

1 **Coaches' perceptions of Sport Education: A Response to Precarity through a**  
2 **Pedagogy of Affect.**

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5 **Abstract**

6 *Purpose:* The aim of this study was to investigate coaches' perceptions of using sport  
7 education (SE) for the first time with socially vulnerable children in order explore its  
8 suitability for equipping young people living in precarity with the skills they need to  
9 take positive action to challenge their socially vulnerable backgrounds. In doing so, we  
10 want to explore what experiences of learning to use SE these coaches had, and what  
11 their perspectives of the children's learning were.

12 *Settings and participants:* The study developed in a community-based program in three  
13 economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods with high rates of delinquency in a city in  
14 Central Spain. The programme is run by a non-governmental organization and is funded  
15 by several public institutions and private donations. The study included three youth  
16 workers who acted as coaches and 31 nine- to eleven-year-olds from different ethnic  
17 groups.

18 *Programme:* The SE season comprised 36 one-hour sessions which included an  
19 introduction to SE and the activity called ringo (two lessons), a preseason (14 lessons),  
20 a season (18 lessons) and culminating event preparation and celebration (two lessons).  
21 Ringo is a net game, which was chosen to improve participation.

22 *Data collection/analysis:* Four focus groups were conducted with the coaches, and an  
23 open analysis format was followed, using open-ended questions. The first author also  
24 kept a diary of his experience as a participant observer, including field notes and

1 participation in focus groups. The data were transcribed verbatim and analysed through  
2 thematic analysis.

3 *Findings:* Three major results were found. First, although coaches perceived that sport  
4 had a great potential for children to get several benefits, the quality of the pedagogical  
5 strategies they used to implement before the study did not allow them to reach those  
6 benefits. Second, SE gave the coaches the possibility to enact an ethic of care with  
7 participant children; emotional labour played a key role in that process, allowing  
8 coaches to care both for children and for themselves. Third, coaches appreciated how  
9 SE features, especially competition, teams, festivity, and the culminating event,  
10 favoured motivation and engagement, what improved behaviour and the assumption of  
11 roles responsibilities.

12 *Conclusions:* Sport *per se* is not enough to teach ethical conduct. However, a quality  
13 programme which exposes young people to the stimuli they need, and efficient physical  
14 educators who can develop the programme properly and with a coherent attitude are  
15 necessary. Pre-service education for any future professional working with youth from  
16 socially vulnerable backgrounds (teachers, coaches, youth workers) should consider the  
17 need of teaching pedagogies of affect like SE as well as the development of an ethic of  
18 care and emotional labour.

19

20 **Keywords:** Pedagogies of affect; sport education; social vulnerability; ethic of care;  
21 emotional labour

22

23

## 1 **Introduction**

2 Young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds typically experience multiple  
3 disadvantages in terms of education, health, drug abuse, and domestic violence, among  
4 other factors (Lugueti et al. 2017). As many teachers and other youth workers know,  
5 young people experiencing social vulnerability do not necessarily accept their situation  
6 passively. Often, they express disruptive or antisocial behaviour, reject expectations for  
7 civic responsibilities, and disengage from educational activities (Haudenhyse et al.  
8 2012). Young people's responses to social vulnerability involve in many cases truancy,  
9 exclusions, anger, alienation, and underachievement. These responses match closely to  
10 young people's experience of precarity, which Standing (2016) claims involve the 4 As  
11 of anger, anxiety, alienation, and anomie. Precarity, for Standing, links poor mental  
12 health with uncertain employment and the instability and unpredictability this brings to  
13 the lives of workers and their families.

14         There is a close relationship between young people who live in precarity and  
15 physical activity and health. Precarious living and the social vulnerability it engenders  
16 go beyond the four As described by Standing (2016), and includes other risks to health  
17 associated to sedentariness, poor diets and disordered eating, and polluted  
18 environments. Kirk (2020) presents a short overview of recent research to demonstrate  
19 this relationship in the areas of physical and mental health, internet and social media,  
20 body image, and social vulnerability. The conclusion is that physical inactivity appears  
21 to be a major factor in poor health, especially in socially vulnerable children and young  
22 people whose experience of obesity is increasing, unlike their more affluent peers (Kirk  
23 2020). The inequalities evident here are amplified since sedentariness tracks between  
24 childhood and adulthood (Engström 2008; Trost 2006). What is more, precarity is a  
25 major factor not only in poor physical health but also in mental health. In both cases,

1 these trends impact to a greater degree on socially vulnerable young people and girls in  
2 particular (Engström 2008; Trost 2006).

3 This literature shows there is a demonstrated need for socially vulnerable young  
4 people to access good quality physical education and sport programmes, since those  
5 forms of physical activity especially tailored to their needs can provide them with  
6 resources to overcome the detrimental effects of living with social vulnerability  
7 produced by precarity. In order to know what kinds of physical education might best  
8 suit these young people's needs, in the next section we will discuss the notion of social  
9 vulnerability in more detail. Then we will explain the notion of pedagogies of affect  
10 (Kirk, 2020), taking special consideration on the role of the ethic of care within these  
11 pedagogies. Finally, we conclude with the description of sport education (SE) as a  
12 pedagogy of affect, as the purposes of this study was to investigate the coaches'  
13 experiences of learning to use SE, and their perspectives on the learning of the children  
14 from socially vulnerable backgrounds they worked with.

