Safeguarding Culture: Towards a New Approach to Preventing Child Maltreatment in Sport

There is now undeniable evidence of child maltreatment in sport. This has provoked the gradual proliferation of safeguarding research aimed at protecting children from harm in sport. Such research recognises the need for a comprehensive and holistic approach that addresses individual, interpersonal and systemic contributors to child maltreatment in sport. This study sought to provide such an approach by applying the well-researched concept of safety culture to safeguarding children in sport. The aim of this study was to conceptualise safety culture from a child safeguarding in sport perspective (i.e., safeguarding culture). To achieve this, 77 participants from five globally representative organisations took part in 45 Interviews and 7 focus groups. This produced 52 units of qualitative data which were analysed using thematic analysis. Findings suggested that safeguarding culture represents a holistic and integrated approach to prevent child maltreatment which comprises three first order themes; safety management systems, committed leadership and stakeholder engagement. These themes have dynamic and reciprocal relationships, with their ideal formation and application dependent on internal and external contextual factors. Based on these findings, the Safeguarding Culture in Sport Model is presented before practical implications, limitations and directions for future research are offered. By presenting a new approach and model to safeguarding children in sport, this study represents an important advancement of knowledge around safeguarding children in sport.

Keywords: safeguarding, maltreatment, children, sport, safety, culture.

1. Introduction

It is virtually impossible to deny the existence of child maltreatment in sport (a universal term used hereafter to describe all levels, types and uses of sport). There is evidence of sexual abuse (Bjørnseth & Szabo, 2018; Fasting, Brackenridge & Sundgot-Borgen, 2004), emotional abuse (Rhind, McDermott, Lambert & Koleva, 2015; Gervis, Rhind & Luzar, 2016), physical abuse (Vertommen et al., 2016; Alexander, Stafford & Lewis, 2011) neglect (Rhind et al., 2015; McPherson et al., 2015), and bullying (Mishna, Kerr, McInroy & MacPherson, 2019; Evans, Adler, MacDonald & Côté, 2016). This evidence is from a variety of countries, sports, and competitive levels. Therefore, it is accepted that child maltreatment in sport is prevalent in all forms, in all contexts, and at all competitive levels (Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2018).

Previous approaches to eradicate child maltreatment in sport have focussed on individuals (e.g., educational workshops), adult interactions with children (e.g., enforcing codes of conduct) or organisational systems (e.g., policies and procedures) (Brackenridge & Rhind, 2014; Mountjoy, Rhind, Tiivas & Leglise, 2015). However, contemporary research has broadened understanding of its complexity, the variety of potential perpetrators, and the array of contexts that maltreatment may occur (Stirling, 2009; Rhind et al., 2015; Mountjoy et al., 2015). Consequently, there is need for an integrated approach that considers social, institutional, and cultural factors that contribute to the perpetuation and cover-ups of child maltreatment (Nite & Nauright, 2020; Roberts, Sojo & Grant, 2020; Sanderson & Weathers, 2020; Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2018).

One approach that may satisfy this need is the safety culture approach. As the concept has been adapted to address safety concerns in industries as broad as construction, aviation, healthcare, and energy production (Filho & Waterson, 2018; Cull, Rzepnicki, O'Day & Epstein, 2013), this article considers whether it may address those social and cultural factors that research has discussed as fundamental to the success of safeguarding children in sport

(Brackenridge, Kay & Rhind, 2012; Tibbert, Anderson & Morris, 2015). Therefore, the aim of this study is to conceptualise safety culture in sport from a child safeguarding perspective.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Defining Maltreatment and Safeguarding

There are several terms that summarise the harm that children may experience (e.g., abuse, violence, and exploitation). Often, they describe distinct forms of harm, but some research uses them interchangeably to encapsulate all mistreatment towards children (Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2018; Stirling, 2009). This is a significant issue as it hinders the understanding, replicability, and transferability of research over time, particularly as differences in their use and understanding vary globally (Hayhurst, Kay & Chawansky, 2015). To prevent such issues, the all-encompassing term 'maltreatment' can be used to describe the array of harm towards children. The World Health Organisation's (WHO) define maltreatment as:

> All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's heath, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power (Butchart et al., 2006, p.59).

This includes acts of omission (i.e., harmful inaction), commission (i.e., harmful action), and exploitation (i.e., deceptive, cynical and harmful use of one person for another's personal benefit). It also includes harm that is direct (i.e., administered from one person to another), indirect (i.e., administered through others), intentional (i.e., with malicious intent) or unintentional (i.e., without malicious intent) (Parton, Thorpe & Wattam, 1997; Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2018). Thus, maltreatment incorporates harm that research typically identifies (i.e., physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and emotional abuse) (Raakman, Dorsch & Rhind, 2010), and those that contemporary research has considered (i.e., discrimination,

child labour, institutional maltreatment and virtual maltreatment) (Stirling, 2009; Mountjoy et al., 2015).

