



TACKLING DISCRIMINATION IN GRASSROOTS SPORTS: A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS AND COACHES

Anna Kavoura, Marja Kokkonen, & Mariana Siljamäki

**University of Jyväskylä, Finland
Department of Sport Sciences**

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Foreword

This handbook for teachers and coaches is an outcome of the project *Innovative learning Resources to foster equal participation In grassroots Sports, dealing with discrimination, racism and violence incidents* (IRIS). The IRIS project is an ongoing ERASMUS+ initiative that started in January 2015 and aims at developing modern educational material and methodologies that can support the prevention of discrimination in youth sport (for more information visit <http://iris-sport.eu/>).

Six institutes are involved in the IRIS project: the Regional Center of Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning in Achaia, Region of Western Greece (project coordinator), the Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen (Bulgaria), the University of Jyväskylä (Finland), Oltalom Sport Association (Hungary), the University of Santiago De Compostela (Spain), and the Hellenic Open University (Greece). The authors from the Department of Sport Sciences of the University of Jyväskylä undertook the task of writing up this handbook, and designed the book to meet the following objectives:

- To raise AWARENESS on issues of discrimination in youth sport
- To inform on the CONSEQUENCES of discrimination
- To suggest measures and practices that can be utilised in sport settings to PREVENT discrimination
- To better equip PE teachers and coaches for DEALING WITH discriminatory incidents

Following these objectives, we structured the handbook in four main thematic units that we hope will support those who teach sports to children and youth to recognise, prevent, and deal with discrimination and the various forms that it can take, such as racism and violence. In the pages of this book, coaches and PE teachers can find novel didactic approaches for preventing these phenomena, as well as tools for applying and integrating these approaches in everyday school sports activities and training sessions.



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Abbreviations

ECHR **Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms or Convention on Human Rights**

EU **European Union**

IRIS **Innovative learning Resources to foster equal participation In grassroots Sports, dealing with discrimination, racism and violence incidents**

LGBTI+ **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (and other)**

PE **Physical Education**



Part 1: Knowledge and Awareness

1.1. What is discrimination? Introducing basic concepts

Discrimination has many faces. It occurs in multiple grounds and can be expressed in many different ways (see Tables 1 & 2). Confusion often rises in conversations about discrimination and its various forms and categories, as these concepts might be defined and understood differently in different contexts and disciplines. For instance, the legal definition and categories of discrimination differ from those of the social sciences (see for example, Panel on Methods for Assessing Discrimination, 2004, p. 39-54). The confusion becomes even greater in the field of sports, where certain contradictions exist (e.g. certain violence and distinctions might be allowed by the rules). To complicate things even further, the feeling of discrimination (feeling as being treated unfavorably compared to others, or feeling threatened, humiliated and/or afraid) is subjective and the existing definitions and laws might fail to account for all the subjective experiences of discrimination. In this chapter we discuss how discrimination is defined and understood by both, social sciences and the European law. Our aim is to raise awareness of discrimination and to assist coaches and PE teachers to recognise critical incidents. Thus, we also provide exemplary manifestations of discrimination from the field of sports.

What do we mean when we speak of discrimination then? According to Gasparini (2010, p.11) 'Etymologically, discrimination means making a distinction. But it is not just any form of differentiation between one individual and another, or between one group and another, which constitutes discrimination. Differentiation becomes "discriminatory" where it is based on illegitimate or illegal criteria. In practice, discrimination involves different treatment of persons who are in comparable situations, on the basis of at least one criterion which is against the law'.



As it is further explained in the *Handbook on European non-discrimination law* (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights & Council of Europe, 2010), in our personal lives, we all make choices based on our subjective preferences and we might favor specific things, activities and people, over others. But, what happens if we are in a kind of power position and our decisions and choices have a direct impact on people's lives? What are these 'illegitimate' or 'illegal' criteria that constitute certain distinctions as discriminatory?

The European non-discrimination law (which is mainly consisted of the ECHR and EU law), refers to these illegal criteria as **protected grounds**. The EU law has a fixed and limited list of protected grounds which is consisted of: sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion or belief, and racial or ethnic origin. The ECHR in the other hand has an open-ended list of protected grounds. Specifically, it says that 'there shall be no discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, or other status' (see European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights & Council of Europe, 2010, p.89).

Table 1. Different grounds of discrimination

Term (or ground)	Definition/description	Examples
Sexism	Discrimination (prejudice or unjust distinction) based on sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation.	When female athletes are getting paid less than their male counterparts and receive less (or different) media coverage. When a transgender person is not accepted in a sport team, or is not allowed competing in sports.
Racism	Discrimination (prejudice or unjust distinction) against someone's race (color, nationality, citizenship and ethnic or national origins) based on the belief that all members of each	When black-skinned athletes experience verbal abuse by the audience (intentional discrimination). Prejudices against foreign athletes,



