IMPLICATIONS OF A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO YOUTH SPORT

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BACKGROUND

- Sport is a double-edged institution.[1]

It can promote:
- lifelong health
- learning achievements
- interpersonal skills



Yet, it can be a site of:
- maltreatment
- e.g. abuse, bullying, discrimination

- Maltreatment may be enabled by controlling coaching, normalization of harm, and win-at-all-cost mentalities.
- Safe sport has emerged as a response, but concerns remain about its effectiveness.[2]
- A rights-based approach offers an alternate way of understanding & organizing sport, especially for youth.[3]
- Youth athletes are a population whose rights & welfare require greater attention.

PURPOSE

To explore how youth athletes & parents understand and experience human rights in sport.

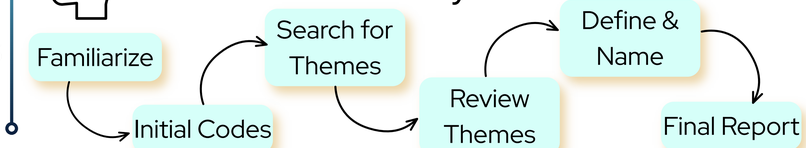
METHODS

Paradigmatic Position
- Constructivism[4]

Participants
- 7 parents
- 4 youth athletes

Data Collection
- Semi-structured interviews
- 30-70 minutes
- 5 categories of questions (e.g. motivation, voice, fairness)

Data Analysis:
- Thematic analysis[5]



RESULTS

Theme 1

Rights are shaped by inconsistent expectations

"Kids still do feel a way when they don't win. … as much as we don't want them to, they measure by winning. … when you have a competitive sport and the boys are watching FIFA … all they want to do is become Neymar and Mbappé."
- Parent

Theme 2

Belonging & respect define positive sport experiences

"It got to a point where I would make a couple bad passes [and] they would hassle me about it. … to the point where I didn't even want to show up anymore. I just wasn't having fun."
- Athlete

Theme 3

Structural priorities reinforce performance over rights

"You'll see the score is the most important thing in the world … [Parents] feel like they're spending a lot of money and they want to see results."
- Parent

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

- Participants expressed understandings that align with a rights-based approach.
- Respecting the rights of youth athlete can influence their participation in sport.
- Cultural & structural barriers can prevent these rights from being fully realized.
- Norway's Joy of Sport for All is an example of a how rights-based and safeguarding can be reflected in practice.[6]
- Safeguarding focuses on preventing harm & promoting the best outcomes in sport.
- Future research should examine how rights-based & safeguarding principles can be fully realized in Canadian youth sport.

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