



Psychological abuse, physical abuse, and neglect: a descriptive study of common practices among Jordanian national teams' athletes

Abuso psicológico, abuso físico y negligencia: un estudio descriptivo de prácticas comunes entre atletas del equipo nacional jordano

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Abstract

Introduction: this study examined the prevalence of psychological abuse, physical abuse, and neglect among Jordanian national team athletes. Athlete well-being and safety in competitive sports have gained increasing attention due to potential long-term consequences.

Objective:

the study aimed to identify differences in exposure to psychological and physical abuse and neglect 736hilean736 gender, age, education level, and years of practice.

Methodology: a descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted using a structured questionnaire. Data were collected from 278 national team players of both genders. Prevalence rates were calculated, and statistical analyses were performed to determine significant differences 736hilean736 demographic factors.

Result: 37.8% of athletes experienced psychological abuse, 9.4% physical abuse, and 40.3% neglect. Males reported significantly higher psychological abuse ($p=0.026$). Neglect was more common among athletes with lower education levels ($p=0.000$) and those with longer practice durations ($p=0.011$). No significant differences were found in physical abuse or neglect based on gender or age.

Discussion: findings align with previous research indicating that psychological abuse is more prevalent 736hi physical abuse in competitive sports. Education level and years of practice were significant factors in neglect.

Conclusions: ensuring a safe training environment is crucial. National teams should implement policies and psychological support programs to reduce the risks of abuse and neglect, enhancing athlete well-being.

Keywords

Abuse in sports; athletes; Jordanian national teams; neglect; physical abuse; psychological abuse.

Resumen

Introducción: este estudio examinó la prevalencia del abuso psicológico, físico y la negligencia entre los atletas del equipo nacional de 736hilean736, destacando su impacto en 736hilestar y seguridad de los deportistas.

Objetivo: identificar diferencias en la exposición al abuso psicológico, físico y la negligencia según género, edad, nivel educativo y años de práctica.

Metodología: se realizó un estudio transversal descriptivo mediante un cuestionario estructurado. Se recopilaron datos de 278 jugadores del equipo nacional de ambos géneros. Se calcularon tasas de prevalencia y se realizaron análisis estadísticos para determinar diferencias significativas según factores demográficos.

Resultados: el 37.8% de los atletas experimentó abuso psicológico, el 9.4% abuso físico y el 40.3% negligencia. Los hombres reportaron mayor abuso psicológico ($p=0.026$). La negligencia fue más común en atletas con menor nivel educativo ($p=0.000$) y más años de práctica ($p=0.011$). No hubo diferencias significativas en abuso físico o negligencia según género o edad. **Discusión:** los resultados coinciden con investigaciones previas que indican una mayor prevalencia del abuso psicológico en el deporte competitivo. El nivel educativo y los años de práctica fueron factores clave en la negligencia.

Conclusiones: es fundamental garantizar un entorno de entrenamiento seguro. Los equipos nacionales deben implementar políticas y programas de apoyo psicológico para reducir los riesgos de abuso y negligencia, mejorando el bienestar de los atletas.

Palabras clave

Abuso en el deporte; atletas; equipos nacionales de 736hilean736; negligencia; abuso psicológico.

Introduction

The International Olympic Committee defines safe sport as a sporting environment characterised by respect and fairness, and free from all forms of unintentional violence such as harassment and abuse towards athletes (Mountjoy et al., 2022). Abuse, including neglect, psychological, and physical abuse, is an increasing risk to athletes' participation in sport (Fortier et al., 2020; Mountjoy et al., 2016a). This type of violence in sporting and social settings is associated with a variety of adverse short- and long-term mental (Tuakli-Wosornu & MacLeod, 2021) and physical health consequences. The researchers recommended increasing awareness among players about the significance of psychological well-being and its impact on performance (Akroush et al., 2025) (Alkasasbeh & Amawi, 2023). Recent reports indicate an increasing number of athlete abuse cases, which present a significant risk to contemporary sport (Lang, 2021; Mountjoy et al., 2016a). The likelihood of violence occurring in these environments is influenced by a range of socio-cultural and personal factors, with increased risk driven by inequities related to disability, race, socioeconomic status, and gender (Tuakli-Wosornu et al., 2020).

