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### **Abstract**

Interpersonal violence (IV) against athletes has gained increased research, policy, and media attention. The purpose of this study is to analyze the scientific sport integrity literature (2010-2020) to better understand (a) to what extent, and (b) how IV has been discussed therein. Implementing Arksay and O'Malley's scoping review framework, 1,342 studies were identified. Most studies focused on doping (n=930), and to a lesser extent (illegal) gambling (n=191), and match-fixing (n=61). Only 36 studies broadly discussed IV as a sport integrity issue. Further thematic analysis showed that IV is sometimes recognized as a personal and organizational sport integrity threat and as an instrumental facilitator for other integrity breaches. Moreover, the normalization of aggression and violence in sport was a recurring theme, hampering safe, fair, and inclusive sport systems and organizations. To effectively address the issue of IV, this review article advocates for a broad, integral, and holistic sport integrity approach.

*Keywords:* harassment and abuse; literature review; maltreatment; normalization; sport ethics

## Introduction

Interpersonal violence (IV) against athletes has received increasing attention in academic research and the global media. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the welfare of athletes linked to media reportage of cultures of fear, intimidation, and violence present in sport across all levels, from grassroots through to elite sport (Roan, 2017). Such accounts have provided a platform for athlete testimonies of experiencing violence in sporting spaces, leading to independent investigations concerning the welfare and safety of athletes all over the globe (e.g., Grey-Thompson, 2017; Phelps et al., 2017; Whyte, 2022). For instance, female South Korean athletes have spoken out about a culture of abuse present in the sport of ice-track skating (BBC, 2019a). In the United States, Larry Nassar, the Medical Doctor for USA gymnastics, formally pled guilty to criminal sexual misconduct with minors under the age of 16 years (Fisher & Anders, 2019; Forsdike & Fullagar, 2021). In the United Kingdom, cycling, rowing, canoeing, and gymnastics have each been investigated for creating and sustaining environments that accept violence against athletes by coaches, managers, and teammates (Adams & Kavanagh, 2018). Recently, an independent report was commissioned in Canada which highlighted “toxic examples of abuse and maltreatment exist at all levels” and that “abuse and maltreatment of gymnasts appears most pronounced in women’s Artistic gymnastics and women’s Rhythmic gymnastics” (McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc., 2023).

In academic research, a number of studies have documented the magnitude of IV against athletes. Data show estimates ranging from 37-81% for psychological violence and neglect, 14-38% for sexual violence and 11-66% for physical violence (Hartill et al., 2021; Marsollier et al., 2021; Ohlert et al., 2020; Pankowiak et al., 2023; Parent & Vaillancourt-Morel, 2021; Vertommen et al., 2016, 2022; Willson et al., 2022). Comparison of resulting rates across these studies is challenging due to differences in

methodologies, applied recruitment strategies, and definitional criteria of violence adopted (Vertommen & Parent, 2021).

Specific forms of IV against athletes have been examined including those on sexual violence (Fasting et al., 2011; Parent et al., 2016), sexual harassment (Fasting et al., 2011), gender-based violence (Mergaert et al., 2016), psychological violence and emotional abuse (Gervis et al., 2016; Kerr et al., 2020), physical abuse (McPherson et al., 2016; Oliver & Lloyd, 2015), maltreatment (Fortier & Parent, 2020; Stirling & Kerr, 2009), bullying (Nery et al., 2018), hazing (Jeckell et al., 2018), aggression/assault (Young, 2019), all of which can be present in both physical and virtual spaces (Kavanagh & Brown, 2020; Kavanagh et al., 2020). This body of knowledge presents a global pattern of violence against athletes; violence that can occur in sporting contexts ranging from community through to high performance sport (Kavanagh et al., 2021).

Indeed, studies in this domain have used many different terms to refer to IV against athletes, such as non-accidental violence (Mountjoy et al., 2016), maltreatment (Kerr & Stirling, 2019), or abuse (Hartill et al., 2021). Interestingly, the European Sport-for-All Charter (1975) was the first policy document to recognize violence in a sport setting as an institutional responsibility (Lang et al., 2018). Yet defining IV is still the subject of an ongoing debate. Most studies adopt the World Health Organization definition of IV (Krug et al., 2002), meaning that it refers to violence perpetrated by strangers or acquaintances, directed at individuals within the sporting community (Vertommen & Parent, 2021). The nature of this violence can either be sexual, physical, or psychological, or result from neglect and/or deprivation (Krug et al., 2002; Vertommen & Parent, 2021). While this typology is far from definitive or universally accepted, it does provide a useful framework for understanding the complex patterns and forms that IV in sport can take. It also supports the clear observation that IV can take place both on and

off the field of play.

In an attempt to introduce a more systematic, comprehensive analysis of violence against athletes and in recognizing the socio-ecological framework (Stirling & Kerr, 2012), some authors have identified that violence against athletes can be categorized into three types (i.e., self-directed, interpersonal and collective; see Mountjoy et al., 2016). In doing so, it is recognized that cases of abuse against athletes can initially place a focus upon perpetrators. At the same time, as each case unfolds, the role played by other people, organizations, and institutions in managing and/or concealing abuse moves sharply into focus (Kavanagh et al. 2020). Acts of violence, therefore, are not just individual acts perpetrated against victims. Instead, each case that comes to light shines a spotlight upon more systemic sport practices and policies that enable abuse to occur in sporting spaces.

