

## Young people and bullying in sports - Exploratory research in an inland Northern region of Portugal

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### Abstract:

This paper aims at describing and comparing bullying behaviours in school sports compared to federated sports. A sample consisting of 642 athletes was used. The prevalence of bullying involvement in the context of school sports was 23.6% overall: as victim (4.9%), bystander (16.3%) and perpetrator (2.4%). There was some overlap of roles as victim and bystander (3.5%), and as perpetrator and bystander (1.7%). In federated sport, the prevalence of bullying involvement was 25.6% overall: as victim (5.9%), bystander (16.6%) and perpetrator (3.1%). There was an overlap of roles as victim and bystander (2.8%), perpetrator and bystander (2.0%), perpetrator and victim (0.6%) and all three roles (victim, bystander and perpetrator) (0.3%). As regards sex, the percentage of bullying involvement in male athletes was 26.5% overall: as victim (5.8%), bystander (17.3%) and perpetrator (3.4%); there was an overlap of roles as victim and bystander (2.6%), perpetrator and bystander (1.8%), perpetrator and victim (0.3%) and all three roles (0.3%). In female athletes, the percentage of bullying involvement was 21.9% overall: as victim (4.8%), bystander (15.2%) and perpetrator (1.9%). There was an overlap of roles as victim and bystander (3.3%). We found no statistically significant differences with regard to variables in the sporting context and sex in all dependent variables under analysis. The prevalence of bullying behaviours in school and federated sports is low when compared to most studies in schools and does not vary significantly between contexts and sexes.

**Key Words:** Sports, Aggression, Sex, Observation

### Introduction

Sport is a key tool for young people to develop their skills, based on equal opportunities (Andrews & Andrews, 2003). It provides an opportunity for developing self-awareness (Cunti et al., 2016), has a positive psychological and social impact (Eime et al., 2013) and contributes to better school success (Eccles et al., 2003). However, research suggests that sport is a window into the complexity of aggressive and violent behaviour (Spaaij & Schaillee, 2019), which may occur in sports settings - professional, and in school and private colleges (Fields et al., 2010). In particular, bullying in sports is a topic of concern (Nery et al., 2018; 2020).

Bullying can be understood as a subcategory of aggressive behaviour (Smith & Monks, 2008). It is antisocial, peer-to-peer, intentional, provocative, and repetitive (Olweus, 1997). Bullying behaviours may arise at school, at work, on the internet (cyberbullying) or at the sports club (Ventura et al., 2019).

There have been studies on bullying since the 1970s, but with a main focus on the school context. School bullying has received much media attention and concern among parents, teachers and society in general (Freire & Aires, 2012). Since the 1990s studies focusing on male and female behaviour in relation to bullying show that both sexes (male and female) can be involved, although differing in type and extent (Olweus, 2010). Björkqvist and Österman (2000) reported that bullying behaviour and the type of bullying varies according to sex. They observed that physical aggression is common in small children; as the child grows, physical aggression is less frequent, while verbal aggression becomes more frequent. A study conducted in France (Blaya et al., 2003) concluded that 75% of females had used some sort of bullying. In a study carried out in seven countries (China, England, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Portugal and Spain), with a sample of 48,000 young people, it was shown that bullying in the school context is a universal phenomenon, which varies according to culture, sex, age and social status (Eslea et al., 2004). Variations by country were confirmed in another study in forty countries by Craig et al. (2009); for example, Sweden had a lower prevalence of bullying (8.6% of boys, 4.8% of girls), compared to Lithuania, with higher prevalence values (45.2% of boys, 35.8% of girls).

Research carried out by Smith (2016; Smith et al., 2019), indicates that males are the main actors in perpetration of bullying behaviour. However, Pontes et al. (2017), in a longitudinal study from 2009 to 2015 in the USA (n=61,042), found an increase in the prevalence of school bullying among women from 21.2% to 24.8%, and a significant decrease among men from 18.7% to 15.8%. A study by Dytham (2018) with a sample of pupils between 13 and 14 years old at a school in England, found that the most popular girls bullied both boys and girls.