Abuse can be perpetrated by those who manage young athletes, including parents, officials, administrators, medical staff, and coaches (Brackenridge & Fasting, 2002; Stirling, 2009a; Young, 2019a). In the context of sports activity, athletes are vulnerable to both physical and psychological abuse (McPherson et al., 2017; Parent et al., 2016; Vertommen et al., 2016a). Young athletes are particularly vulnerable to violence due to the culture surrounding youth sports including the nature of the coach-athlete relationship, the spirit of competition, media pressure, and recruitment tactics, as reported by Dr. Margo Mountjoy and colleagues (Mountjoy et al., 2016b). As stated above, young athletes are susceptible to various types of abuse related to their involvement in sports activities, including psychological and physical abuse, neglect, and bullying each with its own specific features and effects. Psychological abuse in sport also includes verbal and physical behaviors such as throwing objects or snubbing an athlete for poor performance (Stirling & Kerr, 2008). Slightly harsher physical abuse may involve hitting an athlete or punishing them with excessive workouts (Stirling, 2009b). This can occur when appropriate supervision or care for injuries is not provided (Stirling, 2009b). Bullying, which occurs outside of key relationships, is another form of abuse (Stirling, 2009b).

Data on the prevalence of abuse in sports has recently been collected among athletes in the Netherlands, Belgium (Alexander et al., 2011), and the United Kingdom (Alexander et al., 2011). Surveys of adults regarding their early participation in sports found that psychological abuse was the most pervasive, followed by physical and sexual abuse (Alexander et al., 2011; Vertommen et al., 2016b). Psychological abuse (also called emotional abuse) refers to any action that diminishes a person's sense of identity and self-worth. Examples include verbal assault, humiliation, threats, isolation, and denial of freedom (Mountjoy et al., 2020). In sports, psychological abuse is common among both amateur and elite athletes, driving feelings of shame and lowered self-regard, often leading to athletes leaving the sport altogether (Young, 2019b).

Not only does this type of abuse affect athletes emotionally, but it also directly impacts their physical health, resulting in eating disorders or self-harm, with lasting consequences, especially when experienced during childhood (MacGregor, 2020). Psychological or emotional abuse is also a precursor to other forms of harassment and abuse in sport (Mountjoy et al., 2020). Psychological abuse can lead to physical abuse, which refers to any act of intentional and unwanted violence that results in injury or physical harm. Deprivation of rights and forced or inappropriate physical activity (such as excessive training or harsh physical punishments) can lead to physical abuse (Mountjoy et al., 2020). Physical abuse can cause injuries as well as long-term emotional and cognitive impairments. This is particularly dangerous for young athletes, where improper nutrient timing can further harm their physical and mental health as they are still growing (Mountjoy et al., 2020).

Some instances of physical mistreatment, as described by Yabe et al. (2019), include behaviors such as punching, hitting, forced exercise, and the inappropriate use of drugs, including alcohol or steroids (Yabe et al., 2019). Further compounding these different forms of malpractice is the effect of neglect. According to a national survey conducted by Mountjoy et al. (2016), neglect occurs when those responsible for an athlete's care fail to provide the minimum acceptable level of attention or care, resulting in harm and risk (Mountjoy et al., 2020). Neglect may manifest as improper use of safety equipment, unsupervised trips, untreated injuries, malnutrition, dehydration, and mental illnesses.



Neglect is especially damaging to athletes under 18, who are particularly vulnerable due to their physical, cognitive, and emotional development. Exposure to extreme temperatures or inadequate hydration can cause serious, potentially fatal health problems, while undernutrition can hinder growth and development (Trickett & McBride-Chang, 1995). Therefore, neglect not only contributes to the onset of physical and psychological abuse but also creates an atmosphere of violence that further jeopardizes the athlete's well-being. The overlap between psychological abuse, physical abuse, and neglect underscores the need for a holistic approach to athlete protection, ensuring all aspects of their health physical, emotional, and psychological are safeguarded from harm. studies addressing the issue of abuse in sports (Fortier et al., 2020; Mountjoy et al., 2016a) [(Lang, 2021; Mountjoy et al., 2016a), highlights its significant impact on athletes' psychological and physical health (Tuakli-Wosornu & MacLeod, 2021). Research indicates that experiencing psychological and physical violence deteriorates athletic performance (Young, 2019b). Chronic abuse is also associated with higher rates of psychological stress, anxiety, and depression, while other studies reveal long-lasting effects of physical injuries resulting from the mistreatment endured (MacGregor, 2020). International studies have revealed that athletes have reported experiencing psychological, physical, and/or sexual abuse, highlighting the severity of this issue (Mountjoy et al., 2016c). One such study includes a survey conducted by the International Olympic Committee, which found that athletes from certain countries had faced psychological and physical abuse throughout their sporting careers (Mountjoy et al., 2016c). On a local level, the Jordanian Olympic Committee has taken steps to address these problems by forming committees, reflecting a growing understanding of the adverse impact such abuse can have on athletes.