### 15 ***Social vulnerability***

16 According to Luguetti, Oliver, Kirk, et al. (2017), we use the term 'youth from socially  
17 vulnerable backgrounds' because we consider other terms such as 'disaffected youth'  
18 (Sandford & Duncombe 2006), or 'at-risk youth' (Jiménez Martín 2008) tend to put the  
19 focus on the individual, rather than in the complexity of social structures children and  
20 young people live in. In other words, when the focus is put on the individual, we tend to  
21 blame the youth for the problems they experience. In doing so, and paraphrasing  
22 Fitzpatrick (2013), we blame youth for problems not of their own making. In contrast to  
23 this, we consider children and young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds are  
24 the victims of those complex social structures where they unfortunately were born and  
25 have to live with and survive.

1 For a better understanding of social vulnerability, we draw in the work of  
2 Misztal (2011). Misztal reveals three forms of vulnerability. A first form of  
3 vulnerability is dependence on others; we all need to be cared for others and not be  
4 alone in the world. This form of vulnerability differs from one person to another,  
5 depending on social support, welfare and labour market protection (Misztal, 2011). A  
6 second form of vulnerability refers to the differences among people for coping with the  
7 complexity of the situations they live in; different people have different human  
8 experience and action, that is, they have different capabilities to achieve and sustain the  
9 balance between autonomy and dependence. A third form of vulnerability is that actions  
10 are irreversible, we cannot free ourselves from the wrongdoings. What is more, “the  
11 predicament of irreversibility endows an ordinary life with past pains and suffering, and  
12 so limits our capacity for self-protection and cooperation with others” (Misztal 2011, p.  
13 95).

14 Instead of letting ourselves be carried away by the difficulties posed by all this  
15 complex social tangle, our position agrees with that of Freire (1979). Freire appeals to  
16 the full consciousness of the individual based on action, of being in the world. Changing  
17 reality is possible under a transformative attitude, and we all have been called to an  
18 open proposal to the collective construction of a socio-educational-cultural project.

### 19 ***Pedagogies of affect in physical education and sport.***

20 Physical education scholars have sought for appropriate pedagogical responses to social  
21 vulnerability and precarity (Lugueti, Oliver and Parker 2020), in the belief that active  
22 engagement in purposeful physical activity can be a means of building a ‘sense of  
23 coherence’ in young people’s lives (McCuaig and Quennerstedt 2018). Kirk (2020)  
24 describes how some of pedagogical models have been implemented with children and  
25 young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds. Kirk (2020, p.151) defines these

1 models as critical pedagogies for school physical education, which involve “the  
2 organization and alignment of curriculum, teaching, learning, and assessment in ways  
3 that render physical education inclusive, fair, and equitable as an embodied experience  
4 for young people, in order to empower them”. Moreover, in order to emphasize their  
5 focus on the ‘affective domain’, he describes them as ‘critical pedagogies of affect’. The  
6 examples he provides of critical pedagogies of affect are Teaching Personal and Social  
7 Responsibility (TPSR) (Hellison, 2011), Activist Approaches to working with girls in  
8 physical education (Lugueti et al. 2017; Oliver and Kirk, 2015), and some forms of SE,  
9 the pedagogical model used in this study.

10 SE seeks to make all students’ sport experiences in PE more authentic  
11 (Siedentop 1994). To achieve this purpose, Siedentop (1994) identified six basic  
12 features of SE: seasons; affiliation through persisting groups; formal competition; a  
13 culminating event; record keeping; and festivity. Furthermore, students participating in  
14 a SE season have to perform a role apart from player, e.g., coach, referee, or manager.  
15 According to Kirk (2020), SE can be considered a critical pedagogy due to three  
16 structural features described by Hastie, Martínez de Ojeda, and Calderón Luquín  
17 (2011), which are fair play, inclusion (due to students’ membership in persisting  
18 groups) and the goal of becoming enthusiastic players, certainly concerned with  
19 personal and social development, attitudes and values.

20 For pedagogies of affect to be effective, the role of physical educators and  
21 coaches is of considerable importance. Kirk (2020) claimed for physical educators  
22 working with young people living in precarity, they must be committed, caring,  
23 resilient, and persistent. We think that claim can be extrapolated to all areas of physical  
24 activity pedagogy to relieve social vulnerability, even more when it comes to non-  
25 formal education, including coaches who work with children and young people from

1 socially vulnerable backgrounds. Specifically, we would like to highlight the need for  
2 physical educators to have the ability to enact an ethic of care (Owens and Ennis 2005).  
3 The basic assumption of the ethic of care is the reciprocal relationship between teachers  
4 and students. Following Noddings (1992, p. 395), “caring teachers seek to recapture  
5 their own most caring moments and convey those feelings to their students”. In doing  
6 so, caring teachers put into practice several types of activities, such as modelling,  
7 dialogue, practice, and confirmation. Modelling are those activities in which they  
8 demonstrate how to care. Dialogue consists of listening, sharing, and responding,  
9 coming into contact with students’ ideas and understandings. Practice provides  
10 opportunities for students to develop attitudes and ways of viewing the world,  
11 enhancing their capacity to care. Finally, confirmation consists of affirming and  
12 encouraging the best in students, which allows a positive relation with them.

### 13 *Sport Education as a pedagogy of affect*

14 Although SE has been implemented in both primary and secondary schools to teach  
15 ethical conduct (decisions and behaviours related to issues such as inclusion, ownership,  
16 personal and social responsibility, and social justice) with apparent success (Hastie et al.  
17 2011), only three forms of SE have been identified as critical pedagogies of affect (Kirk  
18 2020). Ennis et al. (1999) developed Sport for Peace, a curriculum model combining SE  
19 structure and roles development with strategies for conflict negotiation, the requirement  
20 that all students play during every classes, and rules guiding students’ positions and  
21 responsibilities. In another study, Hastie and Buchanan (2000) designed a hybrid model,  
22 integrating SE and Personal and Social Responsibility (Hellison 2011). A third form of  
23 SE that Kirk (2020) considers a pedagogy of affect is the Cultural Studies Curriculum  
24 (O’Sullivan and Kinchin 2015). This pedagogical model integrates meaningful physical

1 activities and strategies (e.g. autobiographical assignments) that offer young people  
2 opportunities for socio-cultural critique in the SE structure.