While IV has been in sharp focus, issues concerning sport integrity more broadly are also commonplace in critiques of the purpose and place of sport in society (Robertson & Constandt, 2021). Sport integrity is not a new term, though it has gained traction in recent years (Harvey & McNamee, 2019; Loyens et al., 2021). Integrity is a dynamic and context-dependent concept that is often applied in sport to describe sport-related situations on all levels of play (both professional and amateur) in which certain morals, norms, and values in relation to inclusivity, safety, and fairness are at stake (Kihl, 2020; Loyens et al., 2022). Kihl (2020, p. 397) defines sport integrity as:

morals, norms and values that help determine right or wrong in different contexts (e.g., the administration of sport competitions, sport governance and sporting organizations). For example, sport integrity is conceived as individuals (i.e., sport stakeholders) upholding a range of moral values (e.g., honesty, sportpersonship, respect and trustworthiness) in fulfilling their sport organizational roles (professional responsibility) as well as within wider society (personal

responsibility). In the specific context of sport, sport integrity has also been referred to as providing an inclusive, safe and fair environment.

According to Gardiner et al. (2017), sport integrity entails four types: i.e., personal integrity, organizational integrity, procedural integrity, and the integrity of sport itself. The type of integrity refers to the nature of what is at stake, respectively the integrity of an individual in sport, sport organization, sport procedures, or sport as an institution (Gardiner et al., 2017). Despite this growing research interest, sport integrity remains understudied, especially when considering its relevance in times in which sport continues to be confronted with a moral crisis (Gardiner et al., 2017; Kihl, 2023; Loyens et al., 2022; Robertson & Constandt, 2021). This crisis is illustrated by a broad number of sport integrity breaches. Match-fixing and doping are two breaches most commonly tied to the topic of sport integrity across the globe, but there is a shift towards a more holistic and inclusive interpretation which includes IV (Cleret, et al., 2015; Kihl, 2020, 2023).

In other words, while long perceived in quite narrow terms, sport integrity is increasingly being discussed more broadly (Cleret et al., 2015; McNamee, 2013). However, the role of IV against athletes in relation to other sport integrity issues remains largely unclear (Kavanagh et al., 2020). While the impact of IV on the personal integrity (e.g., health and wellbeing) of athletes is regularly highlighted, less remains known about the ways IV threatens other sport integrity types (Gardiner et al., 2017). For instance, how do sport organizations' responses to athlete disclosures of IV impact their organizational and procedural integrity? This question has been tackled by Sailofsky (2023) and Sailofsky & Shor (2022), who exposed that violence against women offences have little to no effect on the post-arrest salary and career longevity of involved NFL and NBA players. However, much remains to be uncovered about this theme, especially in relation to better understanding sport organizations' (lack of) response to violence cases.

Nonetheless, numerous organizations and governments have taken the initiative to install reporting and response mechanisms (Cleret et al., 2015). Some of them chose for an integral approach, by setting up Integrity Units (independent or internally) to deal with all/some integrity violations (e.g., World Athletics Integrity Unit and Biathlon Integrity unit and Sport Integrity Australia), whereas other organizations create response mechanisms dealing with harassment and abuse separately (e.g., Gymnastic Ethics Foundation, US Center Safe Sport). Two different approaches to deal with IV are thus present in both theory and practice, but considering IV with a broader sport integrity lens might help to better understand its causes, characteristics, manifestations, interconnections, and consequences (Cleret et al., 2015; Kihl, 2023). Against this background, the purpose of this study is to conduct a scoping review of the sport integrity literature with the twofold aim of (a) exploring *to what extent* IV is discussed, and (b) understanding *how* IV is discussed.

### **Methods**

According to Colquhoun et. al. (2014), a scoping review is a form of knowledge synthesis that addresses an exploratory research question aimed at mapping key concepts, types of evidence, and gaps in research related to a defined area or field by systematically searching, selecting, and synthesizing existing knowledge. In contrast to a systematic review, scoping reviews do not claim to be exhaustive, nor do they make an assessment of research quality. Rather, scoping reviews attempt to provide extensive (rather than intensive) coverage of a select topic area. In this manner, scoping reviews seek to “map the landscape” of a research area to summarize research and convey the breadth of a field (Levac et al., 2010). Scoping reviews are increasingly applied in the field of sport management to provide overviews of the size and scope of available literature across diverse themes, such as sport governance, spectator sport and health, institutional theory

in sport, and fraud in sport (Dowling et al., 2018; Inoue et al., 2015; Robertson et al., 2022; Vanwersch et al., 2022). This present scoping review was guided by the staged framework outlined by Arskey and O'Malley (2005). Stage 1 identifies the research question, stage 2 identifies relevant studies (i.e., search strategy), stage 3 selects studies, stage 4 extracts, maps, and charts the data, and stage 5 summarizes, synthesizes, and reports the results.

### **Identifying Research Question(s) (Stage 1)**

Two research questions were posed to guide this descriptive scoping review. Firstly, to explore to what extent IV is discussed in the sport integrity literature and secondly to understand how IV is discussed in the literature on integrity breaches in sport.