Despite various efforts to create safer environments in sports, there remains a significant gap in understanding the extent to which abuse is prevalent among athletes in Jordan. No local studies have comprehensively examined the prevalence of psychological abuse, physical abuse, and neglect among athletes across different sports, nor their psychological and physical implications. This research addresses this critical gap by exploring whether athletes in the Jordanian national teams are exposed to these forms of abuse and identifying the prevalence of such experiences among male and female athletes. It further investigates whether exposure to abuse varies significantly based on factors such as gender, educational level, age group, and years of participation in national teams. By shedding light on these issues, the study aims to provide evidence-based recommendations to enhance the safety of sporting environments, raise awareness about the impact of abuse on athletes' performance and well-being, and contribute to the formulation of policies that safeguard athletes' physical and mental health. Ultimately, this research seeks to foster a positive and secure atmosphere for athletes in Jordan's sporting community.

Method

Participants

The study population consisted of 626 male and female athletes (aged 18 and above) who were registered in the Jordanian national teams, representing 27 Jordanian sports federations. A total of 28 sports were involved, including 26 Olympic sports and two non-Olympic sports (jiu-jitsu and kickboxing). The number of male athletes in 2024 was 436, and the number of female athletes was 190, according to the data records of the Sports Federations Department at the Jordanian Olympic Committee as of July 2024. The study sample consisted of 278 participants, including 194 males (69.8%) and 84 females (30.2%). Participants were categorized into three age groups: 18 to 20 years (43%), 20 to 30 years (42%), and over 30 years (15%). Regarding their experience in the national team, 36.3% had more than eight years of participation, while the remainder were distributed across shorter durations, with 6.5% having less than one year. The educational levels of the participants varied, with the majority holding a bachelor's degree (42.1%), followed by high school diplomas (33.1%), less than a high school diploma (14%), and lower percentages for intermediate university education (5.0%), master's degrees (5.0%), and doctorates (0.7%). These demographic and experiential characteristics highlight the diversity in gender, age, tenure, and educational attainment within the study sample, See table 1.

Participants were included if they met the following criteria: being a male or female athlete aged 18 years or older, participating in one of the selected sports, and enrolled in any of the Jordanian national teams. Athletes had to be registered under one of the 27 Jordanian federations, with rare exceptions



made for non-Olympic sports—jiu-jitsu and kickboxing. The exclusion criteria were participants younger than 18, those not registered in their national teams, those not participating in the selected sports for this study, athletes without affiliation with the relevant federations, and individuals unwilling or unable to provide informed consent.

Table 1. Description of the study sample individuals according to the study variables (n=278).

Variable	Levels of the Variable	Count	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	194	69.8
	Female	84	30.2
	Total	278	100.0
Age Group	18 to 20 years	119	43
	20 to 30 years	117	42
	Over 30 years	42	15
	Total	278	100.0
Number of Years in the National Team	Less than 1 year	18	6.5
	1 year	21	7.6
	2 years	30	10.8
	3 years	26	9.4
	4 years	33	11.9
	5 years	19	6.8
	6 years	11	4.0
	7 years	4	1.4
	8 years	15	5.4
	More than 8 years	101	36.3
	Total	278	100.0
Educational Level	Less than high school diploma	39	14.0
	High school diploma	92	33.1
	Bachelor's degree	117	42.1
	Intermediate university education (Diploma)	14	5.0
	Master's degree	14	5.0
	Doctorate	2	0.7
	Total	278	100.0

Procedure

The researchers were involved in multiple administrative and executive processes to streamline data collection and facilitate the execution of the study. Initially, the researchers received a facilitation letter from the Dean of the Faculty of Sport Sciences at the University of Jordan, which was sent to the Jordanian Olympic Committee (JOC) to assist in data collection and the distribution of the survey. Later, the researchers received an official list from the Sports Federations Department at the Jordanian Olympic Committee, based on the facilitation letter, that included the number of male and female athletes registered in the national teams of Jordanian sports federations for the age group above 18 years. The study was approved by the Deanship of Scientific Research at the University of Jordan, with approval number [1117-19-2024].