3 In the case of the present study, three youth workers took on the role of coaches  
4 to implement a Sport Education season for socially vulnerable young people. They  
5 chose SE because they perceived that traditional pedagogies of teaching sports were not  
6 having the expected impact on personal and social development of the young people  
7 they worked with. Although they were trained youth workers, they had never used SE  
8 before. In this study we explored their perceptions of using SE for the first time in order  
9 to better understand SE's suitability for equipping young people living in precarity with  
10 the skills they need to take positive action to challenge the forces that have a detrimental  
11 effect on their health and wellbeing. Specifically, the purposes of this study was to  
12 investigate their experiences of learning to use SE, and what their perspectives of the  
13 children's learning were.

## 14 **Methods**

### 15 *Settings*

16 The study developed in a community-based programme running since 1990, in three  
17 economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods with high rates of delinquency in a city in  
18 Central Spain. The programme is run by a non-governmental organization and is funded  
19 by several public institutions and private donations. During the time this research was  
20 conducted, the programme was providing services to 120 children and adolescents aged  
21 between 6 and 16 years.

### 22 *Participants*

23 Three youth workers (two women and one man, M age =33.33 years) acted as coaches.  
24 Their names (anonymised) were Pilar, María and Víctor, and were all Caucasian. The

1 mean length of their experience in social work was 11.33 years, and the mean length of  
2 their participation in the programme was 7.33 years. In Spain, youth workers' pre-  
3 service education is founded in the fields of psychology and sociology, but they lack  
4 training in pedagogy. However, all were qualified Outdoor Educators and had been  
5 responsible for organising sports and leisure activities throughout their time in the  
6 community programme. Youth workers in Spain usually do administrative work, but  
7 they can also be involved in social education. The programme was implemented in three  
8 neighbourhoods where there were large Roma and immigrant populations. Of the 31  
9 nine- to eleven-year-olds (17 boys and 14 girls) participating in this study, 11 were of  
10 Roma origin, six were North African, six were Latin-American, five were Caucasian  
11 and three were of sub-Saharan origin. According to Andalzúa (2012), children were  
12 insiders in this study, whereas the coaches and first author of this study were in-  
13 betweeners due to their experience with children from socially vulnerable backgrounds  
14 and leisure activities.

15         The first author had the role of participant observer, collaborating with the  
16 coaches to plan and teach the lessons. We made this decision in order to maximise the  
17 resources available to implement the programme; to benefit the young people of a more  
18 efficient implementation; and to support the coaches since they had limited experience  
19 in SE programmes. Young people's parents or guardians, the coaches and the non-  
20 governmental organization gave informed consent to participate in the study. We also  
21 informed all of them that the young people would be involved in a low risk activity-  
22 based programme as the normal course of events. In the introductory session, we also  
23 received the assent of the young people for their participation in an innovative  
24 programme that was implemented in collaboration with the University.

1 ***Programme***

2 A SE season comprising 36 one-hour sessions was implemented. The SE season  
3 involved an introduction to SE and the activity called ringo (two lessons), a preseason  
4 (role assignment, roles progressive introduction, teaching ringo tactics and skills, intra  
5 and inter-squad pre-season matches, team t-shirts designed and painted; 14 lessons), a  
6 season (round-robin formal competition, ringo clinic, elaboration of the teams' own  
7 ringos; 18 lessons) and culminating event preparation and celebration (two lessons).  
8 Four teams participated in the SE season. We used a Polish net game called ringo,  
9 which is similar game to volleyball which is played simultaneously with two projectiles  
10 (ringos). This game was chosen because of the low level of technical difficulty  
11 involved, so all the participants in a few sessions could enjoy the game quickly. Also,  
12 the game was new to all the participants, which helped to an equal participation. And  
13 the lack of physical contact between players encouraged the girls to take part. Roles  
14 assigned were coach, fitness specialist, referee (2), scorekeeper, publicist and manager.

15 ***Procedures***

16 Coaches took part in a SE training course lasting 20 hours, including eight hours of  
17 theory and 12 hours of practical sessions in which they put into practice a reduced  
18 version of the same ringo SE season. During the implementation of the SE season,  
19 weekly meetings were held with the aim of solving problems, checking progress,  
20 planning the next week's sessions, and establishing and introducing concepts and  
21 protocols. These meetings served to ensure the fidelity of the implementation of SE  
22 judged against the different benchmarks proposed by Metzler (2011), Ko, Wallhead,  
23 and Ward (2006) and Sinelnikov (2009).

1 ***Data sources and analysis***

2 Four focus groups were conducted with the coaches, led by the first author: (1) before  
3 implementing the programme; (2) at the end of the pre-season; (3) after the first round  
4 of the formal competition; (4) when the programme was completed. Each focus group  
5 lasted between 75 and 90 minutes and an open analysis format was followed, using  
6 open-ended questions, as shown in Table 1.

7 Insert Table 1 near here

8         The first author also kept a diary of his experience as a participant observer,  
9 including field notes and participation in focus groups. This diary, as well as his  
10 thoughts about the same points addressed in the focus groups, included his perceptions  
11 on the organisation of the season, the influence of the social setting and different things  
12 that happened over the course of the programme. The questions were open-ended and  
13 were used to delve deeper into the most significant aspects suggested by the  
14 participants' responses. The focus groups data were transcribed verbatim, and then  
15 analysed qualitatively through Atlas.Ti 8.

