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## UNETHICAL FORMS OF BEHAVIOR IN SPORTS

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**Abstract.** *This study analyses various forms of unethical behavior, which are increasingly present in sports. The focus of the research is to identify various forms of punishment, humiliation, mistreatment and abuse in sports clubs, and to approach this issue with determination with the aim of reducing or removing the consequences. The research was conducted in a variety of sports clubs in Serbia, which were chosen at random, and the participants (n=250) responded to a specifically structured questionnaire. The research showed that, depending on the age category, various types of unethical behavior took place: undue threats and punishment (55% men, 50% women, but with a statistically significant gender difference among the lower age categories), forced to compete despite possible health risks (over 80% athletes), and sexual harassment (78% of the female respondents in the category of younger seniors). Abuse and mistreatment were present in the pioneer, cadet and junior categories, and they became more intense in the senior age. Considering that the research results clearly show the existence of certain forms of abuse and mistreatment of athletes, this points to the need for the educational work of coaches to be focused on sport.*

**Key words:** *unethical behavior, mobbing, sports, age categories, gender.*

### INTRODUCTION

Sport as a multidisciplinary social phenomenon has become a focal point of society. It is perpetually in a potent cause and effect relationships with numerous segments of society, and this is what sets it in the focal point of social life (Lazarević, 2006). Being involved in sports, by the nature of its authentic motives and features, is directed towards

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nurturing and developing sound moral values and ethical principles. Psychological and pedagogical work in sports should be directed towards accepting positive attitudes to the training process, competing and sports in general, as well as moral social norms, attitudes and opinions (Havelka & Lazarević, 2011; Bačanac, Radovanović, 2005; Lazarević, 2009; Hosta, 2009). Such an approach creates a good foundation for normal development and the functioning of the personality of each participant in sport, and the fostering of features such as persistence, conscientiousness, responsibility, self-control, self-confidence, affiliation, cooperation, respect and tolerance, representing fundamental principles in sports.

Contemporary social trends and challenges often damage value systems, ethical principles and moral values in certain areas of social life and work, which also has direct repercussions on sports. Whether aggression, as a feature of individuals in society, will develop or not, depends on the context of social conditions, the reaction of society to violent behavior, as well as the way children and youth are raised (Rot, 2004). Aggression and violence among athletes, sports fans and other participants are present not just in contemporary sports, but rather, these features were also known throughout sports history (Jewell, Moti & Coates, 2012, according to Jovašević, Batričević, 2013). Instrumental aggression is most often controlled and has the aim of realizing positive values, and as such represents a desirable form of behavior in sports (Silva & Weinberg, 1984; Weinberg & Gould, 1999; Lazarević, 2009). On the other hand, uncontrolled and aggressive behavior which is not in the context of positive realizations most often becomes a source of violence and a main means for realizing aims which as a rule do not correspond to authentic sports values (Tenenbaum, Stewart, Singer & Duda, 1997; Bodin, Robène & Héas, 2007; Stanger, Kavussanu & Ring, 2012).

The commercialization of sports and the urge to maximize success in sports creates a space for corruption in sports, doping affairs, unsportsmanlike conduct towards opponents, mistreatment and abuse of sportsmen by coaches and members of club boards, discrimination and similar. The list of violated ethical principles is quite long, which only indicates a lack of formal education from the aspect of ethics and ethics in sports, which ought to be developed primarily via pedagogical and educational work with children and young athletes (according to Perasović, Bartoluci, 2007, Brkljačić-Žagrović et al. 2011). In sports, deviating from the same or similar ethical principles is more "allowed" than in any other social area (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 1996). Sports, as an important factor of contemporary society, instead of helping in the development of and ennobling the personality of each individual, today often epitomizes a ruthless area in which means are not chosen to reach various ends. Thus, the role of the coach in the development of young athletes is quite large. However, very often coaches view athletes as an efficient instrument and a means of their own promotion, as well as of achieving socially relevant aims or attaining victory and acquiring profit (Simon, 2006, 2013; Kavussanu, Boardley, Jutkiewicz, Vincent & Ring 2008; Lazarević, 2009).