Regarding the executive procedures, the research team communicated with the executive boards of sports federations through federation presidents, coaches, and athletes to distribute the electronic survey links. The survey was sent via the electronic link. A total of 33 days were dedicated to the electronic process of distributing and gathering data, which took place from June 1, 2024, to July 3, 2024.

Instrument

The questionnaire was specifically designed for this study due to the lack of a validated measure addressing athlete abuse. The items for the questionnaire were developed through an extensive review of the literature and discussions with the Jordan Safe Sport Committee. This working group included members from various committees, such as the Appeals Committee, the Investigation Committee, the Psychological Expert, the Awareness Committee, and the Disciplinary Committee. Diversity within the group was essential to ensure that the questionnaire included items relevant to different athletes and sports.

The questionnaire addressed various types of individual and team sports for male and female athletes, both disabled and non-disabled. In addition, it incorporated questions adapted from the studies by (Vertommen et al., 2009) and (Willson, 2022) (Vertommen et al., 2016c; Willson et al., 2022) as well as behaviors identified by (Stirling, 2009) (Stirling, 2009c) as abusive (i.e., psychological, physical abuse



and Neglect), and additional questions recommended by the Jordan Safe Sport Committee. The researcher designed an electronic questionnaire using Google Forms. The questions in the questionnaire were of the closed type, which organize responses by allowing only pre-specified options. Some questions were dichotomous (yes/no), other questions included in the questionnaire followed a multiple-choice format, items measured the frequency or degree to which certain behaviors or experiences occurred using a 6-point Likert scale. The response options consisted of a scale as: "Not at all prevalent" (1 degree), "Very slightly prevalent" (2 degrees), "Slightly prevalent" (3 degrees), "Moderately prevalent" (4 degrees), "Highly prevalent" (5 degree) and "Extremely present" (6 degree). This answer option scale captures more detail regarding the amount or severity frequency/intensity of particular behaviors or experiences, and is consistent with showing results on the extent of athlete maltreatment, providing a list of alternatives from which the respondent could select. The questionnaire was completed online privately, without any interviews, to avoid any embarrassment or influence on the participant's answers. The electronic questionnaire for this study consisted of three main sections, each addressing a different type of abuse in sports, as defined by the International Olympic Committee. The first section of the survey included consent to participate in the questionnaire and basic demographic questions for the study sample. These questions aimed to gather general information about the participants, such as their gender, age group, years of experience in national team sports, and educational level. The second section of the questionnaire comprised 29 questions distributed across five primary domains, each focusing on different sources of abuse: fellow athletes (4 questions exploring experiences of abuse from teammates, including type and circumstances), coaches (4 questions investigating abuse by coaches, including its context), administrators (4 questions addressing abuse from administrators such as federation members or Olympic committee representatives), sports therapists (4 questions focusing on abuse from therapists), and national team service employees (4 questions examining abuse by support staff members). Additionally, this section included 9 general questions about colleagues' experiences with abuse, the types of abuse they faced, and the impact of these experiences on participants and their colleagues. The third section contained 4 questions assessing participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to abuse in sports. To ensure anonymity, the questionnaire did not collect any personal or identifying information. The questionnaire did not ask for any personal information that could identify the participant or provide contact details.