16         Conventional content analysis was conducted utilizing the guidelines described  
17 by Hsieh and Shannon (2005). After a preliminary reading to obtain a general overview,  
18 the data was read in greater depth, where the first author highlighted the exact words  
19 used to express key thoughts and perceptions (codes) which were related to the research  
20 questions of the study. Subsequently, synonymous words or phrases were categorized  
21 using constant comparison technique and these categories were reworked into themes  
22 (Tesch, 1990). This process followed several steps: first, author one read each focus  
23 group and his diary until saturation; second, author one read all data one as a whole; and  
24 third, data were read again with the purpose of clarifying themes. Data from the

1 participant observer has only been used to describe initial situations and to confirm or  
2 delve into the information extracted from the focus groups.

### 3 **Results**

4 This section provides a summary of descriptions of the three themes resulting from the  
5 analysis of three coaches' perceptions of their use of SE as a pedagogy of affect. First,  
6 we report on the initial context in which SE was implemented. Second, we describe  
7 coaches' experiences of learning to use SE, from their perspective as youth workers.  
8 Third, we present coaches' perspectives of the children's learning related to roles and  
9 SE features.

#### 10 ***A challenging scenario: when you know that something important is missing.***

11 After more than seven years working together in this programme, Pilar, María and  
12 Víctor, the coaches participating in this community-based programme, assumed the  
13 usefulness of the sport in it, given the various benefits that both they (in their daily work  
14 of youth workers) and children (from an educational view) could achieve. Undoubtedly,  
15 one of these benefits of the inclusion of sport in the program was children's enrolment.  
16 Víctor stated that sport "helps to motivate and engage children in school support  
17 activities, their classes, against absenteeism..." (FG1).

18 Sport was not only useful for coaches to engage children, but also played a key  
19 role in keeping them in the programme. In this sense, the coaches used sport as  
20 reinforcement, since the children were only allowed to attend the sports programme if  
21 they behaved well at school:

22 Pilar: There was coordination with the primary school teachers, and the children  
23 were monitored. They knew they could participate in sport as long as they were  
24 responsible. Sport is playful and it contributes to educational purposes: assuming

1 responsibilities, tasks, duties. Some months ago, a child had a serious  
2 misbehaviour at school. He was expelled from school, the school representatives  
3 informed us, and that child knew the consequence: he went to the game, but he  
4 did not play. (FG1)

5 From these coaches' perspective, sport has always been a tool of enormous  
6 educational potential, which allowed them to face other educational processes, such as  
7 accompanying and caring for these children, or giving them opportunities to let out their  
8 feelings:

9 Víctor: For me the activity is not a goal in itself, that is, for me any process or  
10 action that is done is an opportunity to accompany, to educate, to try to achieve  
11 the educational objectives, even the individual ones that we set for every child.  
12 (GF1)

13 Pilar: As nobody listens to them, they are disrupting all time. I decided to have a  
14 meeting at the end of the training session. I used to say: 'do not come to tell me,  
15 write everything down, and later on we will talk and share'. I think that was  
16 important. (GF1)

17 However, coaches perceived a number of problems that they could not  
18 overcome. One was how to favour equity in participation during competition. Pilar  
19 described their ambition to win, and this meant that some children barely participated in  
20 official competitions:

21 Pilar: We sometimes perceived teams like 'I'm the coach and I only take the  
22 good players'. I think then we forget about the children. Children must all  
23 participate equally, no matter if are they worse or better players; if you reinforce  
24 them that they are bad players and should be on the bench all the time, they will  
25 leave the team. (FG1)

1           What we can appreciate from Pilar and Víctor's perceptions is that they are  
2 aware of the need for an inclusive pedagogy. Both of them observed they lacked  
3 appropriate strategies to coach these children from a perspective of pedagogies of affect.  
4 They perceived that something was missing, that there was something they were not  
5 doing right. For example, they explained how there was not a clear strategy for conflict  
6 resolution:

7           Pilar: For children to assume them it is necessary to work on rules during the  
8 week. Ask them to commit to something specifically and check whether or not  
9 they do it.

10          Author 1: Ok, but do you apply it systematically? Have you all previously  
11 agreed any *what*, *when* and *how* while coaching?

12          Pilar: No, we don't.

13          Víctor: We have some rules to work, for example for punishments. We try to  
14 invite children to reflect on their behaviour, they should realize of the emotions  
15 they are feeling, but we don't always do it. (FG1)

16          Although coaches were not specifically asked about the precarious situation in  
17 which the children lived, at different times they alluded to the instability and uncertainty  
18 that characterized their daily lives. To the aforementioned fact that "nobody listens to  
19 them" (Pilar, FG1), which is typical of unstable settings, the coaches continually alluded  
20 to their lack of ability to assume responsibilities, which led to the coach role having  
21 very few responsibilities at the beginning of the process. When Author 1 raised roles  
22 assignment, coaches responded:

23          Víctor: These children are not prepared to assume these responsibilities. It's  
24 going to be a disaster.

1           María: You're kidding? We can't pose such a big challenge to them right from  
2           the start. (FG1)

3           Another recurring issue is their lack of ability to manage their emotions, one  
4           feature of anomie. Any situation that made them feel minimally uncomfortable resulted  
5           in serious disruptions during the sessions:

6           Víctor: If there's one thing that changes their entire behaviour, and that doesn't  
7           allow them to have good behaviour, it's their lack of emotional control. As small  
8           as the problem may be, their answer is always violent and disproportionate.  
9           (FG2)

10          Author 1: Today we had a very violent session in Cubas. A. and J. have been  
11          insulting girls all the time. They put up with it, but there comes a time that they  
12          can no longer, and their reactions are as violent as the boys have. (Diary, 22/03)

13          Finally, Víctor described how those who attended schools in more affluent  
14          neighbourhoods tended to fail academically: “if these children go to another school  
15          where there are no vocational teachers, absenteeism starts and, in the end, school failure  
16          is assured” (FG4).