As regards federated sports, there are a few studies about violence and aggression (Tenenbaum et al., 1997). Peguero (2008) conducted a study on bullying in extracurricular activities, including sports in school context, in female and male students. He concluded that male students were more likely to be victims of bullying than females, often in accordance with socioeconomic status. Volk and Lagzdins, (2009) studied bullying behaviour in female adolescents, both in the school context and in school sports. They found that bullying and victimization were more frequent in the school context than in school sports, maybe because in sports context there was less cause for conflict than in school context, where the students come from different backgrounds and the groups were more heterogenous. Melim and Pereira (2013) reported that students who practiced federated sports were more protected from bullying behaviour at school than those who practiced school sports. Regarding sports generally, Escury & Dudinkl (2010) found that 26% of soccer and judo participants were victims of bullying. Mishna et al. (2019), concluded that the prevalence of victimization is higher in team sports, namely rugby (11.5%), hockey (7.4%), and football (6.6%), compared to individual sports such as cycling.

Vveinhardt and Fominiene (2019) concluded that male athletes are more aggressive physically, verbally and non-verbally than female athletes. They are also more expressive, both as victims and perpetrators. To lessen bullying in sports contexts, a possible pedagogical strategy could be the inclusion of cooperative games in training sessions (Oliveira et al., 2017). According to Greco et al. (2019) karate can be an effective alternative to combat bullying in contexts, as it is a martial art that emphasizes respect, self-regulation and health.

There is a scarcity of literature carried out in Portugal on the theme of bullying in the sport context, taking account of both sexes. Nery et al. (2018; 2020) only focussed on male athletes. In mainland Portugal, Nery et al. (2018) carried out a study in the regions of Porto, Coimbra and Faro, focusing on federated sport (56%), concluding that male athletes were involved in episodes of bullying, predominantly through verbal means. Investigations in the Madeira archipelago by Melim and Pereira (2013) concluded that victimization is greater in school sports than in federated sports. A study in the cities of Bragança, Chaves, Mirandela and Vila Real by Marracho et al. (2021) aimed to compare the prevalence of bullying behaviour in different sports and the perspective of victims, perpetrators and bystanders. It was concluded that collective (team) sports had a higher percentage of prevalence of bullying (26.7%), compared to individual sports (19.1%) and combat sports (23.1%). More qualitative data indicated that the predominant forms of bullying behaviours were verbal and physical, and that these occurred in the changing rooms, in training and in sports practice (Marracho et al., 2021).

The limited research in this area, and the different methods used by researchers, do not give a full account of sports-related bullying in Portugal. Our study aims to cover the regions of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, and to contribute to further understanding of the topic of bullying, comparing the prevalence of bullying behaviours according to contexts and sex. Furthermore, we include findings on cyberbullying; this has emerged as a significant kind of bullying in recent years (Zych et al., 2018), but has been neglected so far as sports bullying is concerned.

## Material & methods

### Participants

The participants consisted of 642 athletes (371 male, 271 female) aged 13-18 years (16.64±1.46), practitioners of school sports (N=316), and federated sports (N=392). The average experience of school sports practitioners was 2.93 (±1.77) years, and of federated sports practitioners 5.23 (±3.37) years.

School sports included were: *individual sports* — badminton, acrobatic gymnastics, table tennis, athletics, skating, swimming, chess, field tennis and boccia; and *team sports* - futsal, volleyball and basketball. Federated sports included: *individual sports* - swimming, figure skating, cycling, table tennis, athletics, field tennis, chess and ballet; *collective (team) sports* - football, futsal, volleyball, basketball, handball, rugby and roller hockey; and *combat sports* - karate, judo, kung fu, goju-ryu, kickboxing and taekwondo.