Validity of the study Instrument

In order to test the validity of the study tool, the researchers used content validity by exposing the tool to a group of qualified judges. The qualified groups selected for the purpose of validating the measurement tool included members of sports safety committees for the Jordanian Committee for Safe Sports, experts in fields sports psychology, and individuals with experience working with those involved in abuse-related issues in specific sporting settings, also from current and retired athletes to ensure the questions accurately captured their experiences. Additionally, researchers specializing in measurement and evaluation methods participated in the study to apply statistical approaches to confirm the tool's validity. Finally, ethical review committees were consulted to ensure that the tool adhered to ethical standards regarding data protection and participants' rights. The purpose of this process was to evaluate whether the items in each section of the survey were appropriate for this study and to finalize the tool. The judges were instructed to provide feedback on the appropriateness of the questions and were allowed to modify, add, or remove any questions as they saw fit. The judges' responses were collected, and their feedback, including additions, deletions, or rewording suggestions, was integrated based on the experts' recommendations. This established the content validity of the scales used in this study. After gathering comments and suggestions from the judges, the tool was reviewed, and some items were rephrased. The final version of the tool contained a total of 29 questions, including three sections, with a section for personal information personal data (gender, educational level, age group, and years of experience in the national team).

Stability of the study Instrument

Regarding the stability of the study tool, the researcher distributed the tool to a survey sample of 25 professional players twice, with a time gap of 3 weeks between the two distributions. The researcher relied on two methods to calculate stability: the application and reapplication method, by extracting the Pearson correlation coefficient between the two administrations. The statistical analysis software

(SPSS, IBM version 24 for Windows) was used to analyze the data and obtain the results. Statistical significance was considered at a value of ($P = 0.05$). The standard deviations and arithmetic means of the variables were calculated, and the normal distribution of the data was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The Cronbach's alpha test was used to assess the reliability of the tool. The Pearson correlation coefficient test was used to evaluate the stability of each question on the questionnaire and compare it with the stability coefficient of the total questions for each of the five main sections. The degrees of freedom for the tool in this study were 38, and most of the questions showed a correlation with the purpose of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the tool overall was 0.629, indicating that the tool has moderate internal consistency and reliability. In the statistical operations, SPSS (IBM version 24 for Windows) was used to analyze the data and obtain the results. Statistical significance was considered at ($P = 0.05$). Study stability results are available upon request.

Data analysis

Data were entered and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, IBM version 24 for Windows). Frequencies and percentages, mean \pm standard deviation (SD), and Pearson correlation coefficient were used for analysis. The Shapiro-Wilk test was applied to assess the normality of the data. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure reliability, and the Chi-Square test was performed. Statistical significance was set at $p \leq 0.005$.

Results

1. The extent to which Jordanian national team players are exposed to psychological abuse, physical abuse, and neglect from their perspective
2. The extent to which male and female Jordanian national team players are exposed to psychological abuse, physical abuse, and neglect.

Table 2. Responses of study participants regarding their exposure and their teammates' exposure to acts of abuse in sports and its prevalence.

Question	Responses	Count	Percentage
Have you been on some level psychologically abused?	No	173	62.2%
	Yes	105	37.8%
	Total	278	100.0%
Were you ever physically abused in any way?	No	252	90.6%
	Yes	26	9.4%
	Total	278	100.0%
Have you ever experienced any type of neglect?	No	166	59.7%
	Yes	112	40.3%
	Total	278	100.0%
Has any of your teammates ever been mentally abused in some form?	No	195	70.1%
	Yes	83	29.9%
	Total	278	100.0%
Has any of your players been abused physically in any way?	No	245	88.1%
	Yes	33	11.9%
	Total	278	100.0%
Has any of your fellow team members experienced some type of neglect?	No	210	75.5%
	Yes	68	24.5%
	Total	278	100.0%
How common do you think acts of abuse are by Jordanian national team players?	Not prevalent at all	61	21.9%
	Very slightly prevalent	52	18.7%
	Slightly prevalent	52	18.7%
	Moderately prevalent	60	21.6%
	Highly prevalent	34	12.2%
	Very highly prevalent	19	6.8%
	Total	278	100.0%

Table 2 shows the results of the study on the exposure of Jordanian national team players to different forms of abuse in sports. The results revealed that 37.8% of participants were exposed to psychological abuse, 9.4% to physical abuse, and 40.3% to neglect. Regarding their teammates, 29.9% reported that

their teammates had been exposed to psychological abuse, 11.9% to physical abuse, and 24.5% to neglect. Concerning the prevalence of abuse in sports, 21.9% considered it to be not widespread at all, while 21.6% saw it as moderately widespread, and 19% regarded it as highly or very highly widespread.

