analysis, descriptive results of the variables used in the analysis are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Descriptive indicators for variables included in the mediation model

	N	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
To avoid negative sanctions, I am ready to train despite pain.	135	1	5	3.27	1.242
Emotional violence	135	1.0	4.3	2.07	0.762
Victory is the only thing that counts.	134	1	5	2.63	1.412

The results presented in Table 3 indicate a general willingness among athletes to continue training despite pain to evade negative sanctions like being ignored by teammates or coaches, facing ridicule, or even being excluded from the team ( $M=3.27$ ,  $SD=1.242$ ). Additionally, the range of results suggests that athletes differ from each other in their assessments, with some completely agreeing with this statement while others completely disagreeing with it.

Regarding emotional violence, average assessments from athletes generally indicate that they rarely or never experienced different types of emotional violence ( $M=2.07$ ,  $SD=0.762$ ). Considering the minimum value (1.0), it can be concluded that there are athletes who never encountered any of the tested forms of emotional violence, while based on the maximum value (4.3), it is clear that some athletes often experienced multiple forms of emotional violence.

On average, athletes tend to agree with the statement that victory is the only worthwhile thing ( $M=2.63$ ,  $SD=1.412$ ). As with other variables, the minimum and maximum values indicate that there are athletes with a strong attitude that victory is the only thing that counts, while there are other athletes who completely disagree with it.

Before conducting mediation analysis, it was necessary to examine whether a statistically significant correlation exists between the variables included in the model. The results of the correlation analysis are shown in Table 4.

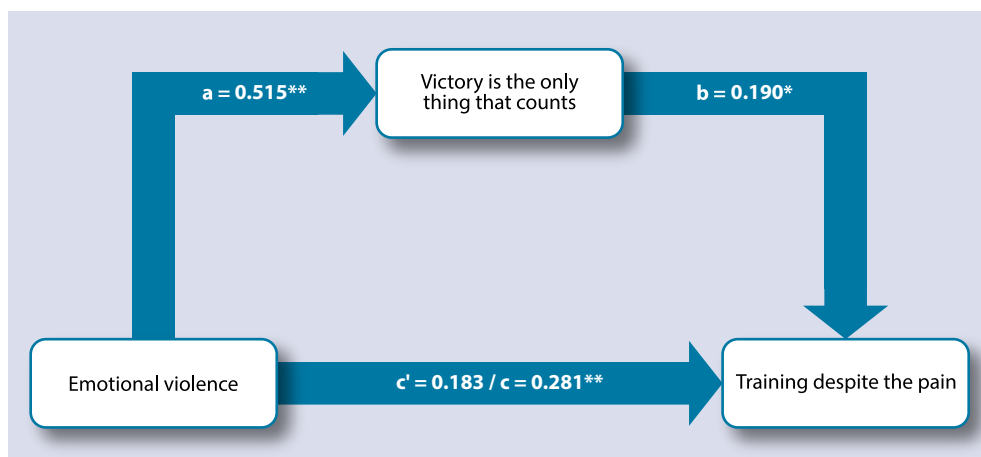
**Table 4.** Correlations between variables included in the mediation model

	1	2	3
To avoid negative sanctions, I am ready to train despite the pain.	1	.172*	.247**
Emotional violence		1	.279**
Victory is the only thing that counts.			1

$p < .01^{**}$ ,  $p < .05^*$

Correlation analysis confirms the satisfaction of the assumption necessary for conducting the mediation analysis, demonstrating statistically significant positive relations among all variables. The highest correlation is present between emotional violence and the attitude that victory is the only worthwhile thing ( $r = .279$ ,  $p < .01$ ), which indicates that athletes who experience higher levels of emotional violence tend to think that victory is the only thing that counts. The lowest correlation is obtained between emotional violence and athletes' willingness to train despite pain ( $r = .172$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating that athletes who experience higher levels of emotional violence are more willing to train despite pain to avoid negative sanctions.

Figure 1 shows the results of testing the model with the attitude that victory is the only thing that counts as the mediator in the relationship between emotional violence and the tendency to train despite pain.



**Figure 1.** Results of testing the model with the attitude that victory is the only thing that counts as the mediator in the relationship between emotional violence and the tendency to train despite pain

The results shown in Figure 1 show a statistically significant contribution of emotional violence to the explanation of the attitude that victory is the only thing that counts ( $a = 0.51$ ,  $t(132) = 3.332$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Also, the attitude that victory is the only thing

that counts significantly contributes to the explanation of athletes' readiness to train despite pain ( $b=0.19$ ,  $t(131)=2.460$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

The results show that the effect of emotional violence on the readiness to train despite pain is statistically significant among athletes when the model does not include the attitude that victory is the only thing that counts as the mediator ( $c=0.28$ ,  $t(132)=2.009$ ,  $p<.05$ ). However, when the attitude that victory is the only worthwhile thing is included as the mediator, it is evident that the effect of emotional violence on readiness to train despite pain becomes statistically insignificant ( $c'=0.18$ ,  $t(131)=1.280$ ,  $p>.05$ ). To determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between c-pathway and c'-pathway, a Sobel test was performed to examine whether the difference between the c-pathway and c'-pathway differed from zero. The results of the Sobel test ( $Z=1.98$ ,  $p<.05$ ) indicate a statistically significant difference between the c-pathway and c'-pathway.