### Instruments

For data collection, the Prevalence of Bullying in Sports Training questionnaire (Nery, 2016) was used. This was an adaptation of the Olweus (1989) questionnaire in the school context, adapted, validated and used in the European Training and Mobility of Researchers (TMR) Program: Nature and Prevention of Bullying by Ortega et al. (1999) and used earlier as part of data collection in Portugal. The questionnaire consists of 24 questions subdivided into 4 blocks: *demographic data* — age, sex, grade, nationality, locality, modality, length of practice and number of trainings / hours per week; *victim perspective* - frequency (occasional: 1/2 times+3/6 times a year; persistent: once a week+several times a week) and forms of mistreatment (type of bullying), duration, location, number of actors, feelings, coping, coach communication and family-coach communication; *bystander's perspective* - forms of mistreatment (type of bullying), feelings, reactions to bullying behaviors

(participating in the aggression, defending the victim or observing) and reasons for bullying; *perpetrator's perspective* — frequency (occasional: 1/2 times+3/6 times a year; persistent: 1 time per week+several times per week) and forms of mistreatment (type of bullying), number of actors, feelings and communication.

*Procedure*

The survey was conducted in the geographical area of the Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro region and focused on students from 10 public schools in Vila Real, Bragança, Chaves and Mirandela, aged between 13 and 18 years.

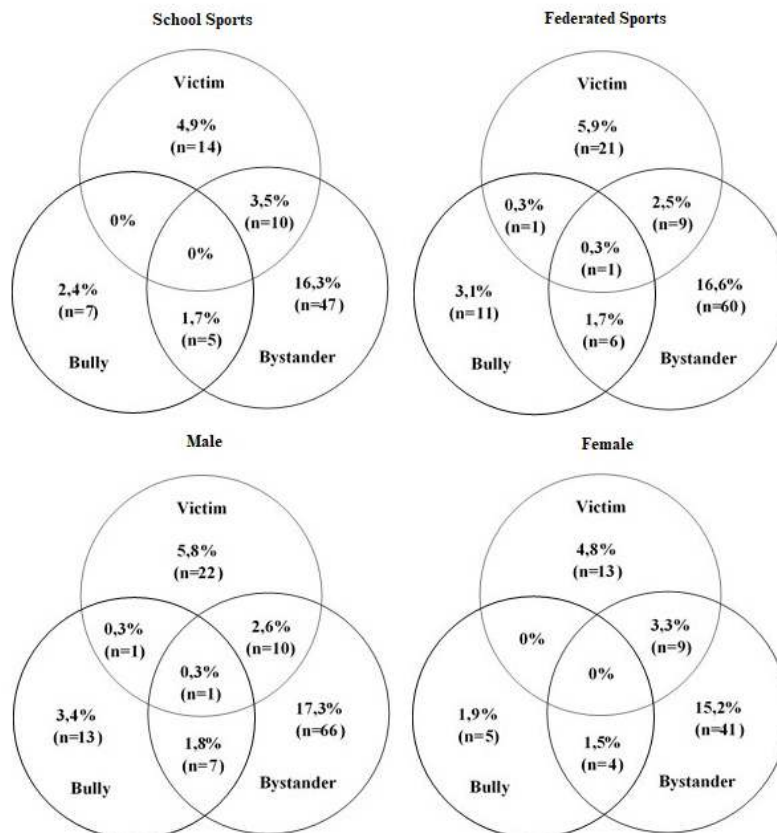
Authorization was requested from the Ministry of Education (registration number: 0642800001) for the application of the questionnaire. Contacts were then made with the Heads of the Schools, and authorization (informed consent) was also sought from the parents. The questionnaire was distributed by a researcher in six schools, and in four schools the headmaster proposed that the questionnaire should be distributed by the Physical Education teachers of each class. The researchers met the students of the six schools to explain the purpose of the study; in the four schools in which there was no direct participation of the researcher, a meeting was held with the Physical Education teachers to explain the procedures for giving the questionnaires to their students.

*Statistical analysis*

For statistical analysis, frequency distributions and Chi-Square tests were performed. In sections two, three and four of the questionnaire, which correspond to the victim's, bystander's and perpetrator's perspectives, participants were divided into victims, bystanders, bullies (perpetrators), and not involved (respondents who did not report experiencing or seeing any bullying episodes). Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$  level. The Monte Carlo method was used when the necessary conditions for applying the chi-square test were not satisfied.