Statistical differences in the exposure of male and female athletes in the Jordanian national teams to acts of “psychological abuse, physical abuse, and neglect based on variables such as gender, educational level, age group, number of years of sports participation in the national team

Table 3. Study sample demographic differences in exposure to psychological abuse, physical abuse, and neglect: frequencies and statistical significance.

Variable	Type of Abuse	Response	Male	Female	Total	Chi-Square	*Sig	Significance
Gender	Psychological Abuse	No	129	44	173	4.968a	0.026	Significant
		Yes	65	40	105			
	Physical Abuse	No	175	77	252	0.147a	0.701	Not Significant
		Yes	19	7	26			
	Neglect	No	118	48	166	0.330a	0.565	Not Significant
		Yes	76	36	112			
Age Group	Psychological Abuse	No	74	70	173	1.118a	0.572	Not Significant
		Yes	45	47	105			
	Physical Abuse	No	107	107	252	0.166a	0.920	Not Significant
		Yes	12	10	26			
	Neglect	No	76	68	166	1.915a	0.384	Not Significant
		Yes	43	49	112			
Educational Level	Psychological Abuse	No	28	71	173	4.994a	0.082	Not Significant
		Yes	11	35	105			
	Physical Abuse	No	36	95	252	0.275a	0.871	Not Significant
		Yes	3	11	26			
	Neglect	No	34	69	166	21.931a	0.000	Significant
		Yes	5	37	112			
Years of Practice	Psychological Abuse	No	66	54	173	6.668a	0.036	Significant
		Yes	29	28	105			
	Physical Abuse	No	83	73	252	3.768a	0.152	Not Significant
		Yes	12	9	26			
	Neglect	No	67	49	166	8.992a	0.011	Significant
		Yes	28	33	112			

*Statistically significant at the level of less than 0.05

Table 3 shows the differences in exposure of Jordanian national team players to psychological and physical abuse, as well as neglect, based on demographic variables. The results indicated that psychological abuse was statistically significant between males and females ($p = 0.026$), with males being more exposed to it. However, there were no significant differences in physical abuse or neglect based on gender. Additionally, there were no significant differences in psychological and physical abuse or neglect by age group. Regarding educational level, a significant difference was found in exposure to neglect ($p = 0.000$), with individuals with lower education being more exposed to neglect. Finally, significant differences were observed in exposure to psychological abuse ($p = 0.036$) and neglect ($p = 0.011$) based on years of sports practice.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the extent to which Jordanian national team players were exposed to psychological and physical abuse and neglect, in addition to analyzing the differences between males and females based on demographic variables such as gender, age, educational level, and number of years of practice in the national team. The results showed statistically significant differences between males and females in exposure to psychological abuse, with males being more exposed. There were no statistically significant differences between males and females for physical abuse or neglect. The study also showed that players with a lower educational level were more likely to be neglected, as were players with more years of experience, who were more likely to be psychologically abused and neglected.

The results of the study were consistent with many previous studies that addressed the topic of abuse in sports. The studies showed that 38% of the sample were exposed to psychological violence (Vertommen et al., 2016c), which is in line with the current findings that show that psychological abuse is common form of abuse. These results also support the study, which indicated that 25% of the sample

were exposed to insults and ridicule (Kirby et al., 2000). These findings also support the study by (Timpka et al., 2019) showed high prevalence rates of abuse in sports (Carleton et al., 2016a). In addition, the report of the International Olympic Committee General Assembly confirmed that the prevalence rates of abuse in sports ranged from 19% to 92%, indicating that the problem is global and requires immediate intervention.

Psychological abuse does long-term damage for athletes. Studies have found that psychological abuse by a coach can lead to PTSD-like symptoms, as well as anxiety and depression in the athlete, which may extend after their sports career has finished or result in reduced self-esteem (Kerr et al., 2020a; Mountjoy & Edwards, 2022). Psychological abuse is associated with increased aggression and decreased performance in athletes, with long-term effects that negatively impact their psychological well-being and competitive outcomes. Studies suggest that athletes may experience symptoms similar to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of this abuse, which calls for appropriate psychological support (Carleton et al., 2016b; Kerr et al., 2020b) (Carlton et al., 2016; Kerr et al., 2020). Psychological resilience is also a potential buffer to mitigate the negative effects of psychological abuse (Wang & He, 2023).