17          Before implementing SE, Pilar, María, and Victor, found in sport a very useful  
18          tool to engage children in the community-based programme and to have opportunities to  
19          care for them. However, the sport they offered to children from socially vulnerable  
20          backgrounds was the source of other troubles they had to face, such as the lack of equity  
21          in participation during competition and of clear systematic strategies for conflict  
22          resolution and teaching skills to manage emotions.

23          ***Coaches' experiences of learning to use SE: when you realize of the potential of***  
24          ***a pedagogy of affect.***

25          Although these coaches had participated in a 12-hour SE season with other PE teachers

1 as a training experience, they implemented SE with children from socially vulnerable  
2 backgrounds for the first time during this study. Their experiences of learning to use SE  
3 were threefold. The coaches explained how they went beyond the technical work and  
4 were proactive with children from socially vulnerable backgrounds, how SE gave them  
5 the opportunity of being caring to these children, and how emotional labour played a  
6 key role in these processes.

7 Caringi, Lawson, and Devlin (2012) describe how many youth workers perceive  
8 the work of protecting and servicing children from socially vulnerable backgrounds as a  
9 technical set of tasks that normally excludes emotions. For this reason, many youth  
10 workers are not engaged in promoting situations of change in people, stressing  
11 emotions, but they tend to focus on technical work (e.g. completing the forms,  
12 maintaining records, brokering services). The youth workers with whom we have  
13 developed this project represent the exact opposite of this approach and, in addition to  
14 performing all the technical work, much of their working time was spent on the ground.

15 And it is in this area where they met face to face with the children. We noted in  
16 the introduction that socially vulnerable children often respond to their circumstances  
17 and experiences with anger, and that they experience, in Standing's (2016) terms,  
18 alienation, anxiety and anomie. Furthermore, coaching children from socially  
19 vulnerable backgrounds involves adapting their emotional control more than teachers do  
20 at school, as they work in out-of-school programmes, as we described before. In this  
21 context, violence and disruptive behaviours are constant: "the first reaction is always  
22 violent: insulting, hitting the equipment..." (Ruben, FG2). This problem is compounded  
23 by the fact that these coaches faced children's perception of lack of authority. In the  
24 event that activities were carried out in a non-formal education context, it caused  
25 children not respect the coaches' authority:

1 Víctor: in a formal education scope such as a school, there is a defined space, a  
2 defined schedule, the rules themselves are not the same. The link between youth  
3 workers, coaches or teachers with children is not the same. (GF1)

4 Author 1: Being in an extracurricular context makes things more difficult.  
5 Children do not perceive the youth workers' authority as much as they perceive  
6 it from teachers. If they (youth workers) scold or punish them, sometimes they  
7 leave, or at least threaten to leave. (Diary, 23/02)

8 This is a situation that raises the level of disruption in the sessions, which leads  
9 to increased stress for coaches. However, within this hostile environment, the coaches  
10 exhibited positive emotional responses that Author 1 emphasized in the final focus  
11 group held at the end of the program:

12 Author 1: The care with which you have done everything, not only with the  
13 children that this is huge, has impressed me. It has been a long time since I saw  
14 professionals so easily take on children's problems and give so positive  
15 solutions to those problems. (FG 4)

16 Most of coaches' responses to those complex and tough situations was caring for  
17 the children they worked for. They were able to experience and understand empathy by  
18 thinking that children's aggressive behaviours resulted from the drama they lived at  
19 home. These coaches managed to create a positive and caring environment, where  
20 positive interactions between them and children were possible:

21 María: At the beginning all were bad manners: 'Do this! Do it like this!' Now  
22 sometimes you can listen 'why don't you throw it like that'. Now they respect  
23 each other more in that sense, they respect turns more, they distributed  
24 themselves well on the field so that each one has his space. (FG4)

1 Pilar: “S. is the worst-player. Her teammates realized that if they supported S.,  
2 she was doing well. And they did it. (FG3)

3 Víctor: I saw that, for example when they lost the first game, that many of them  
4 were there biting their tongues and so angry their veins were standing out, they  
5 have calmed the team. (FG3)

6 Another example of how coaches cared about the children was the empathy they  
7 experienced towards the children they work with, which translated into patience. All  
8 three coaches showed consistently that they had assumed processes with these children  
9 were very slow, as they have a slow learning rhythm and classes were very disruptive:

10 María: Children have learned the model slowly. (FG4)

11 Víctor: After reasoning with them, they gradually learn what you want to  
12 explain. (FG2)

13 Pilar: It is necessary to take coaches aside and explain their role, perhaps more  
14 slowly so that they understood. (FG3)

15 Although we find coaches’ caring for children impressive, they sometimes also  
16 struggled and made mistakes. They went through some critical moments and lost their  
17 emotional control because of the great stress they were exposed to:

18 Author 1: Today Víctor has exploded. Although he usually has infinite patience  
19 and is usually able to re-conduct situations, after the continued disrespect to  
20 everyone of J. and A., he has lost his cool and has given them a good telling off,  
21 eventually expelling them from the training session. (Diary 22/05)

22 Finally, we consider emotional labour the foundation stone for coaches’ care and  
23 resilience. Coaches’ emotional labour allowed them to put into practice the different  
24 attitudes and skills we referred above. Our perception is that without professionals like  
25 these coaches’, the program would not have reached certain success. In this sense,

1 Author 1 emphasizes that “one of the keys to the success of the study, beyond the  
2 program, has been you (coaches)” (FG4). The first author describes how the coaches’  
3 emotional responses have always been very positive, and this would not have been  
4 possible if they did not enjoy good emotional health, derived from adequate emotional  
5 labour.