Efforts to prevent maltreatment in sport can be understood as safeguarding. That is "the reasonable actions taken to ensure all children and young people are safe from harm" (Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2018, p. 15). This is significantly broader than 'child protection' which is a set of activities undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm (Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2018; Parton, 2016). Safeguarding may be achieved in (e.g., during training and competition), around (e.g., because of major sporting events) and/or through sport (e.g., using sport to promoting safe life choices) to prevent all forms of maltreatment which may occur (Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2018).

2.2 A New Approach to Safeguarding

Historically, efforts to safeguard children in sport have focussed on individuals, their interactions with children, or organisational systems (Brackenridge & Rhind, 2014). Yet contemporary research has found that maltreatment in sport is not influenced by these factors in isolation, but interaction between individual, interpersonal, and systemic elements (Everley, 2020; Nite & Nauright, 2020; Brackenridge & Rhind, 2014). For example, after examining the contexts of renowned safeguarding scandals in sport, Nite and Nauright (2020) found that institutional structures, processes, and individual attitudes contribute to the harbouring, perpetuation and legitimisation of maltreatment. Similarly, a recent systematic review found that lapses in these areas can contribute to; organisational tolerance, inappropriate interactions with and between children, harmful dominant values, conformity, power imbalances, and flawed reward systems that incentivise maltreatment towards peers (Roberts et al., 2020). This supports the argument that a failure to simultaneously consider individual, interpersonal, and systemic elements can lead to significantly compromised safeguarding initiatives (Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2018), higher likelihood of bystanders,

and environments/organisations that are not actively against child maltreatment (Nite & Nauright, 2020).

One way a suitably holistic approach may be developed is through the lens of culture. In fact, a recent evaluation of organisations working towards the International Safeguards for Children in Sport found that improvements were experienced due to positive changes at personal, social, and organisational levels, which facilitated the development and maintenance of strong and positive cultures of safeguarding children (Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2020). This is unsurprising considering calls for sporting organisations to pay more attention to organisational culture and recognise its potential to address the breadth of risk factors of child maltreatment in sport (Nite & Nauright, 2020; Sanderson & Weathers, 2020; Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2018; Brackenridge et al., 2012). Indeed, Mountjoy et al., (2015) state that 'unhealthy' organisational cultures can create inherent underlying threats to children, Pike (2010) outlines the need for sport to address cultures of risk which contribute to child maltreatment, and Rhind et al., (2013) state that the culture of the organisation has the power to impact maltreatment by permitting it, even when systems are present.

Consistent with these findings, Palmer and Feldman (2017) argue that numerous cultural elements can facilitate the perpetration of child maltreatment, impede its detection, and undermine responses to it in youth-serving organisations. This was substantiated by Tibbert and colleagues (et al., 2015) who found that organisational culture can even encouraging victims to rationalise their experiences as they become enculturated. This is consistent with Brackenridge and colleagues' (et al., 2012) contention that organisational cultures can mask or facilitate maltreatment, and Brackenridge's (2001) claim that although maltreatment occurs as individuals exert their own agency, they are only able to do so within the confines of their cultural contexts. Therefore, as argued by Mountjoy and colleagues (et al., 2015), there is merit in adopting an organisation wide approach that considers how the

culture of the organisation can promote safeguarding efforts. Such an approach may be better understood using the concept of safety culture.

2.3 Defining Safety Culture

Safety culture is a sub-component of organisational culture, which is in turn a category of culture (Fernández-Muñiz, Montes-Peón & Vázquez-Ordás, 2007a). So, it is important to comprehend culture in its broader sense, before organisational culture, thus safety culture can be understood. A seminal definition of culture has been offered by Schein (1990) who identifies a culture as:

> a pattern of basic assumptions, invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore is to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1990, p. 111).

> As argued by Schein (1990), any group with a shared history may have developed a culture. Therefore, organisational culture is merely the culture of a particular organisation. However, with many studies adopting or adapting this definition, Guldenmund (2000) identifies seven commonly cited characteristics of organisational culture, describing it as:

> (1) an abstraction rather than a concrete phenomenon, (2) relatively stable over time, (3) comprised of multiple dimensions (4) shared by groups of people, (5) containing several aspects which co-exist within an organisation, (6) something that leads to but is not solely defined by overt practices and (7) serving a functional purpose as expressed with the saying that it is 'the way we do things around here'.