### **Identifying Relevant Studies (Stage 2)**

We conducted the scoping review on the presence of IV in the sport integrity literature through a systematic search strategy. Four major electronic databases (i.e., Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCOHost and PubMed) were searched in October of 2020. These databases were selected to cover a broad range of disciplines and the search strategy was developed in consultation with institutional librarians. The following search string was used: “sport”<sup>1</sup> AND (“integrity” OR “match-fixing” OR “match fixing” OR “competition corruption” OR “sport manipulation” OR “doping” OR “performance enhancing drug” OR “recreational drug” OR “human trafficking” OR “child labor” OR “child labor” OR “betting” OR “gambling” OR “illicit supplement” OR “fraud”) AND NOT Transport. The search was refined by only including (i) peer-reviewed journal

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<sup>1</sup> This study uses the Council of Europe’s definition of sport, as proposed in its Revised European Sports Charter, which argues that: “Sport means all forms of physical activity, which through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels”. (See Art. 2 of Council of Europe, 1992)

articles, that were (ii) published or accepted for publication between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 and 24<sup>th</sup> October 2020, and (iii) written in the English language.

### **Selection of Studies (Stage 3)**

In brief, a total of 16,911 studies were imported into the Covidence software for screening, and 8,457 duplicates were removed. From the remaining studies, 6,477 were excluded after screening of title and abstract, and 635 were excluded on full text review. The remaining 1,342 studies were included in this study. All studies were then screened by two independent reviewers. Discrepancies in inclusion/exclusion were resolved by a third reviewer. Table 1 summarizes the applied inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Studies from a range of disciplines were included, such as management, criminology, law, philosophy, psychology and psychiatry, history, medicine and health sciences. Clinical trials, drop composition or testing studies, studies on nutrition, physiology or biomechanics were excluded. Purely technical studies (e.g., on scale development) and studies that did not focus on sport were excluded too. Only peer-reviewed, English studies were included, leaving out editorials, scientific notes, letters, news reports, conference proceedings, comments or speeches.

### **Charting Data (Stage 4)**

The fourth stage of the scoping review process included charting the data to synthesize and interpret key items from the selected 1,342 studies, and identify key issues and themes pertaining to the twofold research aim. In this scoping review, this was done in two steps, each of which addressed the two aims of the study. First, to understand the scope of the sport integrity literature, the selected articles were charted for: year of publication, title, authors, journal, abstract, research aim and questions, methodology, method, study location, and study population (all exported to Excel from Covidence), and the country pertaining to the research (manually added by two independent researchers).

### **Collating, Summarizing and Reporting Results (Stage 5)**

We synthesized the data according to the research question previously defined. To contribute to the first aim of the research (i.e., identify the extent to which violence is discussed in the sport integrity literature), the main potential integrity breach(es) covered in the article were also recorded manually in the Excel document by two independent researchers. Basic descriptive statistics were performed using Excel to identify the frequency of each breach, including violence in sport as a main topic of focus.

Scoping reviews can also focus on analyzing specific issues of interest, in the case of this review, our second aim was to identify the extent to which IV is discussed in the sport integrity literature. Specifically, beyond identifying potential studies focusing on violence as the main area of research, we wanted to identify if violence was discussed in any of the other sport integrity focused articles, and how it was discussed in relation to these sport integrity breaches. This analysis was facilitated by the Nvivo qualitative analysis software. Following upload of all selected articles to Nvivo, the “Query” function was used to identify any terms related to violence. The search terms were developed during a network meeting where the present experts in IV breaches operationalized it to: sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, psychological abuse, neglect, maltreatment, aggression, assault, violence, harassment, hazing or rape. Articles which included any of these terms were saved. Following a search for the operationalized definition of IV in all 1,342 included articles, a total of 426 studies were found to include at least one mention of a violence term. Each study was individually screened and a further 382 were excluded for the following reasons: term only mentioned in reference list, terminology unrelated to IV in sport, or only one mention unrelated to full article content, mentioned only as a side effect to drug use. In total, 36 studies were included.

These 36 studies are outlined in a separate document, that has been uploaded as Supplementary Material to this scoping review study.

Thematic analysis (Patton, 2015) was employed to identify the ways in which violence is discussed in the sport integrity literature. First, data extracts including the violence-related terms were coded by one independent researcher. Following two meetings with the other members of the research teams whom acted as critical friends, the codes were refined and used to develop themes and sub-themes. Finally, an academic consultation exercise was completed to receive feedback on the findings and potential gaps of the scoping review, by presenting the findings to some of the major scholars on IV in sport during the hybrid seminar of the Research Chair in Security and Integrity in Sport at Laval University (Quebec, Canada) in November 2021. The feedback of the seminar attendees was then implemented in the final and present version of the scoping review.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The findings of this descriptive scoping review are presented in two sections, each addressing a research aim. First, a summary of the selected studies is presented with the corresponding outcomes of the descriptive statistics analyses to provide a big picture view of the field of sport integrity literature as developed during the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including where violence was mentioned. Second, we present the results of the thematic analysis to indicate how violence is discussed in the sport integrity literature.

#### **Summary of Studies**

In line with the search strategy, included studies were published between 2010 and 2020, with the lowest number of 82 articles published in 2011 and the highest number of 171 articles published in 2019 (see Figure 1).