Mobbing represents an active or passive form of behavior in the workplace, whereupon an individual is verbally, physically and/or psychologically abused, mistreated and humiliated, with the aim of endangering his or her personal and professional integrity, and injuring his or her dignity, reputation and honor (Leymann, 1990). Hostile and unethical communication during a longer period of time causes various psychological, psychosomatic, emotional, social, professional and other problems. Even though mobbing is linked with psychological and moral denigration, which may lead to sexual and physical abuse in organizations, whether these are business or sports, it is presumed that similar forms of behavior also exist in sports. In spite of the fact that there is not much data and research on

the subjects of humiliation, punishment, mistreatment and abuse, as well as the most important forms of mobbing (Duffy & Sperry, 2012), this does not mean that these forms of behavior do not exist in sport. These forms of behavior may be concealed, and supported by parents and club management.

Researching mobbing in Serbia, as an increasingly social phenomenon in the workplace, has become prevalent in the last decade. The most frequent research topics involved the conditions of mobbing and attempts to ameliorate its state (Kondić, 2008) as well as researching the occurrence of mobbing in certain social activities (Arsenović Pavlović, 2008).

The aim of this research is, by using qualitative and quantitative analyses of statistical data, to identify, research more thoroughly and describe any unethical forms of behavior (mobbing) in sports organizations or clubs, to break down their frequency according to gender and age category, as well as to determine the most common instigators of these unethical occurrences and point to a lack of awareness and knowledge of the athletes regarding this issue.

#### THE METHOD

A questionnaire with 28 questions was specially created for this research where the athletes (n=250) put forth their opinions by agreeing or disagreeing with the given statements. The questions were formulated in such a way that their responses reflected the degree of their awareness about mobbing in sports, as well as recognizing unethical forms of behavior in their sports clubs. The questionnaire also contained three open-ended questions, to which the participants responded in a descriptive way, presenting their opinions on the type of situations when mobbing occurs, the frequency and the main instigators from their sports environment (the athletes' co-players, coaches, club members and the like). Before filling in the questionnaire, the participants were instructed how to fill them out, as well as received information on the subject (mobbing), and the significance of their anonymous participation. Considering that under-age participants also took part in this research, parental agreement for voluntary participation and announcing of the results was obtained prior to the conducting of the research.

The research was conducted in various sports clubs in Serbia and athletes from the following sports were involved: taekwondo (n=74), karate (n=17), judo (n=20), aikido (n=17), swimming (n=22), water polo (n=7), football (n=16), volleyball (n=28), basketball (n=26), sports dancing (n=6) and aerobics (n=10). The structure of the total number of participants was made up of athletes: 134 males (53.6%) and 116 females (46.4%), aged 10 to 30, differing according to sports categories – pioneers (from 10 to 12 years of age), cadets (13-14), juniors (15-17) younger seniors (18-20) and seniors (21-30) (Table 1).

**Table 1** The structure of the participants according to the gender and age category of the athlete

Category of the athlete (age)	Male	Female	Total No (%)
Pioneers (10-12)	20	9	29 (11.6%)
Cadets (13-14)	24	15	39 (15.6%)
Juniors (15-17)	20	31	51 (20.4%)
Younger seniors (18-20)	25	23	48 (19.2%)
Seniors (21-30)	45	38	83 (33.2%)
Total	134	116	250 (100.0%)

In planning the research, and in accordance with the defined aims and subject, 7 criterion variables and 10 characteristic predictor variables were defined describing the typical forms of unethical incidents. These are variables which are considered, by their contents, to be representative samples which describe forms of harassment, abuse or mistreatment in sports, i.e. forms of unethical behavior and mobbing in sports. The respondents conveyed their opinions to what extent in their clubs there is *abuse based on gender, origins and nationality* (I1), *forms of abuse in the form of unjustified criticizing* (I2), *public condemning of athletes* (I3), *unwarranted punishment of athletes* (I4), *coerced training leading to health risk* (I5), *experiencing physical violence in the clubs or during competitions* (I6), *sexual harassment in the clubs* (I7), *excessive pushing during training sessions and competitions* (I8), *free and public speaking out about abuse in clubs* (I9), and *awareness of the athlete of this phenomenon* (I10). The criteria variables used were: gender (male and female) and age category in sports.