It can be concluded that higher levels of experienced emotional violence, through the attitude that victory is the only thing that counts, contribute to a higher willingness of athletes to train despite pain to avoid negative sanctions. That is, it is evident that the addition of a mediator changed the relationship between emotional violence and the athletes' willingness to train despite pain. Given that the effect of emotional violence on readiness to train despite pain became insignificant by including a mediator in the model, one can speak of complete mediation.

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

Violence in sports, and especially emotional violence, is a widespread and complex problem present throughout the world, and this research has shown that the City of Zagreb is also facing this problem. Although athletes in the City of Zagreb are, on average, rarely exposed to emotional violence by their coaches, it is not a negligible fact that all examined forms of emotional violence of coaches against athletes are present in the sport of the City of Zagreb. Compared to a study by Kirby et al. (2000), who state that emotionally violent coaching behaviour is experienced by 22% to 25% of athletes, the results of this study indicate a higher percentage of athletes who are victims of such behaviour. However, given the different methodologies and definitions of emotional violence, it is not easy to compare the results of various studies. Also, given the relatively small sample of athletes in the City of Zagreb, the possibility of generalizing the obtained results to the population of athletes in Croatia is questionable. Research is consistent on the agreement that the coaches' emotional violence is present in sports (Alexander et al., 2011; Gervis and Dunn, 2004; Kirby et al., 2000; Stirling and Kerr, 2008). Including a larger and a more representative sample involving athletes would enable future research a deeper understanding of emotional vio-

lence in sports, which could involve the different types of sports, levels of professionalism, situations in which violent behaviour occurs, and other significant predictors of emotional violence. Given the evident presence of emotionally violent behaviour among coaches, it would be beneficial to direct research efforts towards comprehending both short-term and long-term consequences on athletes' mental and physical health, as well as their performance and motivation to play sports. According to the research results, coaches treat athletes in a way that would not be tolerated in other contexts, such as educational environments, so it would be beneficial to investigate the contextual factors of emotional violence in sports.

In addition to confirming the presence of emotional violence in sports, this research also indicates the most common forms of violent behaviour, as well as their frequency. From the answers of athletes, it is evident that the most present forms of emotional violence in sports are outbursts of rage, jealousy, swearing, and inappropriate comments. However, the share of athletes who are also exposed to other forms of violence is concerning, especially among those experiencing such violent behaviours (very) often. Athletes' responses stating that they are exposed to certain violent practices (very) often indicate that certain violent behaviours are treated as standard training methods. As confirmed by research done by Stirling and Kerr (2014), athletes themselves believe that such coaching behaviour is benevolent and geared toward their athletic progress, confirming how emotional violence is closely linked to ambition and the philosophy of athletic development. Athletes, guided by a close relationship with a coach and a sense of trust and respect for them, sometimes cannot be critical of the coach's behaviour and suffer all the insults, believing that they will thus progress in the sport. Future research should look into how athletes perceive such violent behaviours of coaches, how they explain the reasons for such behaviours, and what consequences such behaviours bear on their psychological well-being, attitudes, relationship towards training, and athletic results.

Additionally, research should incorporate multiple perspectives, by considering the viewpoints of coaches and parents in examining the presence and frequency of this problem. Athletes themselves, due to prolonged exposure to emotional violence, may gradually become desensitised to it, or misinterpret the modalities of the coach's emotional violence as a necessary component of the training process. We need to be aware of the fact that emotional violence is otherwise difficult to recognize (Glaser, 2011; Stoltenborgh et al., 2012) and that it does not only happen in the context of sports, which certainly makes this situation even more complex.

Besides exposure to emotional violence, most often in the form of verbal violence, it is evident that the athletes of the City of Zagreb tend to train despite the pain to avoid negative sanctions, such as being ignored by their teammates and coaches, exposure to ridicule and exclusion from the team. In addition to achieving athletic

success and gaining the respect of others (Nixon, 1994; Tynan and McEvily, 2017), the research indicated an additional motivation for athletes to persevere in training despite pain, and that is the fear of sanctions. A limitation of this study is the inability to discern the frequency of sanctions, ignoring, or exposure to ridicule athletes face due to their inability to endure pain from their responses to this question. Also, future research would benefit from examining athletes' attitudes toward training despite pain, allowing a deeper understanding of their internalization of the attitude that enduring pain is necessary to achieve success.