**[Insert Figure 1 near here please]**

The 1,342 studies were published in 489 journals. Journals with more than 2% of all studies published were the *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* (n=55), the *Performance Enhancement and Health* (n=49), the *International Journal of the History of Sport* (n=39), the *International Sports Law Journal* (n=39), *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy* (n=34), *Sport in Society* (n=33), the *International Sports Law Review Pandektis* (n=29), and *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* (n=29).

With regard the country pertaining to the research reported in the papers, a total of 843 studies could be linked to a country. In the other 499 cases, the country pertaining to the research in the study could not be determined or was not applicable (e.g., conceptual papers). From the 843 studies, the majority (n=188) described multinational data. Another 111 studies described data collected in the United States of America. Other countries with more than 2% of studies covered were Australia (n=95), the United Kingdom (n=70), and Germany (n=31).

The 1342 studies were further analyzed through two distinct methodologies to answer research question 1. One team of researchers manually tagged each of the 1342 articles into distinct categories of potential integrity breaches (i.e., doping, match fixing, gambling/betting, corruption/fraud, violence and others). Out of the 1,342 selected studies, 36 studies were tagged by the researchers as a study which focused on IV in sport. The majority of studies focused on doping (n=930), and, to a lesser extent on (illegal) gambling/betting (n=191) and match-fixing (n=61). Other integrity issues covered in 92 studies were for instance gender modification and classification, ethical implications of sport regulations and sponsorship, whistleblowing procedures, child labor or exploitation, Olympic values, racism and migration (Figure 2).

**[Insert Figure 2 near here please]**

### **Thematic Analysis**

The thematic analysis demonstrated that IV was discussed in three main ways in the 36 studies (for an overview of these studies, please see Supplementary Material) included in this phase of analysis: i.e., (1) Defining violence in sport; (2) The intersection of violence and integrity in sport; and (3) The sanctioning and normalization of aggression and violence in sport.

#### ***Defining violence in sport***

An initial theme from the data was associated with the definition of violence in sport and the types of violence that are encompassed within this definition. The identification of this theme is important given that violence is understood in different ways and within different contexts. In a broader sense, most studies that provided a definition of violence addressed the culpability of violent behavior and the presence of unwanted harm against another. For example, violence was referred to as “non-accidental” (Kavussanu, 2019) or involving intentional use of physical force or power against another individual (Sakáčová, 2015). Other key elements cited were that the violence would occur “without consent” (Marks et al., 2012; Sanderson et al., 2020) or without the ability of the individual to consent, and that it would be “unwanted” (Martinkova et al., 2015). Various types of violence were referred to across studies including aggression, hazing, physical, psychological, and sexual violence (Kosiewicz, 2014; Marks et al., 2012; Martinkova et al., 2015; Patterson et al., 2018).

The most investigated form of violence present across the papers was sexual violence (i.e., sexual harassment/abuse perpetrated against athletes (Marks et al., 2012; Prewitt-White, 2019; Sanderson et al., 2020). Within this topic, the concept of grooming

was often brought forward as a challenge to understanding or conceptualizing sexual abuse. Finally, some studies propose classifications of diverse forms of violence based on theoretical frameworks (Robene et al., 2014) or very specific on-field violent behavior which could be classified by some as “part of the game” (e.g., biting in football, see Martinkova et al. (2015)). In Robene et al. (2014, p. 2052) for example, authors propose specific classifications of violence:

1. Technical violence produced by sport: where Elias only sees the technical decrease in violence (rules), there appears the visible expression of the staging of violent techniques.
2. Violence against individuals/violence suffered (over-training regimens, imposed dependence, etc.).
3. Violence against individuals/accepted violence (voluntary doping, etc.).
4. Violence against others/planned violence (intimidation strategies, techniques based on aggressiveness, etc.).
5. Violence included in the ‘educational’ interpretation of sport techniques.

It is important to note that this subset of studies met our criteria in relating to IV against athletes and this will influence how violence is defined within them. Nonetheless, this theme highlights many of the current challenges with regards to the conceptualization of violence in sport, with studies predominantly defining violence on either a broad level or with a very specific reference to a single type of violence and very few articles providing detailed descriptions of the varied forms of violence in sport.

### ***The intersection of violence and integrity in sport***

This theme describes studies in which violence against athletes was discussed in terms of its intersection with the concept of sport integrity. In this theme, and the three subthemes detailed below, violence against athletes is contextualized as a breach of integrity to the

person (individual level), to the sport organization (organizational level), or as a breach in facilitation of other breaches of integrity (gateway to other forms of integrity breaches).

**Promoting, managing and researching integrity, particularly personal integrity to prevent violence.** First, some authors argued for the need to conceptualize sport integrity and promote it as a means to prevent violence against athletes. For example, Kavanagh et al. (2020) suggested that the management of sport integrity should be promoted and that it should encompass the welfare of athletes so that violence is prevented rather than reacted upon. Kavanagh et al. (2020, p. 2) stated “promoting integrity to offer safe, fair, inclusive, and enriching environments for all is an integral challenge for sport practitioners and academics”. Some of the studies approached this recommendation via placing the responsibility upon the individual and emphasizing the need to appropriately train practitioners (such as coaches or sport scientists) on matters of sport integrity. As it relates to sexual violence and child abuse in sport, several authors stressed the importance of the ongoing training and education of sport practitioners on personal integrity and ethical behavior to aid the prevention of violence (Sanderson et al., 2020; van der Steeg et al., 2020). Perwitt-White (2019, p. 192) noted that “by assisting coaches in maintaining appropriate professional boundaries, athletic administrators can protect the integrity of the organization and might also help prevent sexual exploitation”.