**Results**

Figure 1 shows the prevalence of bullying behaviors for the different roles, and overlap of roles, by context (school sport; federated sport), and by sex. In school sports, overall 23.6% of the students reported being involved in bullying behaviors, while in federated sports the prevalence was 25.6%. Regarding the roles of bullying in the sports context, no significant differences were found when comparing school and federated sports: victim ( $\chi^2(1)=0.27, p=0.604$ ), bystander ( $\chi^2(1)=0.05, p=0.943$ ) and perpetrator ( $\chi^2(1)=0.215, p=0.643$ ). Regarding sex differences, 26.5% of male students reported having been involved in bullying behaviors, compared to 21.9% of females. There were no significant differences when comparing bullying roles by sex: victim ( $\chi^2(1)=0.29, p=0.593$ ), bystander ( $\chi^2(1)=0.526, p=0.468$ ) and perpetrator ( $\chi^2(1)=1.43, p=0.232$ ).



**Figure 1 - Prevalence of Bullying Behaviors by Context and Sex**

Tables 1, 2 and 3 show comparisons of findings, according to sports context and sex, from the perspectives of victims, bystanders, and perpetrators (bullies), respectively.

Table 1 shows that most victims reported a frequency of occasional bullying (91%) and verbal (83%) behaviors. These behaviors generally occurred individually (83%), in the club (58%) and for a short duration (75%). Bullying mainly caused negative feelings in the victims (81%); 75% of respondents reported using emotion-focused coping and while 39% declared that they did not communicate their feelings to anyone. Most victims did not seek support from the coach (60%), and 80% reported that there was no communication between family and coach. When comparing the victims' perspectives according to sporting context and sex, no statistically significant differences were found.

	Frequency		Forms of Mistreatment			Duration	Place	Speakers	Feelings	Reactions	Communication	Coach Support	Communication: family-coach																
	Occasional	Persistent	Verbal	Social	Cyberbullying	Occasional	Repeated	Competition	Club	Training and Competition	Cyberbullying	Individual	Group	Negative	Indifference	Focused on emotion	Focused on problem	Multiple	No one	Peers	Family	Adults	Didn't talk	Talked (negative)	Talked (positive)	Didn't talk	Talked (negative)	Talked (positive)	
<b>Total Freq. (%)</b>	64 (91%)	6 (9%)	50 (83%)	6 (10%)	4 (7%)	42 (75%)	14 (25%)	18 (27%)	38 (58%)	6 (9%)	4 (6%)	40 (83%)	8 (17%)	50 (81%)	12 (19%)	44 (75%)	14 (24%)	1 (1%)	24 (39%)	16 (26%)	16 (26%)	6 (9%)	36 (60%)	4 (7%)	20 (33%)	48 (80%)	4 (7%)	8 (13%)	
<b>School Sport Freq. (%)</b>	13 (92.9%)	1 (7.1%)	9 (7.5%)	2 (16.7%)	1 (8.3%)	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	6 (42.9%)	5 (35.7%)	2 (14.3%)	1 (7.1%)	8 (80%)	2 (20%)	10 (83.3%)	2 (16.7%)	8 (66.7%)	4 (33.3%)	-	4 (33.3%)	4 (33.3%)	4 (33.3%)	-	7 (58.3%)	1 (8.3%)	4 (33.3%)	8 (66.7%)	2 (16.7%)	2 (16.7%)	
<b>Federated Sport Freq. (%)</b>	19 (90.5%)	2 (9.5%)	16 (88.9%)	1 (5.6%)	1 (5.6%)	12 (66.7%)	6 (33.3%)	3 (15.8%)	14 (73.7%)	1 (5.3%)	1 (5.3%)	12 (85.7%)	2 (14.3%)	15 (78.9%)	4 (21.1%)	14 (77.8%)	3 (16.7%)	-	8 (42.1%)	4 (21.1%)	4 (21.1%)	3 (15.8%)	11 (61.1%)	1 (5.6%)	6 (33.3%)	16 (88.9%)	-	2 (11.1%)	
<b>P</b>	1		0.775			0.364		0.174				1		1		0.647			0.449				1			0.140			
<b>Female Freq. (%)</b>	12 (92.3%)	1 (7.7%)	7 (63.6%)	3 (27.3%)	1 (9.1%)	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	3 (23.1%)	7 (53.8%)	2 (15.5%)	1 (7.7%)	6 (66.7%)	3 (33.3%)	10 (90.9%)	1 (9.1%)	8 (72.7%)	3 (27.3%)	-	1 (9.1%)	2 (18.2%)	6 (54.5%)	2 (18.2%)	6 (54.5%)	-	5 (45.5%)	7 (70%)	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	
<b>P</b>	1		0.41			0.364		0.874				0.259		0.383		1			0.09				0.351			0.804			
<b>Male Freq. (%)</b>	20 (90.9%)	2 (9.1%)	18 (94.7%)	-	1 (5.3%)	12 (66.7%)	6 (33.3%)	6 (30%)	12 (60%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	14 (93.3%)	1 (6.7%)	15 (75%)	5 (25%)	14 (73.7%)	4 (21.1%)	1 (5.3%)	11 (55%)	6 (30%)	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	12 (63.2%)	2 (10.5%)	5 (26.3%)	17 (85%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	