> With this definition of organisational culture as the basis, a plethora of industry specific definitions of safety culture exist. Nonetheless, a synthesised conceptualisation of

safety culture has been offered by Edwards, Davey and Armstrong (2013) who define safety culture as:

> …the assembly of underlying assumptions, beliefs, values and attitudes shared by members of an organisation, which interact with an organisation's structures and systems and the broader contextual setting to result in those external, readily visible, practices that influence safety (Edwards et al., 2013, p. 77).

This integrative, synthesised, comprehensive and seminal definition is adopted for this study. It brings together significant amounts of previously published research on organisational and safety culture, offering conceptual clarity (Edwards et al., 2013).

2.4 Theoretical Foundations

Research on safety culture identifies three contributing factors; safety management systems, managerial commitment to safety, and employee engagement (Fernández-Muñiz et al., 2007a; Mearns, Whitaker & Flin, 2003). Based on these factors, research has found that a positive and strong safety culture can enhance safety performance, morale, and productivity (Filho & Waterson, 2018; Fernandez-Muniz et al., 2007a), while stimulating individuals' motivation to interact meaningfully with safety initiatives (Podgórski, 2006). This has yielded positive effects (Cull et al., 2013), and provided a framework for improved organisational safety performance in industries as diverse as construction (Ismail, Salimin & Ismail, 2012), aviation (Lin, 2012) and healthcare (Halligan & Zecevic, 2011).

Nonetheless, there is no universally agreed model of safety culture. Instead, research has produced a host of models which differ in their explanations of how such factors combine to result in a safety culture, how that culture changes, and how it is maintained (e.g., Frazier, Ludwig, Whitaker & Roberts, 2013; Cooper, 2000; Parker, Lawrie & Hudson, 2006; Filho & Waterson, 2018). This has a negative impact on the predictive and analytical capabilities of these models, and the extent that they can be applied in different contexts. Although an

increasingly popular approach is to ground safety culture in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Reciprocal Determinism Theory (1986). This has been the approach of seminal models (e.g., Cooper, 2000; Fernandez-Muniz et al., 2007a), which have considered safety culture as the result of dynamic and reciprocal interactions between organisational, personal and behavioural factors. In doing so, they have also addressed the absence of theoretically grounded conceptualisations of safety culture (Filho & Waterson, 2018).

The reciprocal factors identified in this theoretical approach (organisational, personal, and behavioural factors) are remarkably similar to the factors identified in research on safeguarding, and safeguarding research highlights the importance of interactions between individual, interpersonal and systemic elements (Brackenridge & Rhind, 2014; Everley, 2020; Nite & Nauright, 2020). Therefore, although Cooper (2000) and Fernandez-Muniz et al.'s (2007a) models are not directly applicable to sport, their theoretical approach may be used to provide applicable and relevant foundations of an effort to apply safety culture to sport, and more specifically, safeguarding children in sport.

2.5 Safety Culture in Sport

Despite findings of its virtues in other industries, safety culture has never been applied to sport, or to safeguarding children in any field (Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2020). The closest sport has come to doing so is a recent review on organisational factors that contribute to non-accidental violence in sport (Roberts, Sojo & Grant, 2020), Brackenridge and colleagues' study on child protection measures on the culture in football in the UK (et al., 2005), and Frosdick's (1995) reflection on the potential for safety culture to be considered in the British stadia safety industry. There are no known empirical papers concerning safety culture in sport. This is a missed opportunity considering growing desire for sporting organisations to increase their levels of accountability and adopt organisation wide approaches that go beyond analyses of individual and interpersonal contributors of child maltreatment (Rhind & Owusu-

Sekyere, 2020; Nite & Nauright, 2020; Sanderson & Weathers, 2020; Mountjoy et al., 2015), calls for a complete readjustment of the culture of sport and sporting organisations (Hartill & Lang, 2014; Kerr et al., 2014), and Brackenridge and colleagues (et al., 2012) advice that for sport to be made safe for all, sporting organisations must engage in a necessary process of cultural change.