Other studies acknowledged responsibility for promoting and managing personal integrity to prevent violence. Van der Steeg et al. (2020, p. 462) noted that defining and researching personal integrity has the potential to promote to safe behavior, including safe sexual behaviors, and that educating sport stakeholders on this was paramount to the protection of violence:

Nevertheless, it is imperative to develop the concept and practice of integrity in sport to include the recognition of personal integrity, in addition to organizational integrity and procedural integrity in sport (Gardiner, Parry, and Robinson, 2017). Issues such as sexism, heterosexism, privacy violations, and inappropriate physical and sexual behaviour are frequently missing in integrity policies and discussions, both in sport organizations (Parent and Demers, 2011) and in sport education (Taylor and Hardin, 2017).

**Violence as a sport integrity breach.** Several studies, both those focusing on violence and those focusing on other breaches, simply recognized and affirm that violence against athletes is a threat to both the integrity of sport from a macro level and at an individual level posing risks to individuals or groups of athletes. For example, Gardiner et al. (2017, p. 10) stated that:

Activities and behaviours that define sport as lacking integrity include: creating an unfair advantage or the manipulation of results through performance enhancing drugs, match fixing or tanking, and extending to antisocial behaviours demonstrated by parents, spectators, coaches and players including bullying, harassment, discrimination and child abuse.

**Violence against athlete as a means to perpetrate other integrity breaches.** Authors also contended that violence perpetration mechanisms (e.g., grooming) were a means used by sport stakeholders to manipulate athletes into perpetuating sport integrity breaches: “Grooming of young people with a view to perpetuate corruption (online and real world) for match fixing and associated activities, which may breach sports’ integrity rules and/or constitute criminal offences” (Mountjoy et al., 2016, p. 1022). Mountjoy et

al. (2016, p. 1023) further suggest that various forms of violence and abuse could also be linked with doping, and may “increase athletes’ willingness to cheat”. The intersection of violence and integrity appears to be conceptualized within the literature as either an individual or institutional issue. Either violence was discussed as a breach of personal integrity, both in terms of the perpetrator breaching responsibility to act with integrity and the violation of the personal integrity of the victim, or violence was discussed from an organizational level as an integrity issue. This finding highlights the prevalent instrumentalization of violence in sport to pursue different kinds of goals, such as sexual abuse or commercial exploitation (Vertommen et al., 2022).

### *(Un)sanctioned violence and the normalization of violence in sport*

This theme reflects the rampant debate that exists within the literature when it comes to sanctioned versus unsanctioned violence in sport and the broader issue of normalization of violence in sport.

#### **Boundaries between unsanctioned and sanctioned violence in sport.**

There is a strong debate in the literature on the boundaries of sanctioned vs. unsanctioned violence against another athlete in sport. In other words, the types of violence that are socially accepted and/or allowed may differ between sports. This debate is often linked with the concept of sportspersonship. Other authors discussed the gravity of intentional assault on the field, which may be perceived by sport actors (e.g., coaches, league managers) as part of the game. One study unpacked the case of football players biting and/or spitting at their opponents on the field. The authors of this study highlighted the intention to cause harm, and argued that the action itself should be viewed as a “direct assault on the person” (Martinkova et al., 2015, p. 219). Another author, Kirkwood (2014) debated about the instrumental use of assaulting another player on the field as a means to

cheat. Kirkwood (2014, p. 487) reflected that cheating requires intent and that the line for what constitutes cheating can be quite blurred during instances of instrumental violence (injuring players):

If a player on my team is intentionally injured by a player on yours,' I will come looking for one of your players and attempt to do the same thing to him. But what if in the process of balancing the playing field I unintentionally injure your player more than mine? My teammate may be unable to participate for four weeks, but yours' may not return for a year. Have I now cheated because I've handicapped your squad for the season, while you only handicapped mine for a month?

These blurred lines highlight some of the challenges of delineating sanctioned violence and unsanctioned violence within sport as it will not always be possible to determine intent in these instances.

**Aggression in sport and normalization of violence.** Sport philosophers and ethicists have discussed the historical evolution of aggression in sport and the increasing levels of aggression found in modern sport at length. Aggression in modern sport can be extremely diverse in the level/severity as well as in how its enactment is conceptualized based on the culture within that specific sport. For example, Atry et al. (2013, p. 474) argue that "...a game such as rugby, despite being highly physical and in a sense aggressive, does not, arguably, provoke emotional responses in the way excessive aggressiveness in football or ice hockey might do".

Others contend that contemporary sport is characterized by violence, Robene et al. (2014, p. 2050) formulate this observation as follows:

Contemporary sport has incorporated planned violence as a component of its own system, ..., globalized contemporary sport, marked by generalized hyper-

competition, has constructed other figures of modernity and generated its own violence like the ‘third type of football’, where participating is worth nothing and winning is everything.