In the processing of the results, nonparametric statistics for determining the significance of the results according to criterion variables of the gender and category of the athlete were used. The basic indexes of descriptive statistics were calculated for all the monitored variables of unethical behavior, while the influences of certain independent variables were checked by calculating the chi-square test for independent samples. The criterion according to the athlete categories included gender differences. The statistical significance was defined at 95% probability, i.e. at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

## RESULTS

The values obtained from the item which is related to the question *Have you suffered any abuse due to gender, nationality or origin* (I1) show that 44% of the total of tested female athletes had experienced abuse on the level of the entire sample, while 99.3% of the male athletes had not experienced abuse due to gender, nationality or origin (Table 2).

**Table 2** The percentages and statistical significance of the studied variables according to gender on the sample level

Item <sup>b</sup>	Female (n=116)		Male (n=134)		$\chi^2$ test	df	$p^c < .0500$
	No(%) yes	No(%) no	No(%) yes	No(%) no			
I1	51 (44.0%)	65 (56.0%)	1 (0.7%)	133 (99.3%)	70.499	1	p=0.000
I2	65 (56.0%)	51 (44.0%)	134 (100.0%)	0	74.012	1	p=0.000
I3	65 (56.0%)	51 (44.0%)	129 (96.3%)	5 (3.7%)	57.903	1	p=0.000
I4	64 (55.0%)	52 (45.0%)	67 (50.0%)	67 (50.0%)	0.667	1	p=0.414
I5	82 (70.7%)	34 (29.3%)	118 (88.0%)	16 (12.0%)	11.725	1	p=0.001
I6	1 (1.0%)	115 (99.0%)	134 (100.0%)	0	1.159	1	p=0.281
I7	63 (54.3%)	53 (45.7%)	0	134 (100.0%)	97.294	1	p=0.000
I8	65 (56.0%)	51 (44.0%)	134 (100.0%)	0	74.012	1	p=0.000
I9	20 (17.2%)	96 (82.8%)	64 (47.8%)	70 (52.2%)	25.959	1	p=0.000
I10	22 (19.0%)	94 (81.0%)	64 (47.8%)	70 (52.2%)	22.846	1	p=0.000

Table 3 shows the results according to sports category, where the first three categories, these being the youngest athletes, experienced no abuse, and the differences appear only

with younger and older seniors. Thus, the obtained  $\chi^2$  test shown in Table 2 and 3a shows a high significance between men and women athletes ( $\chi^2=70.499$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and according to athlete category at the level of the entire sample  $\chi^2 =66.956$ ,  $p=.000$ .

**Table 3** Percentages of the studied variables according to the category of the athlete (pioneers, cadets, juniors, younger seniors and seniors) at the sample level

Item <sup>b</sup>	Pioneers		Cadets		Juniors		Younger seniors		Seniors	
	No(%)		No(%)		No(%)		No(%)		No(%)	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
I1	0	29	0	39	0	51	13	35	39	44
		(100.0%)		(100.0%)		(100.0%)	(27.1%)	(72.9%)	(47.0%)	(53.0%)
I2	29	0	39	0	51	0	35	13	45	38
	(100.0%)		(100.0%)		(100.0%)		(72.9%)	(27.1%)	(54.2%)	(45.8%)
I3	29	0	38	1	47	4	35	13	45	38
	(100.0%)		(97.4%)	(2.6%)	(92.2%)	(7.8%)	(72.9%)	(27.1%)	(54.2%)	(45.8%)
I4	9	20	17	22	33	18	27	21	45	38
	(31.0%)	(69.0%)	(43.6%)	(56.4%)	(64.7%)	(35.3%)	(56.2%)	(43.8%)	(54.2%)	(45.8%)
I5	21	8	30	9	33	18	41	7	75	8
	(72.4%)	(27.6%)	(76.9%)	(23.1%)	(64.7%)	(35.3%)	(85.4%)	(14.6%)	(90.4%)	(9.6%)
I6	0	29	0	39	1	50	0	48	0	83
		(100.0%)		(100.0%)	(2%)	(98.0%)		(100.0%)		(100.0%)
I7	0	29	6	33	9	42	15	33	33	50
		(100.0%)	(15.4%)	(84.6%)	(17.6%)	(82.4%)	(31.2%)	(68.8%)	(39.8%)	(60.2%)
I8	29	0	39	0	51	0	35	13	45	38
	(100.0%)		(100.0%)		(100.0%)		(72.9%)	(27.1%)	(54.2%)	(45.8%)
I9	3	26	2	37	8	43	22	26	49	34
	(10.3%)	(89.7%)	(5.1%)	(94.9%)	(15.7%)	(84.3%)	(45.8%)	(54.2%)	(59.0%)	(41.0%)
I10	5	24	3	36	12	39	22	26	44	39
	(17.2%)	(82.8%)	(7.7%)	(92.3%)	(23.5%)	(76.5%)	(45.8%)	(54.2%)	(53.0%)	(47.0%)