The research shows that training despite pain is significantly related to the athletes' attitude that victory is the only thing that counts and given that a large proportion of athletes support such an attitude, it is not surprising that they are willing to train despite the pain if it helps them and their team achieve good results. Furthermore, it has been shown that athletes who are more exposed to emotional violence are more likely to state that victory is the only worthwhile thing. Emphasizing victory and setting victory as the ultimate goal of sports can serve as a consolation for athletes suffering violent behaviours. That is, by giving significance to the importance of victory, athletes can rationalise the violent behaviours of their coaches. Additionally, achieving victory may lead athletes to perceive coaching methods, even those encompassing emotional violence, as successful (Stirling and Kerr, 2013).

The mediation analysis results presented in this research provide an essential contribution to the literature on emotional violence. Namely, the results suggest that the relationship between exposure to emotional violence and the tendency to train despite pain can be explained by the attitude of athletes that victory is the only thing that counts. Athletes who are exposed to emotional violence are more likely to consider victory the most important thing in sports, and this attitude that victory is the only worthwhile thing further motivates them to train despite pain because of fear of negative sanctions. Emphasizing the importance of winning serves as a mediator in the relationship between exposure to emotional violence and training despite pain. Coaches' emotional violence toward athletes is sometimes justified and supported by emphasizing the importance of winning. Focusing on results and winning encourages athletes to train despite pain to bring victory to their teams. The results of this study suggest that shifting attitudes and focus in sports from winning to the very process of playing and coaching could protect athletes from the potentially negative physical and psychological consequences of ignoring pain and injuries (Andersen, 2011; Crust, 2008; Douglas and Carless, 2006; Levy et al., 2006).

The role of coaches represents a crucial educational aspect in the life of athletes, and therefore, more attention should be paid to how coaches and athletes communicate, and which training methods are used. Emotionally violent behaviour of coaches, although considered integral to training and sports, leaves long-term negative con-

sequences on the psychological well-being of athletes and can demotivate them from playing sports. Besides, emotional violence against athletes, through the mediating role of the emphasis on the importance of winning, encourages athletes to persevere in training despite the pain they feel. Such behaviour can be dangerous for their physical health, and therefore, it is necessary to react to protect athletes and provide them with a safe and respectful environment. This research, in line with previous research studies, indicates the need to educate coaches about the consequences of emotionally violent behaviour towards athletes, about the constructive ways of training and communication, and about setting realistic expectations. Through their conduct, educated coaches can pass on the values of respect and equality to athletes, who can apply these values in communication with other athletes. By changing individual behaviour, the attitude of the society towards violence in sports can gradually change, enabling faster and more effective responses when signs of violence are identified. However, it is also crucial to provide the athletes with tools to report violent behaviour of their coaches or any other problems they encounter. Furthermore, campaigns against violence in sports are desirable since they can raise awareness of the issue of violence in sports and promote a more holistic approach in sports that could shift the emphasis away from results, highlighting other benefits of sports.

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## **Uloga naglašavanja važnosti pobjede u odnosu između emocionalnog nasilja i treniranja usprkos boli**

### **Sažetak**

S obzirom na to da prisutnost emocionalnog nasilja u sportu ostavlja negativne posljedice na sportaše, cilj je ovog istraživanja ispitati učestalost emocionalnog nasilja nad sportašima u Gradu Zagrebu te utvrditi ulogu stava da je pobjeda jedino što vrijedi u odnosu između varijable izloženosti emocionalnom nasilju i varijable ustrajnosti u treniranju usprkos boli. U istraživanju su sudjelovala ukupno 153 sportaša iz Grada Zagreba koji su ispunjavanjem anketnog upitnika procjenjivali učestalost izloženosti različitim oblicima emocionalnog nasilja, zatim svoju ustrajnost u treniranju usprkos boli te stav da je pobjeda ono jedino što vrijedi. Rezultati ukazuju na to da su sportaši iz Grada Zagreba izloženi različitim oblicima emocionalnog nasilja. Analiza medijskog efekta ponudila je objašnjenje odnosa između izloženosti emocionalnom nasilju i treniranja usprkos boli na način da je izloženost emocionalnom nasilju povezana sa stavom da je pobjeda jedino što vrijedi, što potiče sportaše da ustraju u treniranju usprkos boli. Dobiveni rezultati ukazuju na važnost preusmjeravanja naglaska s pobjede i rezultata na sam proces treniranja u sportu.

**Ključne riječi:** medijator, motivacija, sport, trener