Furthermore, there is the suggestion that our consumption of sport may potentially be an expression of individual consumers finding pleasure in violence. In that regard, Van Rompuy (2014) discussed how European football was increasingly becoming violent (unsanctioned violence), but that people only became concerned about it when the consequences on the person were dramatic. This view is shared by Heil (2016, p. 284), who questioned the role of sport in promoting violence in society more broadly again referring to a “tolerance for dangerous rule violating behaviours in sport”, behaviours that in other settings would be deemed criminal. Heil (2016) questions if the resultant effect could be diminished accountability and disinhibited violence in society more broadly. Although this so-called spillover effect of violence in sport is often suggested, scientific consensus about when and how it occurs is lacking (Spaij & Schailée, 2019).

Building on the above argument that aggression is part of sport, Robene et al. (2014, p. 2050) posit that the way violence is performed in various sports pushes the societally acceptable limits of aggressive behaviors and leads to the normalization of violence in training practices:

The demonstrated case of young gymnasts, more or less all over the world, is characteristic of this violence exerted on the body for the sake of performance... This violence, done to bodies which have been trained too early, have been highlighted by institutions such as the Council of Europe, as being harmful to the normal development of the child.

For other authors, group dynamics and attitudes of leaders (e.g., coaches) towards violence have an important influence on how violent an athlete will be on the field as

these factors significantly contribute to the normalization of violence within a particular team:

Football players, who thought that their coach would encourage cheating and aggression in hypothetical situations, and that their teammates would engage in the described behaviors if it was necessary for the team to win, also reported higher frequency of these behaviors (e.g., Kavussanu & Spray, 2006). Thus, the moral atmosphere of sport teams is important in determining the behavior of its members. (Kavussanu, 2019, p. 37).

In a similar manner, cultural and team building traditions continue to be a way to permit hazing behaviors, which are “typically framed positively in a way that justifies practices, enabling behaviors that are harmful to be overlooked” (Heil, 2016, p. 288). Indeed, several authors argued that the sporting culture as a whole (beyond promoting the normalization of aggressiveness) was an enabler to violence perpetration against athletes: “Sport is considered an ideal environment for sexual abuse as it is perceived to be a “sacred” culture, and consequently, behavior that is normally socially unacceptable is permitted and unquestioned” (Sanderson et al., 2020, p. 3).

Discussing this sporting culture, Kavanagh et al. (2020) indicate that the often present win-at-all-costs mentality in sport leads to the normalization of behaviors such as overtraining, homophobia and transphobia, racism, and sexism. Sporting culture was also debated in terms of masculinity and how a male-dominated culture creates power imbalance between men and women, which stakeholders needed to be aware of. Such an imbalance is a “predisposing risk factor for sexual misconduct [...]. Sexual misconduct is a common issue in spaces where men hold positions of power...” (Prewitt-White, 2019, p. 192).

In contrast to the above statement, one study did argue that while some aspects of the sporting culture promote a certain level of aggressiveness, it does not mean that the sports person is violent in society more broadly.

The aggressive behaviour of a North American ice hockey player may not reflect or coincide fully with his individual emotional tendencies towards aggression; he may not behave aggressively outside the playing field, that is, in social contexts where he is not influenced by the emotional culture in North American ice hockey and its normative hold. (Atry et al. 2012, p. 475)

This theme reflects an important debate within the literature around what truly constitutes violence in sport as authors navigate the often-violent historical roots of sport, and the organizational practices that continue to normalize aspects of violence within sport. Increased attention is thereby paid to how the general sporting culture, (elite) sport systems, and the prevailing climate in sport organizations may lead to the normalization of violence and other sport integrity breaches (Constandt et al., 2018; Feddersen & Phelan, 2022; Roberts et al., 2020).

### **Limitations and Conclusions**

Our scoping review bears multiple limitations, including its incomplete and non-exhaustive focus (e.g., books and non-English studies are not included), as well as its inability to evaluate the quality of the included studies (Dowling et al., 2018; Robertson et al., 2022). Yet, scoping reviews support the mapping and synthezation of the scientific literature on a given study subject, while helping to clarify the definitions of key concepts (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Colquhoun et al., 2014). Hence, this present scoping review on IV in sport signposts the relatively limited proportion of sport integrity literature that specifically focuses on said area. On the other hand, it also helps to identify knowledge

gaps regarding IV in sport, a topic that is generating increased societal and academic interest (Kavanagh et al., 2020; Vertommen et al., 2022). Interesting to note is that the intersection between IV and sport integrity has mainly sparked the attention of a limited number of scientific subfields, such as sport psychology, sport politics, sport history, and sport ethics. The shortage of sport management studies on the topic is quite striking, especially in light of the current societal pressure to create and sustain safe and ethical sport organizations, systems, cultures, and environments (Forsdike & Fullagar, 2021; Lang et al., 2018). As practices in sport are being guided and informed by researchers in the field and policies from national integrity organizations, it is critical that IV is included explicitly within the sport integrity discourse.