In terms of understanding the patterns of abuse, it was found that the highest percentages reported by participants were within the acts of "neglect." In terms of understanding patterns of abuse in sports, the study results showed that acts of "neglect" were the most common among the patterns reported by participants. This finding is in line with what Kerr (2022) (Kerr, 2022) indicated, as studies show that young athletes are affected by neglect in its various forms: physical, emotional, and educational. Physical neglect includes ignoring injuries or fatigue, which leads to long-term health problems that negatively affect the athletic performance and physical development of athletes. On the emotional side, a lack of support or appreciation is associated with lower levels of motivation and self-esteem, which negatively affects the psychological and social development of athletes (Kerr, 2022). On the educational side, neglect appears in the form of not providing adequate supervision or failing to develop sports skills, which exposes young athletes to unsafe situations that affect their safety and well-being (Kerr, 2022).

The results of this study showed that a lower percentage of participants experienced physical abuse compared to psychological abuse and neglect. This finding is consistent with previous studies that reported that 9% of adult athletes experienced severe physical violence while participating in youth sports (Vertommen et al., 2018). A survey of elite youth athletes also showed that 12% of males and 9% of females reported experiencing physical abuse in their sporting environments (Bermon et al., 2021). Furthermore, a study of youth baseball coaches showed that 6.6% of players experienced physical abuse, with a significant association between these experiences and coaches' previous experiences with abuse (Hagiwara et al., 2019).

The results of the study showed that there is a variation in exposure to acts of abuse in sports based on some demographic variables. For example, male players were found to be more exposed to psychological and physical abuse than female players and were also more likely to experience neglect. This may be due to the effects of gender roles in sports, where males are typically expected to endure greater pressure to achieve higher performance, which may increase their vulnerability to abuse by coaches or teammates.

Studies show that male athletes experience higher levels of psychological and physical abuse than females, as well as a higher likelihood of being neglected. This disparity is illustrated by several studies exploring the prevalence and impact of abuse in sporting settings. In a study of elite male athletes, those who experienced psychological abuse were found to have significantly higher training stress and lower quality of life compared to their unaffected peers (Jun & Kim, 2024). More broadly, a survey of young athletes showed that 79% of males reported experiencing psychological violence, a significantly higher rate than the 71% reported by females (Hartill et al., 2023). In addition, the same survey found that 44% of male athletes experienced physical violence, while 37% reported experiencing neglect, again reflecting the higher proportions among males (Hartill et al., 2023). On the other hand, physical education teachers reported various forms of neglect, including ignoring the nutritional needs of athletes, which particularly affects males due to performance-related pressures (Güler & Güler, n.d.). Although male athletes face high levels of abuse, female athletes also experience gender-related discrimination and abuse, albeit in different forms. These findings highlight the importance of developing comprehensive

strategies to address all forms of abuse in sporting settings, taking into account the needs of both genders.

As for the age group, the results showed that players in the age group of 20 to 30 years were the most exposed to psychological and physical abuse, in addition to being the most vulnerable to neglect compared to the rest of the age groups. However, the study did not show statistically significant differences between different age groups in exposure to acts of abuse. The researcher attributed this to the fact that all the age groups in the study sample were adult participants (18 years and above), which made the differences between the age groups limited. On the other hand, the researcher believes that the age group of 20 to 30 years is the most exposed to abuse due to their physical and mental maturity, which enables them to distinguish between acts of abuse and express it, as well as the fact that this group is in the stage of athletic maturity, which exposes them to more pressures and challenges.