**Table 3a** Statistical significance of the studied variables according to the category of the athlete at the sample level

Items <sup>b</sup>	Pearson $\chi^2$ test		
	$\chi^2$ test <sup>a</sup>	df	$p^c < .0500$
I1	66.956	4	$p=0.000$
I2	64.750	4	$p=0.000$
I3	50.129	4	$p=0.000$
I4	10.013	4	$p=0.040$
I5	15.179	4	$p=0.004$
I6	3.918	4	$p=0.417$
I7	23.572	4	$p=0.000$
I8	64.750	4	$p=0.000$
I9	55.825	4	$p=0.000$
I10	34.303	4	$p=0.000$

With younger seniors in the subsample of female athletes, 56% experienced abuse due to gender, origin or nationality, while in the male athlete subsample there was no record of experienced abuse. The difference is the sample of older females where all 38 of them

(100%) experienced abuse due to gender, origin and nationality, and contrary to this, 97.8% of the male athletes noticed no harassment or abuse on this basis (Table 4).

**Table 4** Percentages of the studied variables according to gender and category of the athlete (pioneers, cadets, juniors, younger seniors and seniors) at the sample level

Item <sup>b</sup>	Categories of athletes by gender									
	Pioneers		Cadets		Juniors		Younger seniors		Seniors	
	No(%)		No(%)		No(%)		No(%)		No(%)	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
I1 yes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	1	38
								(56.5%)	(2.2%)	(100.0%)
no	20	9	24	15	20	31	25	10	44	0
	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(43.5%)	(97.8%)	
I2 yes	20	9	24	15	20	31	25	10	45	0
	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(43.5%)	(100.0%)	
no	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	38
								(56.5%)		(100.0%)
I3 yes	20	9	23	15	16	31	25	10	45	0
	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(95.8%)	(100.0%)	(80.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(43.5%)	(100.0%)	
no	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	13	0	38
			(4.2%)		(20.0%)			(56.5%)		(100.0%)
I4 yes	0	9	2	15	2	31	18	9	45	0
	(100.0%)		(8.3%)	(100.0%)	(10.0%)	(100.0%)	(72.0%)	(39.1%)	(100.0%)	
no	20	0	22	0	18	0	7	14	0	38
	(100.0%)		(91.7%)		(90.0%)		(28.0%)	(60.9%)		(100.0%)
I5 yes	16	5	21	9	15	18	23	18	43	32
	(80.0%)	(55.6%)	(87.5%)	(60.0%)	(75.0%)	(58.1%)	(92.0%)	(78.3%)	(95.6%)	(84.2%)
no	4	4	3	6	5	13	2	5	2	6
	(20.0%)	(44.4%)	(12.5%)	(40.0%)	(25.0%)	(41.9%)	(8.0%)	(21.7%)	(4.4%)	(15.8%)
I6 yes	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
						(3.2%)				
no	20	9	24	15	20	30	25	23	45	38
	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100%)	(100.0%)	(96.8%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)
I7 yes	0	0	0	6	0	9	0	15	0	33
				(40.0%)		(29.0%)		(65.2%)		(86.8%)
no	20	9	24	9	20	22	25	8	45	5
	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(60.0%)	(100.0%)	(71.0%)	(100.0%)	(34.8%)	(100.0%)	(13.2%)
I8 yes	20	9	24	15	20	31	25	10	45	0
	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(43.5%)	(100.0%)	
no	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	38
								(56.5%)		(100.0%)
I9 yes	3	0	2	0	3	5	18	4	38	11
	(15.0%)		(8.3%)		(15.0%)	(16.1%)	(72.0%)	(17.4%)	(84.4%)	(28.9%)
no	17	9	22	15	17	26	7	19	7	27
	(85.0%)	(100.0%)	(91.7%)	(100.0%)	(85.0%)	(83.9%)	(28.0%)	(82.6%)	(15.6%)	(71.1%)
I10 yes	2	3	2	1	1	11	18	4	41	3
	(10.0%)	(33.3%)	(8.3%)	(6.7%)	(5.0%)	(35.5%)	(72.0%)	(17.4%)	(91.1%)	(7.9%)
no	18	6	22	14	19	20	7	19	4	35
	(90%)	(66.7%)	(91.7%)	(93.3%)	(95.0%)	(64.5%)	(28.0%)	(82.6%)	(8.9%)	(92.1%)