Three key insights emerge directly from this scoping review. First, there are limited studies that focus on IV *and* sport integrity. Due to the safeguarding issues that encapsulate this specific integrity threat and the potential vulnerability of those affected, our findings ought to concern researchers, policy makers and sport organizations' stakeholders. Moreover, the findings highlighted how violence in sport is viewed as either a personal or organizational breach of integrity. Few studies really discuss both concepts together. The few that do are limited to just these two dimensions, when, in fact, sport integrity actually entails four dimensions (i.e., personal, organizational, procedural, and the integrity of sport itself, Gardiner et al., 2017). The current literature, therefore, largely fails to evaluate how IV impacts procedural integrity in sport (i.e., the trustworthiness of sport events) and the integrity of sport as a socio-cultural institution. Hence, a more holistic view on sport integrity is required, entailing the necessary attention for its links with IV as a sport integrity breach and the use of IV as a means to facilitate other sport integrity breaches (Kihl, 2023; Robertson & Constandt, 2021). Second, a distinct challenge in the field remains the inconsistent (or often absent) definition of what is

classified as IV in sport. A lack of consistency in defining IV or even variations in the terminology adopted is problematic when seeking to synthesize the evidence and to strengthen safeguarding and integrity prevention policies. Universal definitions are critical to avoid confusion and provide clarity for researchers and the general public. Third, the normalization of aggression and violence is considered “the most documented sociocultural risk factor” for violence in sport (Parent & Fortier, 2018, p. 235). The general sporting culture is often aggressive and violent in nature, leading to unsafe environments and situations, which regularly remain unsanctioned and socially accepted (Roberts et al., 2020).

The observation that IV is often tolerated and normalized in sport – which regularly functions as a “breeding ground” for toxic masculinity and violence (Sailofsky & Shor, 2022, p. 250) – has led scholars to think about the creation and strengthening of local, regional, and national sport integrity systems to safeguard sport stakeholders (Kihl, 2020, 2023; Roberts et al., 2020). Such systemic approach is not only needed to manage and respond to incidents of violence, but also to prevent them (Roberts et al., 2020). Dealing with violence in sport organizations is a complex task, due to socio-cultural, policy-related, organizational, and individual conditions and constraints (Forsdike & Fullagar, 2021). However, as scoping reviews in the field of sport management are believed to bear the potential “to consolidate evidence to inform policy and practice more effectively” (Dowling et al., 2018, p. 448), we think this present scoping review on IV and sport integrity enhances the understanding about how to mitigate sport integrity risks and strengthen sport integrity systems on all levels of the sport ecosystem.

To conclude, we would like to offer some recommendations for future research based on the insights of our scoping review. First, there is a clear need for universal language to define and conceptualize IV in sport to offer a *lingua franca* for both scholars

and practitioners to further build on. Second, we advocate future research to closely examine the impact of modern sport's capitalist-oriented (Chen, 2023) and industry-focused (Gammelsæter, 2021) nature on the high occurrence of IV in sport. In other words, how does modern sport's hyper fixation on winning and its tendency to treat athletes as commodities link with IV? Third, drawing from the seminal sport integrity systems research of Kihl (2023), inquiry into how surveillance systems (in narrow terms) and sport integrity policies (in broad terms) should look like to monitor the prevalence and incidence of IV and other integrity breaches in sport would be worthwhile. Fourth, empirical (and not only conceptual) scholarship is recommended to map and outline the impact of sport integrity breaches (including IV) on all sport integrity types and not only on personal and organizational integrity (Robertson & Constandt, 2021). Fifth and finally, correlation and causation studies regarding the synergies between different integrity breaches in sport would support our understanding about how one integrity violation may lead to another, and help explain how seemingly "innocent" situations may quickly escalate towards unsafe sport environments for numerous sport stakeholders involved both on and off the field of play.