6 However, these coaches did a similar job to teachers when implementing SE and  
7 were able to have a certain success because they mostly used deep acting. For example,  
8 Víctor confessed he was very sceptical about SE at the beginning of the study:

9 Víctor: At the beginning it was difficult for me to adapt to the model because it  
10 was something new, and that had to be systematized and incorporated into my  
11 work routine. So I remember weeks of thinking ‘what am I doing teaching  
12 ringo? I am going to quit’. (FG3)

13 Víctor did not quit. Once he realized SE deserved an opportunity because it could be  
14 very useful for the children he worked with, he engaged even more than before:

15 “Honestly, once I saw in the meetings that things could go out and that I had to spend  
16 half an hour preparing the sessions, I managed to incorporate it in my routine. Then I  
17 started to see results” (Víctor, FG3).

18 However, the coaches emphasized that teachers do not usually treat children like  
19 this. On the contrary, “there is lack of this (emotional labour) at schools” (Pilar, FG4).  
20 They believed some teachers perceive children as a problem for their own work, and not  
21 as people who live in a negative and complex environment:

22 Víctor: I think kids often have problems in schools because there are no teachers  
23 who perceive the thing this way. I mean, they perceive kids as a problem for  
24 them instead of having to work to solve the problems that kids have. The kid is  
25 not the problem, the kid has a problem, and you have to work to solve it. I think

1 many teachers do not perceive it that way and I think that is the difference  
2 between what we do in the program to what some teachers do at school. (FG4)  
3 SE became a space where coaches went beyond the technical work and were  
4 proactive with children from socially vulnerable backgrounds. In this way, SE  
5 contributed to create a safe environment where coaches were caring for these children,  
6 and where coaches' emotional labour played a key role in order to be able to commit  
7 and not give up despite the difficult situations they experienced.

8 ***Coaches' perspectives of the children's learning: when you perceive the benefits***  
9 ***of a pedagogy of affect.***

10 During this SE season, coaches perceived several issues of the children's learning of  
11 roles and the adaptation of SE features. Teaching and learning roles took a longer period  
12 of time than usual. These coaches knew that the children participating in this SE season  
13 could get results, but they needed time, as advancing in classes was very difficult:

14 Author 1: So far, we have not advanced in the dynamics of SE because in Cubas  
15 and Carretas the problems to introduce the roles were not overcome. In Cubas  
16 the disruptive behaviours were many. In Carretas the activity was not motivating  
17 enough. (Diary, 22/03)

18 Moreover, they wanted to give children time. At the beginning, we planned to  
19 do two SE seasons in the five months the project lasted. Later, we decided that the best  
20 decision was to implement only one SE season introducing the roles characteristic of SE  
21 such as warm-up coach, team leader, equipment officer and so on, more gradually: "I  
22 have proposed youth workers to go slower, and only implement one SE season" (Author  
23 1, Diary, 22/03). The coaches agreed, and that allowed them to give an example of how  
24 they empathised with children and had positive expectations towards them. They  
25 gradually delegated responsibilities, so that the children developed their responsibility.

1 One of the most interesting contributions of SE to vulnerable children is its potential to  
2 develop responsibility. The coaches really believed children could do this. They  
3 perceived that they had to adapt their teaching to the children for them to acquire greater  
4 responsibility in their respective roles:

5 Víctor: I have evolved from a more managerial role to a more facilitator role, as  
6 children improve role performance. That is directly proportional to how roles  
7 work, as their role execution improves, we become more mediating, more  
8 facilitating the process. (FG3)

9 María: Everyone has a responsibility. We all lead the session. I'm just the adult  
10 who's there and who mediates in conflicts, but everyone intervenes, and  
11 everyone develops the activity. (FG3)

12 Pilar: We are slowly introducing it (the role) and letting him learn it. I am  
13 accompanying them and still I do not let him alone at all because when they  
14 have to organize something, anything could make him angry. He still does not  
15 have the capacity that the role requires. (FG3)

16 SE features needed some adaptation. We appreciate this especially in the  
17 treatment of competition, teams, festivity, and the culminating event. Before the  
18 implementation of SE, equal participation in competition was one of the issues coaches  
19 struggled with. However, in SE competition became one relevant source of motivation.  
20 It became a key element in improving behaviour and assuming roles responsibilities.  
21 Although introduction of competition was initially delayed because of the disruptive  
22 behaviours of children, it is when competition is introduced through inter-squad  
23 matches when these behaviours evolved most positively:

24 Víctor: In Cubas, the intra-squad matches did not work well. However, in the  
25 last inter-squad match, children paid particular attention to the explanation of the

1 roles because they knew that they were going to have to develop it during the  
2 match, so I told them that I did not want them to act like fools. Then, during the  
3 match, at the beginning they argued a lot... and then, really, the match was  
4 spectacular. On the part of Cubas at least, I was really surprised because they  
5 behaved very well. So, this is a little before and after, I've noticed that, when  
6 they're very motivated, when something motivates them, they work differently.  
7 They needed this. And I think getting into competition is going to get them into  
8 another dynamic. (FG3)

9 In addition to the motivation of the competition scenario, coaches highlighted  
10 the motivation favoured by team affiliation. SE offered children the opportunity to  
11 realize of the benefits of teamwork. Thus, according to the coaches, the children  
12 perceived the importance of their personal contribution to the team, and how this  
13 influenced team's performance:

14 Pilar: We played the first pre-season match, and they lost. They felt a bit  
15 demotivated, but then they realised the importance of being a team, the  
16 engagement they had acquired, that they had to play as a team. And since then I  
17 must say that they have changed their attitude a lot and they have worked a lot ...  
18 They have understood that we are a team, everyone has to participate, if not this  
19 (losing) will happen again. (FG3)