The feeling of unfounded criticizing during training (I2) or in a public place in front of others (I3) was experienced by 56% of the female athletes, while all the male athletes stated that they were unjustly criticized during training or publicly in front of others (Table 2). The results by category and gender show that younger categories of male and female athletes to a high or maximum percentage of 100% - that is, 96% - declared that they were criticized without reason by the coach during training, that is, publicly in front of others (Table 4). On the younger and older senior level, all the male athletes (100%, i.e. all 45 participants) considered that they were criticized for no reason, while not one woman experiences the criticism as unjustified. The obtained  $\chi^2$  test for variables I2 and I3 (Table 2) show a high significance of differences between genders (for I2,  $\chi^2=74.012$ , and for I3,  $\chi^2=57.903$ ), and the athlete category at the level of the entire sample (for I2,  $\chi^2=64.750$ , and for I3,  $\chi^2=50.129$ ), where  $p=0.000$ .

Regarding the assessment of perception about *Ungrounded excessive punishment of male athletes (I4)*, there are no statistically significant differences between the male and female athletes at the level of the entire sample ( $\chi^2=0.667$ ,  $p=.414$ , Table 2), that is, both the male and female athletes at the level of the studied sample had experienced excessive punishment.

Athletes in the younger categories (pioneers, cadets and juniors) differed in a statistically significant manner when taking into consideration the gender factor ( $\chi^2=10.013$ ,  $p=0.04$  Table 3a), or to be more precise, in all three categories the female athletes experienced punishment as excessive and ungrounded, and at a significantly higher percentage. What is characteristic for this form of abuse is that the results are significantly different at the level of seniors in both categories. With younger seniors, experiencing punishment as excessive and ungrounded appears with the female athletes in 39% of the cases, while men in the same category experienced punishment to a much larger percentage - 72% (Table 4). On the level of older seniors, there is a significant difference in gender: seniors in 100% of cases experienced punishment as excessive and ungrounded, while the female seniors in 100% cases did not.

The responses to the question *Whether the coach demanded that the training or competition be continued in spite of potential health risk of the athletes (I5)*, show that 80% of the tested athletes confirmed that they came to training in spite of potential health risks. With male athletes of all categories, as many as 88% experienced the demands of the coach as a health risk (92% of the younger seniors and 95.6% of the seniors), while with the female athletes the percentage is somewhat smaller - 70.7% (Table 2). The female athletes in the younger categories to a significantly lesser percentage assessed the demands of the coach as a health risk, while on the senior level in both categories, the demands of the coach were to a high percentage (78.3% of the younger seniors, 84.2% of the older seniors) assessed as a health risk (Table 4).

The question, *Have the tested athletes experienced some form of physical abuse in their clubs (I6)*, did not prove to be a statistically significant variable according to the gender and athlete category, as the male and female athletes in all age categories stated that there was no such abuse in their clubs ( $\chi^2=3.918$ ,  $p=0.417$  Table 3a).