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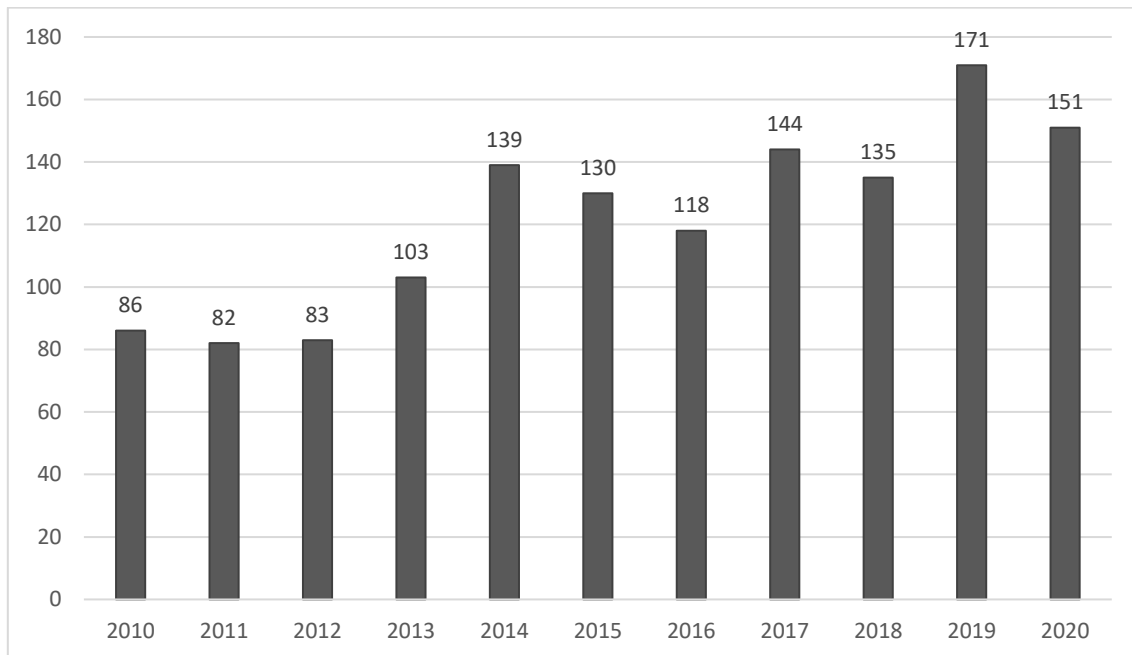
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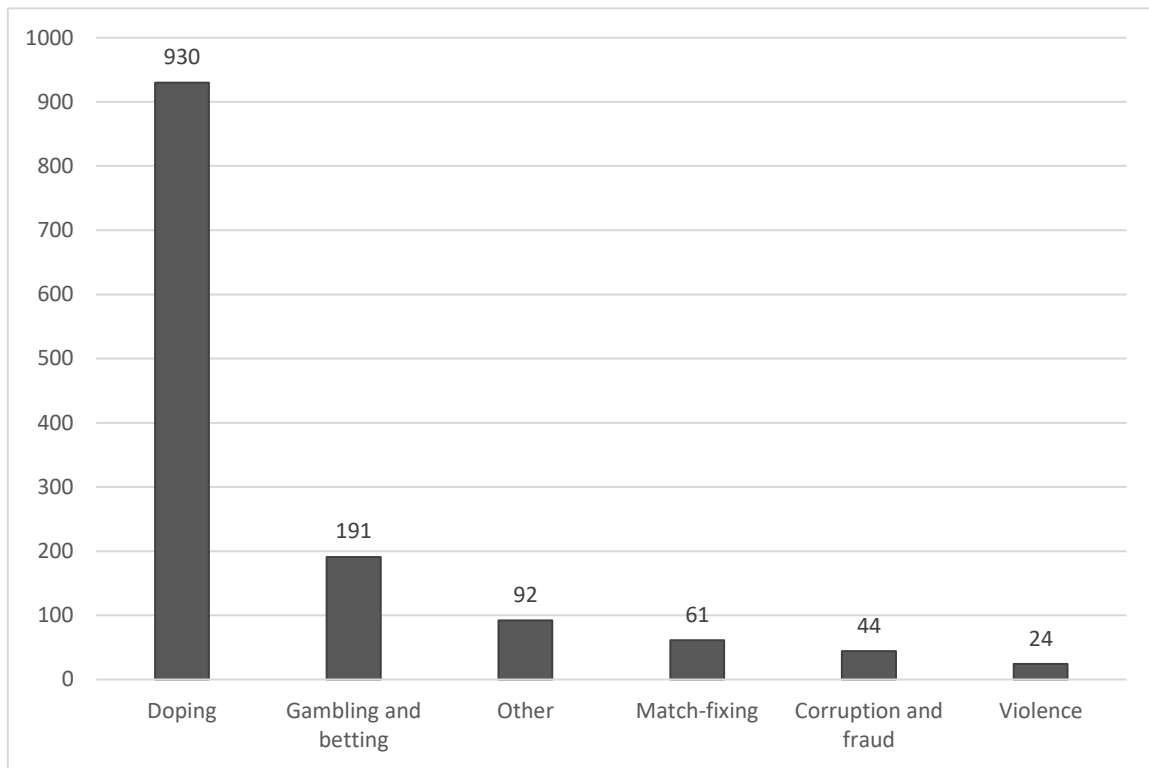
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## Figures and Tables

**Figure 1. Included studies according to their year of publication ( $n = 1,342$ )**



**Figure 2. Included studies according to the potential sport integrity breach they discuss ( $n = 1,342$ )**



**Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria scoping review**

<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Exclusion</b>
<p data-bbox="226 392 683 548"><u>Study type:</u> Empirical and Conceptual studies, Reviews (including position statement)</p> <p data-bbox="226 638 683 728"><u>Disciplines</u> Social sciences related disciplines (non-inclusive list):</p> <ul data-bbox="287 761 582 1288" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criminology</li> <li>• Sociology</li> <li>• Law</li> <li>• Ethics and philosophy</li> <li>• Psychology (including psychiatry)</li> <li>• History</li> <li>• Legal reports</li> <li>• Sport management</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="226 1377 683 1657">(Note that: drug-testing procedures/policies and sport pharmacy studies are included only if there are not on the biology/physiology, but on the process of testing).</p>	<p data-bbox="689 392 1417 548"><u>Study type:</u> Editorial/Letter to editor, Scientific notes on the prohibition of some drugs, “Speech”, Workshops, Correspondence, Newsletter</p> <p data-bbox="689 638 1417 672"><u>Disciplines:</u></p> <ul data-bbox="766 694 1417 1467" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical studies (e.g., drug trial or other human clinical trials)</li> <li>• Nutrition-specific studies</li> <li>• Pharmaceutical (e.g. drug composition)</li> <li>• Physiology</li> <li>• Biomechanics</li> <li>• Scientific methodology (e.g., Validation/questionnaire development studies, e.g. “validity of finance databases used by sports economists”)</li> <li>• Mathematics/ Big Data (including micro economics, algorithm, e.g., sport gambling studies that are about algorithm development or prediction based on market economics)</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="689 1568 1417 1601"><u>Scope:</u></p> <ul data-bbox="766 1624 1045 1657" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sport is not the focus</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="689 1747 1417 1780"><u>No full text</u></p>