Table 1 - Comparison of victims' perspectives according to sport context and sex

From the data shown in Table 2, it can be seen that bystanders reported the most frequent form of bullying as verbal (57%), leading mainly to negative feelings (97%) about it. Bystander's reactions are usually focused on the victim's defense (75.3%); 70.2% blamed the perpetrator.

When comparing the perspectives of the bystanders according to sport context and sex, no statistically significant differences were found.

	Female Freq. (%)	Male Freq. (%)	P	Federated Sport Freq. (%)	School Sport Freq. (%)	Total Freq. (%)	Forms of Mistreatment				Feelings			Reactions				Motives						
							Physical	Verbal	Social	Cyberbullying	Negative	Avoidance	Neutral	Aggression Participation	Victimization	Observation	Victim Defense	Doesn't know	Aggressor responsabilization	Victim responsabilization				
P	0	0.761	0	0	0	0	0	0.578	0	0	0	0.131	0	0	0	0	0.125	0	0	0	0	0.718	0	
	7 (17.1%)	14 (21.2%)		12 (20%)	9 (19.1%)	42 (19.6%)																		
	24 (58.5%)	37 (56.1%)		31 (51.7%)	30 (63.8%)	122 (57%)																		
	8 (19.5%)	14 (21.2%)		15 (25%)	7 (14.9%)	44 (20.5%)																		
	2 (4.9%)	1 (1.5%)		2 (3.3%)	1 (2.1%)	6 (2.8%)																		
	100	56 (91.8%)		51 (91.9%)	44 (100%)	190 (97%)																		
	-	1 (1.6%)		1 (1.8%)	-	2 (1%)																		
	-	4 (6.6%)		-	-	4 (2%)																		
	-	2 (3.6%)		-	2 (4.8%)	4 (2%)																		
	2 (5.6%)	3 (5.5%)		1 (2%)	4 (9.5%)	10 (5.2%)																		
	7 (19.4%)	10 (18.2%)		11 (22.4%)	6 (14.3%)	34 (17.5%)																		
	27 (75%)	40 (72.7%)		49 (75.5%)	30 (71.4%)	146 (75.3%)																		
	7 (19.4%)	11 (19%)		10 (18.9%)	8 (19.5%)	36 (19.1%)																		
	23 (69.4%)	41 (70.7%)		36 (67.9%)	30 (73.2%)	132 (70.2%)																		
	4 (11.1%)	6 (10.3%)		7 (13.2%)	3 (7.3%)	20 (10.6%)																		

Table 2 - Comparison of the perspective of bystanders according to sport context and sex

In relation to the perpetrator's perspective, Table 3 shows that the frequency of bullying behaviors was mostly occasional (94%). Mostly it assumed a verbal form (70.3%) and it usually occurred in groups (88.2%). Some perpetrators reported having experienced negative feelings (42.3%), but 50% of them mentioned experiencing positive feelings. Some did not communicate these behaviors to anyone (40%). When comparing the perspectives of the perpetrators according to the sport context and sex, no statistically significant differences were found.

