An Overview of the Sport-Related Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children

Kirsty Burrows
Olawale Maiyegun
Daniel Rhind
Dorothy Rozga
Agenda

- Overview and Introduction
- Impacts Associated with absence of sport
- Impact on children in special situations
- Other impacts & Call to Action
Overview

Child Protection practitioners
Child Rights experts
Athlete safeguarding experts
Introduction

Around
How sport can indirectly affect the lives of children

Through
Safeguarding & empowering children beyond the context of sport

In
Ensuring that children can participate / compete safely
Overview and Introduction

Impacts Associated with absence of sport

Impact on children in special situations

Other impacts & Call to Action
Sport as a safe haven

- Globally, it is estimated that up to 1 billion children aged 2 - 17 years have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect in the past year
- Harassment and abuse occurs in sport, however
- Sport can also provide a safe haven, which due to shelter-in-place and quarantine policies, has been taken away

“Contacts to our helpline about the impact of domestic abuse on children have increased by 32%...”

A national assessment ... revealed beatings by parents or guardians had increased by 42% and that there was a 40% increase of calls to the child helpline…”

“Up to 85 million more girls and boys worldwide may be exposed to physical, sexual and/or emotional violence over three months as a result of COVID-19 quarantine…”
“What began as a health crisis risks evolving into a broader child-rights crisis”

UN Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 on Children
Mental Health

- Studies have reported psychiatric manifestations of COVID-19 and threats to mental health
- Evidence demonstrates that sports participation may protect against mental health symptoms and disorders
- The restriction of sports participation may therefore have a detrimental impact to young people’s mental health and well-being
Physical health

- Direct physical health consequences
- Indirect risks posed through the restriction of participation in sport and physical activity

Nutrition

- Good nutrition is essential for physical and mental well-being in education and sport.
- The COVID-19 pandemic places children from low-income households in all countries at nutritional risk.
- This is particularly true in countries that already had prior to the onset of the pandemic a high burden of under-nutrition and those affected by humanitarian crisis.
- Impact on child health, and return to sport
Overview and Introduction

Impacts Associated with absence of sport

Impact on children in special situations

Other impacts & Call to Action
Sport-Related Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children
Children in Special Situations

Olawale Maiyegun
Children in Vulnerable and Special Situations

All children are vulnerable but some are more vulnerable than others:

- Poor/Low Income/Unstable homes
- Girls
- Children with Disabilities
- Humanitarian Situation - Refugee camps; Migrants detention centers; IDPs, Migrant children/Irregular undocumented; Children on the move, etc.
- Children in Sport Academies
- Elites Sports
Children in Special Situations: Poor Homes

- Poor/Low Income/Unstable homes
- The protective factor/safe space that their participation in sport may have provided has been taken away
- Magnifying Inequalities
- Sexual exploitation
- Child labor
Children in Special Situations: Girls

- Girls/Girl-Child
- COVID-19 has taken away the safe space and social-emotional outlet that their participation in sport may have provided.
- Sexual exploitation, child marriage and related harmful practices
- Child labour
Children with Disabilities

- Disproportionately affected by Covid
- Currently no data on how Covid affect child athletes with disability
- Sport is a powerful tool for promoting a sense of inclusion
- Lack of access to accessible or individualized online programs
- Lack of regular interaction with coaches
- Reduction or absence of support or therapeutic services
Humanitarian Situation

Humanitarian Situation - Refugee camps; Migrants detention centers; IDPs, Migrant children/Irregular undocumented; Children on the move, etc.

- Humanitarian services disrupted including program delivery of sport and recreational activities
- Negative impact of sport cancelation on mental health
- Sport can be a powerful tool for promoting a sense of inclusion
- Child labour, trafficking and smuggling
- Sexual exploitation
Children in Sport Academies and Elite Sport

- Lost and Shattered dreams
- Some Academies will not reopen due to financial problems
- Will these minors have to reimburse the costs the academy has incurred (OHCHR 2019)? Where will they go? And how will exacerbated risks of children in limbo be addressed, for example trafficked children stranded with no club or academy recruiting them? (OHCHR 2019)
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Other impacts & Call to Action
The impacts of COVID on children and sport:

Other impacts and a call to action

Dr. Daniel Rhind
eSports

• The global eSports audience is expected to reach 495 million in 2020 (newzoo.com 2020).

• McBean & Martin (2019) found that 1 in 3 female gamers had experienced abuse or discrimination, including being sent inappropriate content, verbal abuse or threats

• How do we regulate to ensure effective safeguards in this space?
Financial Implications

• Pressure on the budgets of States and businesses which support sport

• Establishing the relationship between child rights and playing sport, and sport and the protection and fulfillment of rights, will be critical.

• The Aspen Institute (2019) found that in the USA only 22% of children from homes with incomes under $25,000 a year play sports, compared to 43% of children from homes with incomes greater than $100,000 a year.
Education

- UNESCO indicated that 194 countries had implemented nationwide or localised closures of educational institutions, affecting 91.3% of the world's enrolled learners.

- Will sport be sacrificed to make way for other ‘core’ subjects

- Extra curricula activities are also likely to be limited which will impact sport
Opportunities

• Will people appreciate the value of sport

• Sports organisations have come together to share funding and resources (e.g. Laureus)

• Good practices can be retained (e.g. improved hygiene, greater consideration of inclusivity)

• Build back safer – International Safeguards for Children in Sport
A Call to Action

• More research
• Stakeholders need to mitigate these impacts
• Guidance is required to support these efforts
• Build capacity to support children
• Listen to children
• Build back better
• Sport can help us achieve the 2030 UN SDGs
• Children should know how to report concerns
• Build resilience
Here is a link to the full paper:


Please share any questions or comments