	<p>race possess specific characteristic and qualities and some races are superior to others.</p>	<p>expressed non-verbally or in the tone of voice (unintentional discrimination)</p>
Disability discrimination	<p>When people with special educational needs are treated less favorably (directly or indirectly) than others.</p>	<p>When the sporting facilities cannot be accessed by people with disabilities. When sport federations (or the state) provide less support (e.g. financial support for traveling to international tournaments) to athletes with disabilities compared to other athletes of the same sport.</p>
Discrimination based on religion or belief	<p>When people are treated less favorably because of their religion or beliefs.</p>	<p>When a sporting federation requires all athletes to wear a specific type of sporting clothing/uniform and this clothing cannot be used by some athletes because it is prohibited by their religion (indirect discrimination).</p>
Classism	<p>Prejudice or discrimination on the basis of social class. It includes individual attitudes, behaviours, systems of policies, and practices that are set up to benefit the upper class at the expense of the lower class, or vice versa.</p>	<p>When in certain sport clubs (e.g. in golf or in tennis) one has to apply for membership and have certain references (of status and position) in order to get in.</p>
Ageism (also spelled agism)	<p>Discriminating and stereotyping against people based on their age.</p>	<p>When athletes that continue to compete after the 'proper' age, receive negative media attention and comments.</p>
Lookism	<p>Discrimination based on appearance. It refers to the positive stereotypes, prejudice, and preferential treatment given to physically attractive people, or more generally to people whose appearance matches cultural preferences.</p>	<p>When female athletes that fit to the cultural ideals of beauty and femininity receive more (and more positive) media coverage than other female athletes.</p>
Discrimination based on poor motor skills	<p>It refers to the preferential treatment of people that are considered to be physically talented and the less favorable treatment of people that have poor</p>	<p>When a child is avoided by peers and excluded from group sporting activities because of poor motor skills.</p>



	motor skills.	
Linguistic discrimination (also called linguicism and languagism)	Unfair treatment of an individual based solely on their use of language (e.g. accent, size of vocabulary, syntax etc.). It also refers to a preference of a language over another and to ideologies and structures that are used to legitimate unequal division of power and resources between groups on the basis of language.	Prejudices against athletes of an ethnic status that might speak a dialect or have an accent.
Multiple discrimination	Discrimination based on multiple grounds	A transgender athlete of color might be discriminated in multiple grounds (e.g. race/skin color and gender identity)

Moreover, in the eyes of the European non-discrimination law, discrimination can be direct or indirect (see European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights & Council of Europe, 2010, p.21-31). **Direct discrimination** will have occurred when an individual is treated unfavorably by comparison to how others who are in a similar situation have been or would be treated, and the reason for this is a particular characteristic that the person holds, which falls under a protected ground. For example, being refused entry to a sports event, or being excluded from a sport because of skin color, race, or ethnicity is direct discrimination. Such incidents of racial discrimination are also referred as **racism**. Racism can often take very hostile and violent forms. For example, black-skinned athletes have reported experiences of racial abuse by the audience, in the form of negative comments, monkey noises etc. (see for example, the interview with Lilian Thuram in Gasparini and Talleu's 2010 book, p. 5-8). In grassroots sports, the most common reason for direct discrimination has been found to be the level of motor skills, followed by skin colour and family background (Schwery, McInnis, & Cade, 2013). Children from 11 European countries that participated in this study reported that coaches treat athletes differently, according to their physical skills, with the ones having limited skills receiving unequal treatment.



Indirect discrimination is when offering the same treatment to people who are in a different situation, and this might affect a group defined by a protected ground in a significantly more negative way by comparison to others in a similar situation. For example, many sport organisations require from all competitors to wear a specific type of sports clothing. This requirement is not directly discriminatory (as the same rule applies to all), but it has a discriminatory effect on people that for religious reasons cannot wear the specific clothing. In order to avoid incidents of indirect discrimination, organisations must ensure that they take **special measures** to adjust their rules and practices to take such differences into consideration. Special measures are situations where differential treatment takes place that favors individuals on the basis of their protected grounds. They are meant to function as 'short-term and exceptional means of challenging prejudices against individuals who would normally suffer discrimination, as well as creating role models to inspire others sharing that characteristic' (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights & Council of Europe, 2010, p.37). For instance, when a sports club is offering women's only classes or cheaper fees for women (in a sporting context that women are a minority or do not have an easy access).

Furthermore, harassment and instruction to discriminate are also prohibited by the EU non-discrimination law (see European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights & Council of Europe, 2010, p. 31-35). **Harassment** is any form of unwanted contact with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, and/or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. When harassment takes place on the basis of a protected ground, it is considered a type or manifestation of discrimination. For example LGBTI+ athletes have reported experiences of harassment on the basis of their gender identity and sexual orientation (see for example, Aulin, 2013; Kokkonen, 2014). Kokkonen's (2014, p.17) report on the experiences of LGBTI+ athletes in Finland (one of the leading countries in terms of equality policies) indicated that 'more than 10% of the respondents had noticed their coach or instructor spreading sexually colored rumors



about them, calling them names or insulting them in degrading and sexually colored way, asking about their gender or sexual orientation in an inappropriate context or making derogatory comments on them at least a few times a year. [...] Over the past year, a coach or a sports instructor had suggested sexual intercourse to five adult participants (3 women, 2 men) of the study'.

Instruction to discriminate refers to situations where there is an expressed preference or encouragement to treat individuals less favorably due to one of the protected grounds. For example, when a coach makes public announcements of a homophobic nature, these announcements might influence the athletes' attitudes and behavior towards homosexual teammates (or others) and might even lead to hostile and violent actions.

To sum up, the European law sees discrimination as direct, indirect, harassment and instruction to discriminate; and uses the concept of 'protected grounds' to categorise the various discriminatory acts according to the grounds on which these acts have occurred (see European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights & Council of Europe, 2010). However, the social sciences go beyond legal concepts, as there are many forms of discrimination that may not be unlawful, but might still have negative (and even severe) consequences, such as suicide (see for example, Haas et al., 2010). Concepts used by social scientist include individual discrimination versus institutional discrimination (e.g. Haas et al., 2010), intentional discrimination versus unintentional discrimination, subtle versus overt discrimination, disparate treatment discrimination versus disparate impact discrimination, statistical discrimination (e.g. Panel on Methods for Assessing Discrimination, 2004, p. 39-54 & 55-70), internalised discrimination (e.g. Speight, 2007), perceived discrimination (e.g. Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009; Borrell, Kiefe, Williams, Diez-Roux, & Gordon-Larsen, 2006), and cumulative (or the cumulative effects of) discrimination (e.g. Huebner, Rebchook, & Kegeles, 2004) (see Table 2).