*The experience of sexual abuse (I7)*, as the most common form of abuse in society, occurs in sports as well. This form of abuse is present among female athletes and increases with higher age categories. According to the obtained data, it already appears at the cadet age (13-14 years of age), in order for it to occur more often in both senior

categories. In the subsample of the younger female seniors, it amounts to 65%, and among the older seniors as many as 86.8% experienced certain types of sexual abuse (Table 4).

The obtained value of the  $\chi^2$  test, from the variable which relates to the *Pressure on the athlete by the coach to train excessively (18)*, points to the significance of differences between male and female athletes ( $\chi^2=74.012$ ,  $p=.000$ , Table 2). Male athletes of all ages, as well as all female athletes of younger ages from pioneers to cadets and juniors, have experienced the pressure to train excessively and over the threshold of their own possibilities and endurance. With younger female seniors, the result is somewhat different, and 43.5% of them share the opinion regarding this problem with other athletes. Along with disturbing results obtained with the tested athletes, the fact that no tested female senior athlete answered this question positively is encouraging (Table 4).

The responses to the question which is related to *Freedom in reporting that the athlete/participant is a victim of (mobbing) abuse and mistreatment (19)*, show that there is a significant difference in this item ( $\chi^2=25.96$ , that is,  $p=.000$ , Table 2). At the level of the entire studied sample of athletes, the younger age categories claim that intimidation is possible if this problem is publicly displayed (89.7% of the pioneers, 94.9% of the cadets and 84.3% of the juniors, Table 3), while 45.8% of the younger seniors, that is, 59% of the seniors have an awareness of this problem and a willingness to display this problem in public. However, the difference at the level of gender structure is evident - 82.8% of the female athletes would not publicly display and talk about this problem (82.6% of the younger seniors and 71.1% of the seniors, Table 4), and 52.2% of the male athletes share the same opinion (Table 2).

The results on being aware of mobbing in sports, i.e. is *Whether athletes have sufficient knowledge about this problem in sports (110)*, show that there is a significant difference in terms of gender and age category at the level of the studied sample. The greatest agreement in the statements of both genders was achieved in the younger age categories where the relative values were exceptionally high and where around 90% of the participants had insufficient knowledge about the issue at large. However, the older males considered that they know enough about unethical forms of behavior (72% of the younger seniors, 91.1% of the seniors), though it is completely different with the female athletes - a mere 17.4% of the younger seniors and 7.9% of the seniors (Table 4).

Based on the open-ended questions and the obtained answers of the athletes, which referred to the following: *the time period of the occurrence of these situations, their frequency and the instigators*, a qualitative analysis singled out some responses. At the level of the entire sample, 98.8% of the athletes responded that the coach or assistant coach are those who behave inappropriately towards them, and that the situations in which these incidents occur are linked to the entry to a higher competition level, conflict with the coach or the co-players, failure at competitions/the match and the beginning of being involved in sports and have thus shown to be the most frequent cases in which there is abuse, humiliation, mistreatment, and similar. The majority of athletes have declared that such forms of behavior occurred several times a month and almost always at competitions, that is, during matches.



## DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the first item (I1), which is related to abuse due to gender, nationality or origin can be explained and understood by more careful pedagogical and psychological work of the coach with the younger categories, and their awareness that a non-pedagogical and discriminatory approach to this age may lead to creating significant problems. Unlike the younger athlete categories, the obtained results from the younger seniors and seniors indicate interaction in which the coaches debase athletes according to gender, nationality and/or ethnicity. On the other hand, differences in gender categories may indicate that the male athletes are probably more resistant and with a higher level of tolerance to frustration, and thus they have a smaller tendency to view these forms of behavior as discriminatory.