2.6 Aim

To harness the benefits of a cultural approach to safeguarding children, the aim of this study was to conceptualise safety culture in sport from a child safeguarding perspective. This concept was described in simple terms as safeguarding culture in sport. To achieve this, the present study sought to collect qualitative data from key global informants on the structure, operation, and potential benefits of safeguarding culture. Hence the questions posed by this study were 'How should safeguarding culture in sport be conceptualised?', and 'How might sporting organisations benefit from a safeguarding culture?'.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design and Sampling

This study was conducted within a constructivist paradigm, adopting a transactional and subjectivist epistemology (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Ponterotto & Grieger, 2007). Therefore, dialectical qualitative methods were used (interviews and focus groups), allowing the study to rely on participants voices in their natural contexts (Ponterotto & Grieger, 2007). This study welcomed discrepancies in the 'realities' of different organisations/contexts as "any common themes that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing core experiences and central shared aspects" (Patton, 1990, p. 172). Consequently, maximum variation sampling was used (Patton, 2015). The criteria was that each organisation must represent a unique constellation of size (local, national/regional or international), location(s) and mission (e.g., coach education, governance, or sports delivery). This allowed the study to

identify "central themes or principal outcomes that cut across a great deal of participant or program variation" (Patton, 1990, p. 172).

Participants were recruited using networks established by the International Safeguards Project. Email invitations were sent to over 50 globally representative sporting organisations. Interested organisations were shortlisted and assessed for suitability based on theoretical relevance, availability, and accessibility (as advised by Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Theoretical interest reflected the extent to which the organisation represented a unique case/context. Accessibility and availability were considered to establish whether there were any practical constraints that may impact the feasibility of data collection (e.g., resources, timings, language barriers etc.).

3.2 Participants

Five organisations participated in this study (as seen in table 1). Each was given a pseudonym to protect their anonymity. They represented a unique constellation of size, location(s), mission and contexts. From these organisations, 52 units of qualitative analysis were conducted with 77 participants (45 interviews and 7 focus groups). Focus groups were analysed as individual units of analysis, but were used to include participants who would not participate otherwise, or to examine specific groups (e.g., those with identical jobs).

Participants were considered key stakeholders of safeguarding in sport based on their direct or indirect impact of safeguarding practice in sport. Participants included internal representatives of each organisation (i.e., staff and volunteers), beneficiaries (e.g., Parents/carers) and those external but interrelated to the organisation's work (e.g., member and/or partner organisations). External parties were included to offer unique insight into how safeguarding culture may impact or be impacted by those who are not organisational members, as discussed by Makin and Winder (2009).

(INSERT TABLE 1)

3.3 Procedure

After gaining ethical approval from Brunel University's Ethics Committee, a gatekeeper for each organisation was given an information sheet, a consent sheet and their organisation was invited to participate. Once consent was provided by a senior member of staff, the gatekeeper and researchers co-ordinated a site/country visit for data collection. The gatekeeper's local knowledge and experience aided the researcher with culturally relevant information which can significantly enhance the quality of international research (Hayhurst et al., 2015). The gatekeeper promoted the study amongst potential participants and in rare cases pre-booked opportunities for data collection. However, most participants were selected by the researcher during the site/country visit to avoid a selection bias occurring.

Country/site visits took place between 2014 and 2017. During which, potential participants were given an information sheet and an opportunity to ask questions. Those that agreed to participate offered signed consent before partaking in a one-on-one semi-structured interview, or a focus group. Both occurred in quiet and convenient places and were audio recorded. Data collection began with introductory questions about participants role(s) and its relation to safeguarding. Participants then discussed their, and their organisation's interpretation of safeguarding, before considering the challenges faced when safeguarding children in, around and/or through sport. This was followed by solutions that they had used or seen being used.

Safety culture was then addressed explicitly. Participants were provided with Edward, Davey, and Armstrong's (2013) definition of safety culture and asked whether this concept could be applied to safeguarding children in sport. Participants discussed the ideal nature and strength of safeguarding culture, including factors that are yet to be identified within literature, and those commonly cited as significant. To facilitate this, probes were used to encourage participants to add depth to their answers, while prompts were used based on key

themes in previous literature. Lastly, participants were invited to discuss the impact of their organisation's safeguarding efforts and potential next steps. Each participant was thanked for their involvement and offered a final opportunity for questions.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data was analysed using thematic analysis, "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Firstly, raw data was transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were then explored to generate initial latent and semantic codes using adductive reasoning; concurrent use of both inductive and deductive methods in research (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Initial codes were grouped for each individual, and aggregated for all organisations to develop themes and sub-themes. Themes were then reviewed and refined to consider how well they explained phenomena within and across organisations. Lastly, themes were defined and labelled with consideration of previous literature and with theoretical guidance.

This process was conducted by one author, but reviewed by the rest of the research team who compared impressions of the data and established a consensus. As such, data analysis was an iterative process which utilised intercoder consistency (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Additionally, each organisation was provided with a report and given an opportunity to feedback on the conclusions reached.