Table 2. Different types and categories of discrimination

Term (or type of discrimination)	Definition/description	Examples
Direct discrimination (or disparate treatment discrimination)	When an individual is treated unfavorably compared to how others who are in a similar situation are treated because of a characteristic that this individual holds	Unequal treatment to women in sport compared to their male counterparts.
Indirect discrimination (or disparate impact discrimination)	When offering the same treatment to people who are in a different situation and this might affect a group defined by a protected ground in a significantly more negative way.	When the rules of a sport association, even though same for every competitor, might have a negative effect to a specific group of people. For example, the rule that a dance pair that wants to compete has to be made up of a man and a woman has a discriminatory effect to people that belong to a sexual minority.
Harassment	Any form of unwanted contact with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person.	Verbal abuse (e.g. calling someone ‘a fagot’, telling gay jokes), physical attacks, sexual harassment
Instruction to discriminate	Expressed preference or encouragement to treat individuals less favorably due to one of the protected grounds.	When a coach makes homophobic or racist comments publicly and these comments might affect the attitudes and behaviour of the athletes against these groups of people.
Institutional discrimination	Refers to the unjust and discriminatory mistreatment of an individual or group of individuals by society and its institutions as a whole, through unequal selection or bias, intentional or unintentional.	Lack of sporting facilities for individuals with disabilities. Lack of bathrooms and locker rooms for transgender people.
Individual discrimination	This term is used to separate individual discriminatory acts and behaviors from the institutional practices.	When an athlete verbally attacks to (or makes jokes of) another athlete because of her/his skin color, use of language, sexual orientation, physical appearance etc.
Internalised discrimination	The internalisation by people of discriminatory attitudes towards members of their own group, including themselves. An	When women athletes accept male superiority in sport and reproduce beliefs such as ‘women by nature are not as good in sport as men are’.



	individual's conscious and unconscious acceptance of being inferior to others and deserving to be treated unequal.	
Perceived discrimination	The subjective perception that one has experienced discrimination or differential treatment.	When an athlete feels that has been treated unjust because of one characteristic that she/he possesses, or feels afraid or humiliated.
Intentional (or overt) discrimination	Explicit discriminatory behavior	Verbal antagonism, physical attacks etc.
Unintentional (or subtle) discrimination	Prejudicial attitudes and unconscious beliefs	Nonverbal hostility in posture or tone of voice, avoidance etc.
Statistical discrimination or profiling	In this situation, an individual or a company uses overall beliefs about a group to make decisions about an individual.	When sport managers or decision makers hire coaches and athletes based on 'statistical' characteristics of the groups that they belong and not based on their individual performance or background.
Cumulative discrimination	Refers to the cumulative impact of discrimination.	When a child is discriminated in physical education in school, this child is more likely to avoid organised sports and this might result in experiencing more discriminatory attitudes even later in life, e.g. because of poor motor skills, physical appearance etc.

Moreover, social scientists have articulated that discriminatory behavior follows sequential steps (Allport, 1954, as cited in Panel on Methods for Assessing Discrimination, 2004, p. 56). It might start from verbal antagonism and avoidance, and might end up to physical attacks and even extermination (of an ethnic minority for example). Each step allows the next if people receive support (or just silent consent) for their discriminatory behavior. This is why it is of crucial importance to recognise and deal with discrimination in the early stages. 'Innocent' jokes and improper use of language that reinforces stereotypes and prejudices might set the ground for discrimination to escalate. In the following chapters of this Handbook we try to provide knowledge and practical tools that will help PE teachers and coaches to prevent discrimination or deal with it in the very early stages.



Key points

- ❖ If you are not sure if an individual has been a victim of discrimination, ask yourself this simple question: Would this person have been treated differently if she/he was of another sex, age, ethnicity etc.? If the answer is yes, then this person has been discriminated against.
- ❖ In the eyes of the law, discrimination can be direct or indirect or in the form of an instruction to discriminate; and it can be manifested in the form of harassment.
- ❖ Discrimination occurs in multiple grounds (e.g. race, gender, age etc.). Racism is one of the many faces of discrimination.
- ❖ Discrimination can be very hostile and can result in violence and abuse.
- ❖ There are many forms of discrimination that might not be against the law, but might still have severe consequences.
- ❖ Discriminatory behavior will escalate if it finds support, even if this support is in the form of silent consent.



1.2. Equality in sport: Introducing basic concepts and European policies

According to *Oxford Dictionaries*, equality is defined as the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, or opportunities. Can we all be equal in the world of sport, in which competition (separating the winner from the loser, the strong from the weak, the talented from the average etc.) is a central element? Can the average sport participant (or an athlete with disabilities for example) enjoy the same status, rights, and opportunities with the super talented elite athlete? How can we find the right balance between a good competition and equality for all in sport? These are questions that have puzzled sport philosophers (and people that deal with sport legislation) for a very long time. Sport has the potential to encourage equality, justice, and social inclusion. However, it also reflects the social hierarchies and inequalities that exist in our society. Sport's potential in enhancing social justice and bringing different people, identities, cultures, and nations together, can only become real if specific strategies are directed in achieving these goals (Marivoet, 2014). In this chapter, we introduce the basic concepts that are associated with equality in sport, as well as the main European 'strategies' (public sport policies).

While equality in sport is (or should be) the ultimate objective of the anti-discrimination policies and strategies, as we previously said, by definition the term 'equality' poses major challenges to sport. For example, sport philosophers argue that for equality to be achieved, we would have to give up sex classes in sport (Tännsjö, 2010). Since we have long way to go until equality is really achieved in the field of sports, other key concepts and objectives that are used in institutional level are 'social inclusion in sport' and 'inclusion through sport' (see Marivoet, 2014).