	Female Freq. (%)	Male Freq. (%)	P	Federated Sport Freq. (%)	School Sport Freq. (%)	Total Freq. (%)	Frequency			Forms of Mistreatment			Speakers		Feelings			Communication						
							Occasional	Repeated	Verbal	Social	Physical	Individual	Group	Negative	Indifference	Positive	No one	Peers	Family	Adults				
P	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0.346	0	1	0	0	0.403	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
	5 (100%)	1 (7.7%)		10 (90.9%)	7 (100%)	34 (94%)																		
	-	1 (7.7%)		1 (9.1%)	-	2 (6%)																		
	4 (100%)	6 (60%)		4 (50%)	5 (100%)	19 (70.3%)																		
	-	2 (20%)		2 (25%)	-	4 (14.8%)																		
	-	2 (20%)		2 (25%)	-	4 (14.8%)																		
	-	2 (15.4%)		1 (9.1%)	1 (16.7%)	4 (11.8%)																		
	4 (100%)	11 (84.6%)		10 (90.9%)	5 (83.3%)	30 (88.2%)																		
	-	4 (40%)		3 (37.5%)	4 (80%)	11 (42.3%)																		
	-	1 (10%)		1 (12.5%)	-	2 (7.7%)																		
	3 (100%)	5 (50%)		4 (50%)	1 (20%)	13 (50%)																		
	1 (33.3%)	4 (44.4%)		3 (50%)	2 (33.3%)	10 (40%)																		
	-	1 (11.1%)		1 (16.7%)	-	2 (8%)																		
	1 (33.3%)	2 (22.2%)		1 (16.7%)	2 (33.3%)	7 (28%)																		
	1 (33.3%)	2 (22.2%)		1 (16.7%)	2 (33.3%)	6 (24%)																		

Table 3 - Comparison of the perpetrator's perspective according to sport context and sex

## Discussion

A main objective of this research was to know the prevalence of bullying according to context (school and federated) and sex. We found a substantial minority of the athletes reported being involved in bullying episodes. There was a prevalence of bullying in the context of school sports of 23.6% and in federated sports of 25.6%. Regarding sex, the percentage of bullying in male athletes is 26.5% and in female athletes 21.9%.

Bullying in sports, whether in the school context or federated context, is a reality in contemporary society. The two sports contexts are different, and it has been reported that victimization is more prevalent when athletes are in school context, as they spend more time in school than in clubs (Schuster & Bogart, 2013). Volk and Lagzdins (2009) concluded that female athletes were more likely to be victims of bullying in a school context. In our study we did not verify this trend. We found the prevalence of involvement in bullying behaviors in school sports to be slightly lower than in federated sports, although the difference is not significant. It can be argued that the two contexts are not that different, as in our study participants had similar practice levels in both contexts.

Our research found that bullying is mainly occasional, a finding that is consistent with other investigations (Escury & Dudinkl, 2010; Volk & Lagzdins, 2009). We also found bullying behaviors in sports context to be mostly carried out by a single perpetrator, taking a verbal form and showing higher prevalence in the club (58%) than in the other contexts (competition, training) In school and federated sports, the results are different, while in school sports 42.9% reported suffering bullying in competition, while in federated sport 73.7% reported suffering bullying in the club. Victims may suffer from bullying in changing rooms or in unattended spaces (Kerr et al., 2016; Sebastião, 2009; Ventura et al., 2019), justified by the shortage of staff in the sports club (federated). Less surveillance may lead to greater freedom among young people. In school sports, surveillance is higher than in federated sport. However when there are competitions between schools, there is a higher prevalence of bullying (42.9%), which can be explained by the fact that there is often only one Physical Education teacher supervising the students.

Following the victimization that occurs in the sporting context and type of sport, a total of 39% of the victims don't tell anyone about it. Unless they seek and get help and support, they may drop out of sports practice at an early stage, due to the physical and/or psychological violence to which they are subjected (Carvalhosa et al., 2009).

Bystanders report that bullying assumed verbal and physical forms (Kerr et al., 2016). In the sports context, bystanders tend to defend the victim of mistreatment, blaming the perpetrators, considering their behavior to be inappropriate. Bystanders often experience negative feelings. Similar findings regarding the reactions and feelings experienced by bystanders were reported by Nery et al. (2018) in their study of male athletes.