20 These improvements that occurred within the teams are based on greater respect  
21 among children. SE offered coaches the possibility to implement different tools, such as  
22 fair-play accountability systems, which are very useful in modifying negative  
23 behaviours:

24 Víctor: At the beginning the team was very convulsed. They argued a lot among  
25 themselves and crushed each other when someone failed. That has been reduced

1 along with time, thanks in part to the fair-play system used during competition  
2 and the use of the different tools and techniques in training sessions to correct  
3 this type of behaviour. (FG3)

4 Other strategies derived from festivity and the culminating event features also favoured  
5 team affiliation, and therefore a greater respect for the work of others. For example,  
6 Víctor described that “painting the t-shirts and playing the first friendly match were the  
7 moments when they really started to feel as a team” (FG3). We could also find these  
8 benefits in the culminating event:

9 Pilar: I can appreciate a very big sense of belonging to a group on the part of the  
10 kids. There's a lot critique for those who fail during training. However, during  
11 the game they encouraged each other, even more whenever someone failed. I  
12 saw gestures that I liked a lot. The fact of wearing the shirt all the same, the  
13 colours ... is something that has united them. (FG2)

14 Author1: I really liked that today things worked perfectly. The children were  
15 happy, motivated, they have had a good time with the party, with the final... I  
16 think it's been one of those times that you're content with the process well  
17 closed. (FG3)

18 **As Pilar, María and Victor put into practice the protocols and strategies of**  
19 **SE, they appreciated the benefits that SE features and roles involved. SE**  
20 **competition became a source of motivation which helped to the children**  
21 **improve behaviour, assume roles responsibilities, and with team affiliation.**  
22 **Other strategies such as fair-play accountability systems and those derived**  
23 **from the festivity and the culminating event worked together in the**  
24 **modification of negative behaviours and promoted respect.**Discussion

25 The purpose of this study was to explore three coaches' perceptions of using SE  
26 for the first time with socially vulnerable children in order to analyse its potential for

1 helping children living in precarity acquire the skills they need to challenge the  
2 situations of their daily life. We explored their experiences of learning to use SE these  
3 coaches had, and their perspectives of the children's learning. Similar to other situations  
4 of working with children from socially vulnerable backgrounds (e.g. Spaaij and Jeanes',  
5 2013, in Sport for Development and Peace), before the incorporation of the SE as a  
6 pedagogical strategy these coaches perceived that sport was a tool of great potential, but  
7 the children were not benefiting as much as coaches expected. They felt that something  
8 was missing. The special complexity of community-based programmes with children  
9 from socially vulnerable backgrounds requires the implementation of specific  
10 pedagogies such as those described by Kirk (2020) as pedagogies of affect.

### 11 *Ethic of care*

12 Findings show how the coaches were able to use SE as a pedagogy of affect to  
13 be a pro-active benefit for children. In doing so, they went beyond their technical work,  
14 had opportunities for caring about children they worked for, and gave those children the  
15 opportunity to develop responsibility and diminish disruptive behaviours. This  
16 contribution is founded in some coaches' qualities like their ethic of care and emotional  
17 labour. These coaches showed the ability to enact an ethic of care as they were able to  
18 implement activities which included modelling, dialogue, and practice (Noddings, 1992;  
19 Owen and Ennis 2005). Caring teachers show children how to care by modelling, i.e.  
20 creating caring relations with them (Noddings 1992). We could also perceive coaches'  
21 caring in their ability to establish a dialogue with these children (Noddings 1992).  
22 Coaches were usually ready to talk, listen, share, and respond to children despite their  
23 aggressive behaviours. Thus, coaches opted to respond to the violent aggressions of  
24 children with constant manifestations of dialogue. We can also observe this dialogue in  
25 the patience they have showed in light of slow learning of roles.

1           Activities of modelling and dialogue showed by the coaches were probably  
2 founded on their attention for the children's emotional stability and their own emotional  
3 labour. It seemed like these coaches really cared for young people's emotional stability  
4 (McCaughtry et al. 2006; Rosiek 2003). The coaches showed empathy and a high  
5 sensibility towards likely improvements of life quality of young people. The coaches  
6 fulfilled children's need to be cared for by others and not to be alone in the world. Far  
7 from blaming them for their situation, coaches recognized children were the victims of  
8 the complex lives they live (Fitzpatrick 2013; Luguetti, Oliver, Kirk, et al. 2017) and  
9 perceived them as a source to be developed rather than a problem to be solved (Roth,  
10 Brooks-Gunn, Murray, and Foster 1998). One example is that described by one of the  
11 coaches, about those children who attended more affluent school. From the coaches'  
12 perspective, those children were more disengaged than others who attended a school  
13 with more children who suffered multiple disadvantages. Moore et al. (2017) reported a  
14 similar situation when they studied school composition, school culture, and socio-  
15 economic inequalities in young people's health in Wales. They concluded that higher  
16 socio-economic schools reproduced situations of inequality for children of socially  
17 vulnerable backgrounds, while schools in poorer areas avoided this by reinforcing  
18 pastoral care systems.

19           On the other hand, the capacity to care is dependent on the experience of being  
20 cared for (Noddings 1984). The experience of SE gave the children the opportunity at  
21 different times to show how they could care for their teammates. Thus, coaches  
22 described how the tension and rifting situations that took place within each team during  
23 the competition have allowed them to promote a greater respect among children. In this  
24 sense, these situations also served as activities for children to practice care (Noddings  
25 1992). In other words, SE competition let coaches to have the opportunity to provide

1 children to collaboratively practice care. Another example of practice was that students  
2 had the opportunity to serve their teammates and others developing their SE roles.