Social inclusion in sport refers to the actual experience of equal opportunities in accessing sport. It is connected to the **sport for all** ideals (for example sport spaces accessible for individuals with disabilities, sport activities available for migrants etc.).



Social inclusion through sport refers to the development of personal, social, motor or other skills of ALL people (so that they will be better integrated to society and less likely to experience discrimination); and the promotion of non-discrimination values, such as team-spirit, **accepting diversity**, and **fair play** (respect for the rules and for equal treatment of all concerned).

Tolerance is another term that is often used in institutional level. While it is often discussed as a positive value, our thesis in this handbook is that it is not. According to *Oxford Dictionaries* the verb 'tolerate' means to allow the existence, occurrence, or practice of (something that one dislikes or disagrees with) without interference and to accept or endure (someone or something unpleasant or disliked) with forbearance. Is it a positive thing to always tolerate things that we dislike? Should we tolerate violence or humiliation for example? Many anti-discrimination campaigns are calling people and organisations to adopt a zero-tolerance attitude towards homophobia and racism for instance; and equality scholars are calling for moving 'beyond tolerance' (DePalma & Atkinson, 2009). Moreover, by using the term tolerance in anti-discrimination policies as a positive value is like considering people that differ from the norm as something unpleasant that we, who are somehow above these people, have to tolerate. Our thesis in this handbook is that instead of tolerance, values such as accepting and embracing diversity should be promoted in and through sports. We all have individual differences anyways and that's the beauty of this world.

In 2007, the European Commission launched the *White Paper on Sport*, in which it proposes a common European sports policy in fighting discrimination in sport and establishing equal opportunities for all. This sports policy document stresses the societal role of sport in generating values such as solidarity and fair play, as well as in contributing to personal development and fulfillment. The Commission further stresses that all people



(regardless of gender, race, age, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation and social or economic background) should have access to sport and the specific needs of underrepresented groups should be addressed. Spaces and sport-related activities should be available (and accessible) to all, including migrants and people with disabilities. Moreover, actions should target at improving access for women and girls at physical education and sport, as well as in management and leadership positions. The Commission calls sport federations to take initiatives to tackle discrimination, and to have procedures in dealing with manifestations of racism and *xenophobia* (dislike or prejudice against people from other countries), as well as any form of harassment.

Answering the call of the European Commission, as well as of sport equality scholars, this Handbook aims to educate PE teachers and coaches on how to facilitate discrimination-free sporting environments and equal opportunities for all.

Key points

- ❖ Sport's potential in enhancing social justice and bringing different people, identities, cultures, and nations together, can only become real if specific strategies are directed in achieving these goals.
- ❖ *Social inclusion in sport* and *social inclusion through sport* are important objectives, in order to make progress towards the ultimate goal, which is equality for all in sport.
- ❖ Anti-discrimination policies and strategies should move beyond *tolerance* and promote values such as accepting and embracing diversity in and through sport.
- ❖ Sport federations/organisations should take initiatives to tackle discrimination and adopt/develop procedures in dealing with discriminative incidents.



Questions to consider

- ❖ In what kind of situations could our personal choices and preferences constitute discrimination?
- ❖ Is it discrimination when a sports club offers a class only for women in which men are not allowed to participate?
- ❖ What is the difference between tolerance and acceptance?
- ❖ What are the values that should be promoted in anti-discrimination policies/strategies/campaigns?
- ❖ What could (or should) sport organisations/federations do in order to tackle discrimination?



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Part 2: The Consequences of Discrimination

2.1 The harmful impact of discrimination on the discriminated individual

Why is it important to treat people fairly and not to discriminate? Of course, as we already discussed in the first chapter of Part 1, discrimination is in many cases illegal and there are strict laws and legal consequences that might be applied to individuals or institutions that discriminate. However, this is not the only reason why we should treat all people fairly. Discrimination (even in the cases that is not against law) has been proved to be associated with very negative effects on the individual that experiences it. These harmful consequences might be psychological, physiological, social, educational, economical, and might have a long lasting and cumulative impact.

This chapter aims to inform PE teachers and coaches on the harmful consequences of discrimination, hoping that this knowledge will motivate them to take action against any form of discrimination. We focus mainly on the physical and psychological impact of discrimination and on the impact on sports and physical activity engagement. Other important consequences of discrimination (such as academic, educational, and economic consequences) are not in the focus of this Handbook. We also highlight the consequences of discrimination in children and youth.

Physical and psychological impact

Discrimination has detrimental effects on the physical and psychological health of the individual that experiences it (and of those who witness it). Studies have shown that perceived discrimination (e.g. feeling treated unjust, feeling excluded, humiliated, or afraid) is associated with elevated health risks. For example, perceived discrimination was found to be associated with poor self-reported physical health (Borrell et al., 2006). People that have experienced discrimination might have physical responses similar to those of post-traumatic stress disorder (Brown, 2015). Research indicates that people belonging to a minority group



have a higher risk of cardiovascular disease and are more likely to be overweight or obese (Conron, Mimiaga, & Landers, 2010). Moreover, people that have experienced discrimination tend to have more detrimental (and even self-harming) health behaviors. This means that they take care of their health less, and they are more vulnerable to developing unhealthy and life-risky habits. For example, several studies on the well-being of LGBTI+ individuals indicate problems such as heavy drinking, substance use, smoking, and unprotected sex (see for example, Chakraborty, McManus, Brugha, Bebbington, & King, 2011; Cochran, Sullivan, & Mays, 2003; Conron, et al., 2010; Haas, et al., 2010; Sandfort, Bakker, Schellevis, & Vanwesenbeeck, 2006).