Results for items I2 and I3 can be explained by a greater sensitivity of young people in a pre-adolescent or early adolescent stage, when most criticism is experienced as threats, unease, pressure and disrespect (Lazarević, 2009). On the other hand, coaches, with the aim to build authority with the younger categories, often use inadequate forms of behavior which are manifested as the following: harshness, excessive and unjustified criticism and various forms of punishment (Popadić, Bačanac, Golić, Petrović & Vidović, 2011). Athletes, sensitive in this development period, are prone to interpret even well-intentioned advice as excessive criticism and experience it as harassment or with the attitude "the coach is abusing me" (Popadić et al. 2011; Bačanac, Petrović, & Manojlović, 2010). Both groups of senior athletes experience criticism as unjustified and groundless, which can be explained with the fact that the athletes, due to having more experience, the development of certain attitudes, and a larger degree of maturity, become more sensitive and more disapproving towards criticism, experiencing it as a certain type of abuse and harassment. All the studied female senior athletes did not experience criticism as groundless, with the assumption that this is an integral part of communication in the process of training and instruction in sports. Some of the presumptions for this result may also be the stereotypical and perceptive content of the behavior used in working with women, while the another assumption may be explained by the application of adequate pedagogical behavior, as well as a more careful pedagogical attitude.

It is hard to presume what led to different results in men and women in the category of seniors in variable I4, where female athletes in the majority of cases experienced punishment and accepted it as well-intentioned, objective and with positive consequences. A possible explanation may be found in the fact that coaches had a pedagogically different attitude towards female athletes, as they were less aggressive and forceful, and did not use excessive punishment. These results can be explained by the stereotypical opinion that the female athletes appreciate the stricter, more aggressive and rigid behavior of the coach as being "normal" and "useful", and a further study with new methodology and on a larger sample could give a better explanation for some of the obtained results.

The results of variable I5 show the disturbing phenomenon of the insufficient concern of the coach and the club in regards to the health of the athletes, even those in the younger categories. Realizing sports results at any cost, and thereby putting them before health and the development of athletes of any age is a significant form of abuse of athletes and a violation of the right for sport to be an area and means of development and satisfaction of personal needs.

The problem of sexual abuse often appears in sports, though it is not talked about often. The results obtained in this research clearly indicate this phenomenon, especially in the senior female category. This fact is worrying, and if we consider the fact that sports clubs and sports themselves are an area in which educational work is the most important, and that this is an area for development of young people, then this form of abuse destroys the value system of sports and sports clubs, and their role in experiencing sport as a form of satisfaction and needs, transforming sport into a matter of frustration, anxiety and fear.

The analysis of the responses to the open-ended questions indicate that coaches are most often the instigators of behavior displayed as abuse, punishment and the like, and the circumstances within which this happens are linked with competitions and the failure to achieve good results. This is confirmed by the research conducted by Popadić et al. that the instigators of unethical behavior in sports towards athletes are coaches, displaying the following: hitting, slapping, abusing, showing anger and shouting at athletes when they make mistakes, insulting by using derogatory names and nicknames, yelling, swearing, threatening and frightening. Only 37% of the studied athletes have never experienced any of the afore mentioned forms of violence (Popadić et al. 2011). The results obtained from this research point to the fact that non-pedagogical work and behavior and inadequate behavior towards all age categories of athletes, regardless of gender, is without doubt present in Serbian sports, and by using a more comprehensive research methodology we could obtain more detailed data and carry out more encompassing measures with the aim of preventing and protecting young athletes.

The results obtained from variable I8 are difficult to interpret, due to the fact that all 79.6% of the studied athletes consider that they have experienced or are experiencing pressure by the coach during the training process which, according to their opinion, leads towards their being overworked and exhausted. This leads us to the following question: What is the main aim of the coach – success and prestige at any cost or quality pedagogical-educational work with children and younger categories? Is victory and achieving sports results the only motive in sports? Is victory in sports more important than a general development of the personality of every individual? If coaches behave in such a way that the responses to the afore mentioned questions are affirmative, and yet they have an appropriate level of education in the area of physical education and sports, and they know how damaging it is to bring about such a state of the body of young athletes, then the ethical codes and moral principles in sports are entirely jeopardized.

The opinion that the male athletes are more prone towards public exposure, and thus are more courageous in speaking out about all the mentioned forms of behavior in sports, points to the fact that the women are more inclined to suffer, that they possess a higher level of self-criticism and self-deprecation and that they often come to the conclusion that they are to be blamed for the situation.