The results for perpetrators regarding the frequency and forms of abuse, is consistent with the results obtained for the victims. Bullying episodes are occasional and the most common form of abuse is verbal bullying. However, in contrast to the victims' perspective, perpetrators claim that bullying is often done in groups, which may be a form of self-justification. When questioned the feelings experienced by perpetrators, the values show a significative difference. 80% of perpetrators in school sports expressed negative feelings, a percentage that decreases to 37.5% in federated sports. In school sports, 20% of perpetrators reported positive feelings; in federated sports, 50% express positive feelings. That 50% have positive feelings in federated sports may stem from the fact that for some there is no distinction between what is sports practice and the practice of bullying (Kerr et al., 2016).

Considering sex, a prevalence of bullying behaviors of 26.5% in males and 21.9% in females was observed. The most frequently observed form of mistreatment was verbal bullying, a finding that is consistent with the general literature on bullying (Smith, 2016). Most studies find that males are more likely to be involved in bullying episodes generally (Smith et al., 2019). Nery et al. (2018) found that the most common type of male bullying is verbal. Craig et al., (2009) found that boys reported more episodes of bullying, both physical and verbal, direct and indirect, compared to girls.

Victims' reactions are mostly emotion-focused rather than in solving the problem. There is a sex difference in whether victims tell anyone about it. Most female victims communicate with their families (54.5%), with peers (18.2%) and adults (18.2%), while males often do not communicate with anyone (55%). This different attitude enables female victims to seek support from the coach (45.5%) so as to reduce bullying behaviors. According to Soares et al. (2010), females are naturally more sensitive than males, leading to greater openness of communication and sharing, which may explain these findings. Young and Sweeting (2004) reported that female athletes run an increased risk of acting like bullies but also to suffer aggression,

In the sports context, bystanders tend to defend the victim of mistreatment, blaming the perpetrators, considering their behavior inappropriate and experiencing negative feelings.

Our results regarding the perpetrator in the variables frequency and forms of abuse are consistent with the results obtained for the victims, that is, bullying is occasional, and the most frequent form of abuse is verbal bullying. However, in contrast to the perspective of the victims, the perpetrators stated that bullying is

used in groups. In what concerns communication, females tend to confide in their family (33.3%) or in adults (33.3%), while males (44.4%) tend not to communicate with anyone. As mentioned above, the fact that females are more sensitive may justify the need to reveal acts of aggression to others.

### Strengths and limitations

This study provides new information regarding the area of bullying in sport. As a suggestion for future research, it is important to emphasize the need for carrying out other quantitative and qualitative studies, as well as studies using mixed methods, to further the knowledge about this theme.

Further analysis should include other factors involved in bullying, their interactions and impact in the different types of bullying. The consequences of bullying, both in the short and in the long term, should also be studied. Cyberbullying is also an important problem that needs to be studied, as its frequency and impact grow.

A limitation of our study, regarding the method of collecting data, may be the structure of the questionnaire. Victims took longer than bystanders and perpetrators to complete the questionnaire, leading to a lack of sincerity on the part of respondents, so some had to be rejected because they were poorly answered. A long questionnaire tires the respondents and affects the results. Although the questionnaires are anonymous, respondents may not be completely honest, and the information collected may not allow a deeper understanding of the problem.

### Conclusions

In our research we found that there are no significant differences regarding the sporting context and the sex in the three roles of bullying (victim, bystander and perpetrator). The prevalence of bullying in the sport context and by gender is a considerable minority (25%). The issue requires attention and it is necessary to implement programs directed to the school community (parents, teachers and students) to act against and prevent these behaviours to be well informed on the nature of bullying behaviours to introduce practical measures and guidelines to reduce violent behaviours in sports, according to sports ethics. Some work has been developed here. Nery et. al. (2020) describe an holistic approach to bullying in sports, from macro to micro-level. The authors also describe some evidence-based strategies to prevent and tackle bullying, and guidelines to coaches, athletes and parents.

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