Discrimination has also emerged as an important risk factor for mental health. For example, perceived racial discrimination was found to be associated with poor mental health (Borell, et al., 2006). Discriminated individuals tend to suffer from stress and anxiety, and have a higher prevalence of developing panic attacks (Chakraborty, et al., 2011; Cochran, et al., 2003). Youth and children that experience discrimination have more delinquency and aggression (e.g. Brown, 2015). Moreover, discriminated individuals tend to be unhappy, suffer from depression and often have self-injurious and suicidal thoughts (e.g. Chakraborty, et al., 2011; Haas, et al., 2010; Kokkonen, 2014). They often feel guilty, internalise feelings of inferiority, and construct a negative picture about their selves and their physical and mental abilities (Speight, 2007). Furthermore, they are in higher risk of developing neurotic symptoms and mental disorders. For example, research on the mental health of LGBTI+ individuals reveals associations with neurotic disorders, generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, phobic disorder and psychosis (Chakraborty, et al., 2011).

Children and youth are more vulnerable to the consequences of discrimination, even when they are not aware of it. In general, children under the age of ten are less likely to perceive discrimination, because their cognitive sophistication (that would allow them to detect such incidents) is not fully developed yet (Brown, 2015). This means that they are not cognitively mature enough to detect these incidents. However, regardless the perception (being aware or



unaware), discrimination can have considerable consequences for the developmental outcomes of children and youth. To rephrase an example provided by Brown (2015), a child might be excluded from a sports team, not because of her or his actual skills, but because of stereotypes around a group or category that the child belongs to (e.g. because of the child's gender, size, ethnicity etc.). That child might be unaware that discrimination has occurred, and may assume instead that his or her physical skills are poor. This experience will affect the child's self-esteem and the future attitudes regarding sport and physical activity. In another scenario, the child might detect the discrimination and recognises that she or he has been treated unfairly. This is a different psychological experience that will result to different psychological and behavioral outcomes, such as mistrust and aggression.

Moreover, according to the Canadian Red Cross (2007), children and youth (because of their age, size, inexperience, dependence etc.) are more vulnerable to elevated forms of discrimination, such as violence and harassment (physical, sexual, and emotional). Painful psychosocial and health-related costs are associated with violence against children, which often occurs in settings that children should be safe, by people that children trust, and usually remains silenced and secret (Canadian Red Cross, 2007). Moreover, the Canadian Red Cross points out that some children and youth are at even higher risk than others. For example, children with disabilities, aboriginal and ethnic minority children, as well as sexual minority youth, are in special need of protection.

Impact on sports and physical activity engagement

Discrimination and prejudice do not only influence the well-being of the individual, but also the individual's behavior and choices. The individual will probably start avoiding any social settings and interactions in which she/he might encounter negative attitudes (Aulin, 2013; Brown, 2015). This applies also to the physical activity and sport engagement. For example, Kokkonen's (2014) study on sexual minorities in Finland, as well as Aulin's (2013) autoethnographic account, reveal that individuals that have experienced discriminatory behavior in sport and physical education (by coaches, PE teachers, teammates and peers)



might be afraid of going to the training or the PE classes, and might consider changing sport, coach, or team, or even giving up sport and physical activity in general.

As previously mentioned, children that experience discrimination in school (and in physical education), are more likely to develop a low self-esteem and to feel less confident about their physical and mental skills and abilities (e.g. Brown, 2015). Also, they have lower motivation and performance in the sporting settings in which they have experienced discrimination (e.g. Aulin, 2013).

It is very important that sport and physical activity settings are discrimination and violence-free and all children and youth feel safe. Only in such conditions athletes will flourish and optimize their performance (International Olympic Committee, 2007). Coaches and PE teachers have an important role in achieving this. In the chapters that follow, we discuss how coaches and PE teachers can facilitate an inclusive and safe training environment (see Part 3), as well as how they should act when incidents of discrimination occur (see Part 4).

Key points

- ❖ Discrimination has negative consequences to the physical and psychological health, not just of those who directly experience it, but also of those who witness it.
- ❖ Discrimination has also social and educational consequences for the individual, as it affects behavior and choices in life.
- ❖ Children are more vulnerable to elevated forms of discrimination, such as violence and harassment.
- ❖ Children that belong to minority categories are in even greater risk and are in special need of protection.
- ❖ Experiences of discrimination in sport and physical activity might affect decisions regarding sport engagement and might even lead to a sedentary lifestyle.
- ❖ Coaches and PE teachers have an important role in facilitating inclusive training environments in which all children feel safe.



2.2. The impact of discrimination on team health and performance

Discrimination does not only have negative consequences for the individual that experiences it, but it affects society as a whole. Discrimination in a society may fuel conflicts, crisis, and even wars. The consequences may be several and they might affect the overall economic, educational and life satisfaction levels of all the members of a society.

Incidents of discrimination, violence, and harassment also damage organisational health. For example, businesses and organisations that fail to manage diversity effectively and take action against discrimination, suffer from bad working relationships and atmosphere, and have less satisfied, committed, and motivated workers (e.g. Ensher, Grant-Vallone, & Donaldson 2001; Settles, Buchanan, & Yap, 2010). This lack of work satisfaction and commitment might even result in performance and financial problems for the organisation (Settles, et al., 2010). The same thing applies to sport teams and organisations (International Olympic Committee, 2007; Stura & Lepadatu, 2014).

This chapter aims to inform coaches and PE teachers on the general consequences that discrimination might have to their PE class or sport team. These consequences go beyond the impact that discrimination has to the discriminated individual, as they affect the general atmosphere in the group and the behavior and psyche of everybody involved.