Studies indicate the prevalence of psychological and physical abuse in sporting settings and its effects on athletes. A study of 10,302 individuals aged 18–30 found that 65% experienced psychological violence, while 44% experienced physical violence in sporting contexts (Hartill et al., 2023). Among elite male athletes, psychological abuse was associated with increased training stress and decreased quality of life, highlighting its negative impact on mental health (Jun & Kim, 2024). In a survey of elite youth athletes, 23% of males and 21% of females reported experiencing verbal abuse, while 12% of males and 9% of females reported experiencing physical abuse (Bermon et al., 2021). The phenomenon of normalizing abusive practices in sport requires a cultural shift to protect young athletes. Raising awareness and implementing targeted interventions are crucial to reducing the risk of psychological and physical abuse in this age group (Canty & Giardino, 2022). In contrast, it is important to acknowledge the positive aspects of sport participation, such as developing resilience and teamwork skills, which can outweigh negative experiences if the challenges of abuse are effectively addressed. With regard to educational level, the results showed that there was no correlation between players' exposure to psychological and physical abuse and the level of education, but university degree holders were more likely to experience neglect compared to their peers with less education. The researcher explains this result by the high level of cultural awareness among university degree holders, which makes them more able to recognize types of neglect and its negative effects compared to players with less education who may lack this awareness.

The relationship between education level and the prevalence of psychological and physical abuse in sport is linked to complex and multifaceted factors. Research suggests that higher levels of education, particularly in elite sport, are often associated with a lower prevalence of some forms of abuse. This is attributed to athletes' increased awareness of their rights and knowledge of the resources available to them, which makes it easier to report abuse. Additionally, sports education programmes help train athletes and coaches to recognize and prevent abuse, creating a safer sporting environment (Margo Mountjoy, 2023). However, risks still exist even among highly educated athletes, with psychological abuse being more common and potentially a precursor to physical abuse (Sølvberg et al., 2022). In another context, vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities or members of the LGBTQ+ community, continue to experience higher rates of abuse regardless of their level of education. This suggests that education alone may not be sufficient to provide full protection for these groups (Margo Mountjoy, 2023). Thus, although educational attainment is an important protective factor, psychological and physical abuse remain pressing issues at all levels of sport. This calls for continued education and the implementation of effective and comprehensive protection policies to ensure the safety of all athletes, regardless of their educational and social backgrounds.

Regarding the variable of Years of Practice on the team, the findings revealed that athletes with more than eight years of experience were the most susceptible to psychological abuse and neglect. This heightened exposure could be attributed to the increased number of interactions and situations encountered within an organized sports environment over a prolonged period, which may include incidents of abuse. Conversely, athletes with fewer than four years of practice were identified as the group most exposed to physical abuse, though the differences between groups were not statistically significant. This may be explained by the tendency of new players to be targeted by coaches or more experienced teammates. Their inexperience may render them more vulnerable to abusive behaviors within the team setting.

In conclusion, the results of this study highlight the prevalence of various forms of abuse – psychological, physical, and neglect among Jordanian national team players, emphasizing the urgent need for targeted



interventions to address this phenomenon. Psychological abuse and neglect were found to be the most prevalent, with psychological abuse having a greater impact on male players, especially those with many years of experience on the team. Neglect was prevalent at all educational levels, with university-educated athletes being more aware of and affected by its consequences. Although physical abuse was less prevalent, its impact, especially on new players, remains a matter of concern. These findings are consistent with many previous studies that confirm that abuse in sports is a global phenomenon with profound psychological, emotional, and physical effects. Accordingly, it is necessary to develop comprehensive strategies that include raising awareness, enhancing education, and providing effective support systems to ensure a safe and supportive sporting environment. By focusing on prevention and effective intervention, sports organizations can foster a culture of respect and care, ensuring that sport participation is a source of development and well-being rather than a source of challenges and risks.

Conclusions

The study sought to investigate the prevalence of psychological and physical abuse and neglect among Jordanian national team players, both male and female, based on demographic variables that included gender, age, educational level, and number of years of experience with the national team. The findings of the study showed a prevalence of psychological and physical abuse and neglect experienced by players within the Jordanian national team. The findings revealed a high incidence of abuse among players, with psychological abuse being the most prevalent. The findings also showed that males were subjected to psychological abuse more than females. Moreover, neglect and psychological abuse were more prevalent among players who had lower education levels and spent more years with the national team. The findings underscore the necessity of offering players a safe and supportive sports environment. We also need wide-ranging educational programs within safeguarding to ensure awareness among players and coaches of the design risks for abuse and neglect throughout sport, and additionally enable provision in coaching related to psychological support. A psychological support system for players should also be created so that their psychological well-being can be maintained, allowing them to achieve greater mental health in a supportive sports atmosphere. In the end, players will be given the best chance to perform at the highest level and develop their careers free from abuse and neglect in a positive sporting climate.

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