### 3 *Coaches' perceptions of children's learning*

4 The coaches perceived that those SE practices contributed to develop responsibility in  
5 vulnerable children. Before the programme implementation the coaches thought  
6 children would not be able to assume roles with strong responsibilities (i.e. coach or  
7 referee). However, they progressively appreciated how SE could be effective if they  
8 really engaged in its execution. Thus, SE was useful to fight the second form of  
9 vulnerability. Following Misztal (2011), different people have different ways for coping  
10 with the complexity of the situations they live in, depending on previous experiences.  
11 Through SE roles and features (team affiliation, competition, festivity, and culminating  
12 event), our coaches provided experiences for children to develop responsibility. These  
13 results are consistent with those of Hastie and Buchanan (2000) when applying  
14 Empowering Sport, who found that their students engaged in practices without direct  
15 teacher supervision. Participants in this study did not get that level of responsibility, but  
16 it was probably due to the higher level of social vulnerability these children had.  
17 Furthermore, Hastie and Buchanan (2000) informed that participants in their study had  
18 only struggled with fair play requirements in a previous SE season. Ennis et al. (1999),  
19 also found successful results in fostering responsibility for learning and respect after  
20 implementing Sport for Peace in high schools.

21 Consequently, we can state that the coaches' vision of children from socially  
22 vulnerable backgrounds was guided by an ethic of care (Noddings 1992; Owens and  
23 Ennis 2005). As Owens and Ennis (2005) state, teachers should care not only for  
24 children, but also for themselves. Coaches' emotional labour allowed them to put into  
25 practice the different attitudes and skills we referred above, but also to enjoy good

1 emotional health. Youth workers are facing emotionally traumatic events daily, which  
2 can create secondary traumatic stress (STS) (Caringi et al., 2012). STS originates when  
3 suboptimal practice, workforce, and workplace conditions prevail, but also when the  
4 quality of treatment and interaction are suboptimal and workplace violence is normative  
5 (Caringi et al., 2012). The latter is the environment in which these youth workers meet  
6 every day, since they spend between two and three hours of direct contact with young  
7 people from socially vulnerable contexts.

8         Furthermore, Hochschild (1983) explains how, in order to meet socioemotional  
9 demands of the job, workers use two techniques: surface acting and deep acting. When  
10 workers use surface acting, they just put on an emotional mask in their jobs (Grandey  
11 and Gabriel 2015). However, they use deep acting when they try to really create the  
12 expected feelings (Grandey and Gabriel 2015). The three coaches in this study  
13 frequently used deep acting as they were able to empathise by understanding that  
14 children's aggressive behaviours. Surface acting is positively associated with all facets  
15 of burnout among teachers, certainly among physical education teachers (Lee 2019).  
16 This is because it requires high levels of psychological effort and leads to greater  
17 depletion of emotional resources (Mahoney et al. 2011). Lee (2019) showed how  
18 surface acting was positively associated with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization  
19 and reduced personal accomplishment, whose consequence was an increase in the  
20 turnover intention. However, these coaches did a similar job to teachers when  
21 implementing SE and were able to do it reasonably well because they mostly used deep  
22 acting. Presenting the self in socially desirable appropriate ways is an especially  
23 stressful emotional work, as it involves masking true feelings (Caringi et al. 2012). It is  
24 what Hochschild (1983) defines as 'the managed heart'.

## 1 **Conclusions**

2 We must emphasize that sport *per se* is not enough to teach ethical conduct. In doing so,  
3 two requisites are necessary: a good programme which exposes young people to the  
4 stimuli they need, and efficient physical educators and coaches who are able to develop  
5 the programme properly and with a coherent attitude. This study sought to analyse three  
6 coaches' perceptions of their use of SE with children from socially vulnerable  
7 backgrounds and found results related to those two requisites. On one hand, the youth  
8 workers who acted as coaches found SE useful to engage children, help them to care  
9 each other and develop their autonomy. On the other hand, coaches are shown to be  
10 caring and to be able to use deep acting during emotional labour with children from  
11 socially vulnerable backgrounds.

12         Some further considerations should be taken into account for future research.  
13 First, it is necessary to listen to young people's voices to know their perception of  
14 coaches' work and have a different view of the process. Second, other coaches'  
15 perceptions of the implementation of SE with young people could differ from the results  
16 obtained in this study with children as young people could have different interests and  
17 difficulties when facing a SE season. That said, the findings from this study would  
18 suggest that pre-service education for any future professional working with youth from  
19 socially vulnerable backgrounds (teachers, coaches, youth workers) should consider the  
20 need of teaching pedagogies of affect like SE as well as the development of an ethic of  
21 care and emotional labour.

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1 Table 1. Sample Questions for Focus Groups

| Topic   | Sample questions   |
|---|--|
| Role of sport in the community-based programme (only first focus group) | <p>What are the aims of the sport activities in the programme? Was the programme effective in achieving these aims?</p> <p>What are the main difficulties you typically found?</p>   |
| SE features and roles   | <p>What problems did you have when implementing the pre-season matches?</p> <p>What problems did you find in incorporating the referee role?</p> <p>What aspect of the referee role do the children find most difficult?</p> |
| Personal and social responsibility.                                     | <p>What problems did you find when implementing the fair-play accountability system?</p>   |
| Fair-play   | <p>Are you finding the plenary sessions at the beginning and end of the sessions to be effective? Why?</p>   |
| Others  | <p>Are you finding it hard to prepare the sessions?</p> <p>What do you think the children are finding most difficult?</p> <p>What was the impact of a particular father's intrusion at the training session?</p>             |

2

3