Legal and economic effects of discrimination in sport clubs and schools

As mentioned earlier (Part 1), discrimination is in most cases illegal. The law can be especially strict when the victims are children and youth. Sport clubs and schools that are not able to protect their students or young sport participants from such incidents might face legal, financial, and moral consequences (International Olympic Committee, 2007). Incidents of discrimination might also affect the overall image and popularity of the school or the sports club. In the case of sport clubs, negative incidents might even affect sponsorship and media coverage. For example, professional basketball team owner Donald Sterling was recently suspended for life for making racist statements in a secretly recorded private conversation



(Swaine, 2014), and the British boxer Tyson Fury has been fined for making public homophobic comments (Davies, 2015).

Impact on group dynamics, cohesion, and performance

In today's globalised world, managing diversity within a PE class or a sports team is a challenging task for all teachers and coaches. Several problems can occur in a team if the coach fails to successfully manage heterogeneity and tackle discrimination, such as internal conflicts and tensions (Stura & Lepadatu, 2014). These conflicts might include 'scapegoating' of people who are different, and in-group – out-group divisions. Scapegoating refers to a situation where a team is not performing well, and people who are 'different' get blamed for that. This is associated with stereotypes and prejudice within a team, and in periods of crisis (or bad performance) might even result to verbal and physical attacks to minority individuals. In-group – out-group divisions refers to the separation of the team members into smaller (and often antagonistic) groups. Personal characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, and age stimulate the determinations for in-group and out-group membership.

All these problems will consequently lead to lower levels of team cohesion, productivity, and performance (Stura & Lepadatu, 2014). In general, in order to perform well, a sports team requires cooperative interdependence and a positive atmosphere in which all athletes feel welcome and safe. Diversity can be a valuable asset for a team when a coach knows how to use and take advantage of (cultural, physical, and other) individual differences, and has the leadership skills to facilitate a co-operative and discrimination-free environment.



Key points

- ❖ Sport clubs and schools that are not able to protect their students or young sport participants from discrimination and violence, might face legal, financial, and moral consequences.
- ❖ Several problems can occur in a team if the coach fails to successfully manage diversity and tackle discrimination, such as internal conflicts/tensions and lower levels of team cohesion, productivity, and performance.
- ❖ In order to perform well, a sports team requires cooperative interdependence and a positive atmosphere in which all athletes feel welcome and safe.
- ❖ Diversity can be a valuable asset for a team when a coach knows how to take advantage of individual differences, and has the leadership skills to facilitate a cooperative and discrimination-free environment.

Questions to consider

- ❖ Is discrimination ever legal? Can you list some examples of lawful discrimination in sport?
- ❖ Is lawful discrimination innocent and harmless? What kind of consequences can it have?



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Part 3: Prevention of Discrimination

3.1. Inclusive language, practices, and facilities

In order to prevent discrimination from occurring, it is essential to facilitate an inclusive and cooperative environment, in which all students/athletes feel safe. The language and the practices used when instructing sport and physical education, as well as the availability of proper and safe spaces and facilities, play an important role in creating such environments. This chapter aims to educate coaches and PE teachers in using proper language and practices, and providing (or doing the best in their power to provide) inclusive and safe facilities.

Language

Language reflects and shapes our experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Depending on how it is used, it can become the vehicle through which stereotypes and prejudices are reproduced, or it can become a powerful tool in instigating social change and promoting equality. Coaches and PE teachers should thus pay attention to the kind of language that they use.

Firstly, the instructions should always be clear, providing concrete information, and emphasising the most essential task cues. Providing clear instructions would make it easier for every participant to follow them. Coaches and PE teachers could make their verbal instructions even more comprehensible by demonstrating the tasks with their own bodies and movements. Using clear language and demonstrating with body movements, helps not only those with special education needs, or immigrant students that might be struggling with their new language, but all learners.

Secondly, attention to the selection of words is important. When the teacher/coach uses sensitive language, she/he should use the appropriate terms concerning genders, ethnic groups, or disabilities. This can often be a complex task, but we need to understand that our language choices have consequences, and the choices of a teacher or coach can affect in many ways the learning processes and outcomes of the students/athletes. For example, if the teacher



chooses the term ‘men’s push-ups’ instead of ‘push-ups’, what kind of values and stereotypes does she/he mediate to the students?

Challenges in using proper language in teaching or coaching can be related to teacher’s own stereotypes concerning, for example, gender (as in the previous example of instructing push-ups), ethnicity, or another characteristic that the person might hold. The term stereotype refers to a simplified, exaggerated belief, which is related to a certain group or individual. In this case, an individual is assessed based on the group where she/he belongs to, and she/he is not mainly seen as an individual (see Hall, 2003). Today’s globalised world is characterised by multiculturalism, a phenomenon that is explosively increasing in Europe, and it is also evidently reflected in our sporting cultures. Thus, being sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of our students/athletes, and paying attention to the language that we use when instructing diversified groups of sporting participants, is becoming increasingly important.

A teacher/coach might also hold stereotypical beliefs of certain sports and physical activities. For example, one can think of some sports as more suitable for women or men (e.g. dance can be seen as a feminine activity, while ice hockey as masculine). By talking of a sport/activity as more appropriate for a certain group of people, or talking about individual preferences in choosing a sport over another as being natural and biological, teachers and coaches might end up reinforcing and reproducing gender stereotypes (Schwery et al., 2013). Gender stereotypes might affect the gender socialisation of our students/athletes, as well as the overall gender equality in sports, and can encourage discriminative attitudes towards women and sexual minorities in sport.