Athletes recognize and identify incidents of abuse and harassment as forms of unethical behavior sustained most frequently by their own coaches, but female athletes have insufficient awareness about mobbing and awareness of its significance, as well as the consequences which can be incurred by these types of behavior. Only in the category of younger athletes of both genders were the values equivalent and high, which points to the fact that there is insufficient education on this issue, and that it is not spoken about openly in their clubs.

## CONCLUSION

This research showed that there are various forms of improper behavior, depending on the age category and gender structure, although sexual harassment was also extant with the female athletes, but what is particularly disturbing is the data that some forms of mistreatment and abuse are currently already being used on the youngest categories. The common forms of violence are the following: pressure and threats, ungrounded and unjustified punishment, compelling the athletes to train or compete risking their health, which can have unforeseeable consequences on the development and health status of the athlete and his or her future.

Unfortunately, athletes are unaware that they are victims of abuse, so they often make excuses for and support the violent behavior of their coaches, often blaming themselves, thinking that they merit punishment. Sport thus represents an area where abuse is at the moment allowed, even at times desirable, especially if it is in the service of achieving top results. Abuse and the violent behavior of the coach but also the members of the club board thus become socially 'acceptable' and are generally tolerated, especially if the athletes achieve prominent sports results and success (Milanović, Čustonja, Škegro, 2011, p. 227). This form of behavior often motivates athletes to realize good sports results under pressure and fear, ignoring the fact that such behavior creates frustrating and stressful situations, as well as developing anxiety and aggression, all of which contribute to the objectifying of athletes and developing anxiety and aggression, and on the other hand, they may cause the young athletes to become very disillusioned with sports and quickly disappear from the sports scene (Popadić et al., 2011; Bačanac, Petrović & Manojlović, 2010).

In order to prevent these occurrences, society must in a planned way insist on educating experts and promoting ethics in sports on all levels of education, an active promotion and application of ethical codes of all the participants in sports along with a persistent and uncompromising battle against violence in all segments of sport (Tenenbaum, et al. 1997) by including the relevant experts and institutions. The permanent education and improvement of athletes, sports experts and experts in sports, as well as appealing to the public regarding the significance of recognizing and preventing deviant forms of behavior in sports, and the support of state institutions to sanction all the instigators, are significant strategic approaches to the development, support and promotion of sports in contemporary society.

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## NE-ETIČKO PONAŠANJE U SPORTU

*U ovom istraživanju analizirani su različiti oblici ne-etičkog ponašanja koje je sve češće u sportu. Fokus istraživanja bio je da se identifikuju različiti oblici kažnjavanja, ponižavanja, zlostavljanja i maltretiranja u sportskim klubovima, i da se ovom problemu pristupi sa ciljem da se njegove posledice ublaže ili nestanu. Istraživanje je sprovedeno u različitim sportskim klubovima u Srbiji, koji su nasumice izabrani, a učesnici (n=250) su odgovorili na posebno strukturisan upitnik. Istraživanje je pokazalo da, u zavisnosti od starosne kategorije, različiti oblici ne-etičkog ponašanja se javljaju u vidu: nepotrebne pretnje i kazne (55% muškaraca, 50% žena, ali sa statistički značajnim razlikama među polovima nižih starosnih kategorija), prisiljavanja na takmičenje uprkos opasnosti po zdravlje (preko 80% sportista), i seksualnog uznemiravanja (78% ženskih učesnika u kategoriji mlađih seniora). Zlostavljanje i maltretiranje mogu se uočiti i među pionirima, kadetima i juniorskim kategorijama, ipostaju ozbiljniji problemi u seniorskim kategorijama. S obzirom na to da rezultati istraživanja jasno ukazuju na to da postoji zloupotreba i maltretiranje sportista, ovo istraživanje ukazuje na potrebu da se treneri obrazuju tako da se tokom rada više fokusiraju na sportske aktivnosti.*

*Ključne reči: neetičko ponašanje, mobing, sport, starosne kategorije, rod.*