Moreover, teachers/coaches can also see some sports as less appreciated than others. Such beliefs might influence the ways that PE teachers or coaches speak about (or to) certain students/athletes. We need to be aware of our own stereotypes (and how these are reflected in the ways we talk and teach), because the identities of children and young people are often shaped through the embodiment of sporting experiences.



Practices

Adopting an anti-discriminatory pedagogy and employing inclusive teaching methods and practices is also crucial for enhancing equality in sport. Anti-discriminatory pedagogy is defined as various pedagogical tools intended to prevent different forms of discrimination (Renko, Larja, Liebkind, & Solares, 2012). For example, making minorities more visible in sports, or promoting/supporting sporting activities that come from other cultures, can be small means of instigating big changes.

Collaborative learning can be used as an inclusive teaching method. In collaborative group work, each participant's work is needed and appreciated; and the role/responsibility of each participant, not only in achieving the given task, but also in guarding the welfare of the group is emphasised. In this kind of learning environment, nobody should feel an outsider, and every participant should feel like having an important role to play. At its best, this kind of approach has the potential to promote equality between the participants.

Moreover, Paluck and Green (2009) have suggested the use of role-playing in anti-discriminatory work and pedagogy. Role-playing that is designed to be sensitive to the emotions of the individuals has the potential to improve the relations between different groups (Stephan & Stephan, 2001, pp. 65-66).

Addressing the prejudices and stereotypes of participants is also one way to work against discrimination. However, this pedagogical approach has to be used with caution, as it can lead to undesirable outcomes, such as strengthening stereotypes instead of questioning them (Paluck & Green, 2009).

Besides managing diversity and promoting inclusion, the activities should remain age-appropriate and fun (Schwery et al., 2013). Schwery and colleagues have also suggested that digital innovation could also be applied in promoting inclusion, as it is nowadays popular among children and fun to use. For instance, an online discussion forum for children could encourage constructive communication and exchange of ideas.



To sum up, physical education and sport have the potential to promote many kinds of positive values and even behaviours, if teachers and coaches pay attention to their language and practices. For example, PE teachers' cooperative teaching methods (Polvi & Telama, 2000) and democratic and socially supportive behaviour (Kokkonen, Kokkonen, Telama, & Liukkonen, 2011) have been found to be linked to students' prosocial behaviour, namely helping, whereas teachers' verbal aggression, for example, negatively associates with pupils' prosocial fair play behaviour (Hassandra et al., 2007).

Facilities

Providing safe, welcoming, and accessible spaces for all is another important step for tackling institutionalised discrimination in sport. For example, providing accessible spaces for individuals with disabilities is important in enhancing equality. Also, providing gender-neutral bathrooms, showers, and locker rooms is important for including transgender and gender non-conforming people in our sporting activities, as these people may experience difficulties and even harassment when using gender specific facilities (see for example Kokkonen, 2014).



Key points

- ❖ To prevent discrimination from occurring, it is important to facilitate learning environments that are suitable for all kinds of learners.
- ❖ The use of clear, sensitive, and proper language is very important in facilitating inclusive environments.
- ❖ In addition to the verbal instructions, teachers and coaches could demonstrate the tasks with their own bodies and movements. This way, participants that might have problems with understanding the teacher's or coach's spoken language, can also follow.
- ❖ Teachers and coaches should be aware of their own values, stereotypes and behaviour, because they are important role models for the young people.
- ❖ Teachers' use of language and cooperative teaching methods also play a role in the enhancement of prosocial behaviours (fair play, helping) in children, which is also needed when tackling discrimination and exclusion in sporting contexts.
- ❖ Providing safe inclusive facilities for all is an important step for tackling institutionalised discrimination.



3.2. Empowering youth through sport

We can consider anti-discriminatory teaching and coaching also in the frames of empowerment, which is an important concept for teachers and coaches to understand and incorporate in their teachings. When individuals gain mastery over their lives, and learn and utilise skills for influencing life events, they can become empowered (Rappaport, 1987). Empowerment has a huge influence on children's and young people's well-being, and that is why teachers and coaches should receive education on the kinds of pedagogy that might strengthen or hinder empowerment. This chapter aims to fulfill this objective.

The concept of empowerment is multi-dimensional, and it might be defined and understood differently, depending on the theoretical framework that we employ. Empowerment relates to many theories, one of the major ones being the critical social theory, which emphasises the development of conditions for enhancing the well-being of oppressed and minority groups (Freire, 1972). The concept relates also to the theories of the organisation, which aim to improve the sense of community and inclusion. In addition to these, empowerment is connected to social psychological theories. Common to all these approaches is a humanistic philosophy and way of thinking that centralises the welfare of the individual (Fetterman 2005; Peterson & Zimmerman, 63, 2004).

Internal experience of empowerment is constructed individually and studies have shown that it is closely linked to a safe atmosphere and environment (eg. Grimmert, 1996). Therefore, it is important that everybody in a sport group feels that she/he is welcome and appreciated. When an individual reaches experiences of success, self-esteem and self-confidence, at the same time her/his self-image and identity are strengthened (Neufelt & Grimmert, 1994). A teacher or a coach is always an educator and sport has the potential both to improve and inhibit an individual's personal growth. Willingness to encourage every individual within a group and act against discrimination is a good start in empowering through sport.



Key points:

- ❖ When individuals gain mastery over their lives, and learn and utilise skills for influencing life events, they can become empowered.
- ❖ Empowerment is closely linked to a safe atmosphere within a physical education class or a sports club.
- ❖ A teacher or a coach is always an educator and sport has the potential both to improve and inhibit an individual's personal growth.
- ❖ Empowerment has a huge influence on children's and young people's well-being, and that is why teachers and coaches should receive education on what kind of pedagogical approaches can empower youth through sport.



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Part 4: Dealing with Discriminative and Violent Incidents

As we already discussed in Part 3 of this Handbook, a key strategy for tackling discrimination is creating a climate that prevents discriminatory incidents occurring. This means promoting equality, embracing diversity, facilitating inclusive and safe for all environments, and leaving absolutely no space for prejudice. We also discussed the preventive role of exemplary adults, such as coaches and PE teachers. Children are not born discriminative; they learn this behavior by observing others. Adults (whether teachers or coaches) might prevent discrimination from occurring by serving as role models and paying attention to their own behaviour.

Sadly, however, despite following preventive measures, discriminatory incidents occur in sports and physical education. When they do, coaches and PE teachers need to feel confident to report, investigate and take action on these. This chapter aims to support coaches and PE teachers to deal with discriminatory incidents with commitment and confidence.

Internal non-discrimination procedures

Schools and sport organisations are required to comply with the European non-discrimination law and to develop own policies and procedures in order to follow the national laws (see for example, the *White Paper on Sport* launched by the European Commission in 2007). It is suggested that all personnel that works with children and youth should be familiar with the internal anti-discrimination procedures of their school/club/organisation and should be trained on how to deal with discriminatory incidents (if not, this topic could be discussed in the parental or coach meetings).

If your school or sports club has developed internal non-discrimination procedures, get familiar to those and follow them if an incident happens. Make sure that you know who are the people that you should conduct in order to report an incident, and what are the forms that



you might have to fill in. Do not hesitate to ask for help if you feel unsure about a situation and how to deal with it. Remember that the worst thing that you can do is to ignore an incident or avoid dealing with a problem, and to believe that it will solve itself or disappear with time.

If your school or sports club does not have developed internal non-discrimination procedures yet, several guidelines and recommended procedures have been published for dealing with specific types of discrimination in schools or sporting contexts. For example, for tackling issues of violence and harassment in spaces that children and youth spend time, the Canadian Red Cross (2007) has published step-wise guidelines. For dealing with discriminative incidents in school, see Reading's (2012) guide. For dealing with bullying in schools, several projects or antibullying programmes have been developed, such as the 'Bergen Project' by Dan Olweus (2013) in Norway and Sweden, the 'Sheffield Project' by Peter Smith (2014) in England, 'KiVa' by Christina Salmivalli (Salmivalli, Kärnä, & Poskiparta, 2010) in Finland, and 'solution-focused anti-bullying' by Young (2009). Also, useful resources can be found in the webpages of *eschooltoday.com*; <http://www.kivaprogram.net/> and <http://www.playbytherules.net.au/>.

To our knowledge, there are no specific guidelines published for dealing with incidents of discrimination in physical education and grassroots sports. The following steps are shaped by the above mentioned documents, projects, and resources, as well as by the European non-discrimination laws and policies (see for example, *White Paper on Sport*).

Step 1: Acknowledge the incident and respond immediately

Never ignore an incident, even if you are unsure about the situation. If something comes to your attention, take it seriously. A child or youth might come and tell you about an incident. Hear the disclosure carefully and sympathetically and acknowledge her/his courage to tell. Also pay attention to his/her non-verbal messages, such as facial expressions, gestures, and body posture. At times you observe a discriminative incident yourself, or another person has



witnessed an incident, and shares this information with you. In these cases, contact the victim immediately and let him/her know of what you have seen or been told. Be prepared for devaluation or denial at first, and try to continue the discussion to get more information. After that, also contact the primary perpetrator, and others involved.

Step 2: Investigate the incident separately and together

Listen to all parties singly. Ask questions to figure out who was involved, when and where the incident happened and who might have been affected and how. When discussing with the victim, make sure that he/she knows that you support him/her fully, and that the discrimination is unacceptable, and never his/her fault. Support the victim by making sure that she/he is safe and assuring that any kind of discriminatory behavior will not be tolerated. In your discussion with the person who has discriminated and those who have witnessed the incident without intervening, focus on their comments or behaviour, rather than them as a person. Also let them know that any form of discrimination is unacceptable. After the private discussions, see all the parties together and give them a chance in resolving the situation. An apology is in order. In addition, ask for what should be different in the future so that discriminative incidents would not happen. The teachers and coaches (because they are adults) should also ask the parties of what kind of help do they need from the adults to be able to prevent this from happening again. And let's not just assume that the parties are always children and youth. Even in the case where one teacher/coach finds out that his/her colleague or a parent has behaved discriminatively, this instructions can be applied.

Step 3: Report (and record) the incident

Inform parents, teachers, coaches etc. of the incident, the conciliation, and the future follow-up. Report to the police if the incident involves abuse or criminal behaviour. Ensure that the incident is recorded.



Step 5: Analyse the incident

Consider what were the underlying issues and why did this incident occur. What should be done in order to avoid such incident in the future? How can you add positive, empowering elements that promote diversity into a PE class or training ? How can you do more of those positive things that you are doing already as a PE teacher or a coach ?

Step 6: Follow up the incident

The teacher / coach should meet the parties independently and together after a while and find out how things have been recently. Parties should know that this kind of follow-up procedure is to be expected after a certain period of time (say, after two weeks).

Key points

- ❖ Never ignore an incident, even if you are not sure about what exactly happened or how you should deal with it.
- ❖ Discuss with everyone who has been involved: the victim, the primary perpetrator, and those who have witnessed the incident. Have both individual and group discussions with an emphasis on what happened and how it was experienced.
- ❖ Be clear and firm: discrimination is never tolerated, and never the fault of the victim.
- ❖ Give everyone a chance to describe the incident from a personal perspective. Also give a chance for an apology and forgiveness.
- ❖ Take also preventive actions: follow up the incident, offer your help, find time to strengthen the positive both in people and in procedures.



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