3.5 Trustworthiness

To ensure rigor, trustworthiness was considered. This includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba, 2007). Credibility describes the confidence with which research can state that findings represent truth (Schwandt et al., 2007). This was enhanced by prolonged exposure to the organisation(s), contexts, individuals and tasks discussed during data collection. Credibility was also enhanced by the utilisation of intercoder consistency between researchers. Additionally, by including participants not

selected by the gatekeeper, and incorporating divergent views into findings, the chances of a selection bias were reduced and opportunities for findings to be disproven were facilitated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Finally, credibility was enhanced by the use of member checking which clarified if the words and/or impressions reported were accurate.

Transferability describes the extent to which the findings can be extrapolated and applied to other contexts (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). To achieve this, thick descriptions of each theme were offered. This includes contextual information which allows consideration of the applicability of findings to other organisations, situations, countries, and people (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability described the stability of data over time (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). This was achieved by keeping a full record of activities completed, as suggested by Robson (2002). This included interviews, field notes, researcher journals and details of the coding process. This allows researchers to demonstrate a logical, traceable, and documented process (Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

Confirmability describes the assurance that the study has considered and minimised researcher bias (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Along with most participants not recommended by the gatekeeper, member checking, and the steps taken to ensure intercoder consistency, this was achieved with an audit trail of the analysis process which was open to scrutiny amongst the research team.

4. Results

After thematic analysis was conducted on 52 units of qualitative data, findings outlined the significance and benefits of strong and positive safeguarding cultures. When conceptualising safeguarding culture, three first order themes emerged; safety management systems, committed leadership and stakeholder engagement (as outlined in figure 1). Findings also suggested that these themes are related to various contextual factors. Findings are presented with representative quotes.

(INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE)

4.1 Benefits of Safeguarding Culture

With Edwards and colleagues' (et al., 2013) definition of safety culture as the basis of a discussion on safeguarding culture, participants argued that sporting organisations that are most successful in their safeguarding efforts will have a safeguarding culture. They stated that this has various benefits, most pertinently that safeguarding becomes integrated as a fundamental part of the organisations work, thus it is not treated as an optional addendum. For example, the Head of Safeguarding at Euro FC said:

> I talk about it as a thread, not a blanket. I talk about weaving a thread through everything that we do. It's not visible, you don't see safeguarding necessarily in your face day in and day out, but you know that it's there.

A similar expression was also used by ICRC's Manager of Programme Operations who said, "It's woven into every aspect of what we do". Furthermore, when explaining the difference that a safeguarding culture makes, the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for Kenya Girls Club said, "It's more engrained you know. Safeguarding becomes like a habit almost. You don't think about it, and it's just a matter of course that you do it. So, for that to happen it's got to go beyond policies".

Subsequently, a Scout at Euro FC said that "it is paramount" to have a safeguarding culture, and in a focus group with Safeguarding Officers at Euro FC, participants explained that with such a culture, safeguarding is considered a fundamental component of professionalism for the entire organisation. Or as put by the Manager of Programme Operations at ICRC, "safeguarding [becomes] part of the foundation by which we define our own success". Therefore, findings suggest that safeguarding culture helps to ensure that safeguarding is accepted, integrated, reflected across the whole organisation, and instilled as a fundamental facet of the organisations work.

4.2 Safety Management Systems

Safety Management Systems emerged as a first order theme. Participants argued that comprehensive and functional Safety Management Systems (SMS) underpin the creation and maintenance of strong and positive safeguarding cultures. At its most effective, this may transcend the importance of the individuals implementing it. For example, an ICRC Programme Manager said,

> When you have good structures in place, you can have turnover, you can have people come and go because there's a fall back…you can have really good structures and less good people and still see a lot happening, just by virtue of the systems in place.

Among this first order theme, six second order themes were identified; safeguarding policy, incentives, training, communication channels, planning and prevention, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

4.2.1 Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding policy describes the organisations written principles, commitment, and procedures. It was considered fundamental to the success of safeguarding, as explained by the Euro FC Safeguarding Officer who said, "Safeguarding policy has to be in place first and foremost, and then all other things come around it". Participants argued that it gives the SMS legitimacy, while motivating employees, partners, and beneficiaries. However, participants warned that policy is often perceived with inflated importance, which perpetuates the false belief that simply having one makes an organisation safe. An Executive Board Member of ICA warned that "Some people create a policy just to create a policy and satisfy somebody's tick box". Therefore, it was stated that the presence of a policy should not lead to presumptions that a safeguarding culture exists.

4.2.2 Incentives

Findings suggested that individuals require incentives to mobilise them to develop, implement and evaluate the SMS. The main incentive discussed was funding/sponsorships. Participants argued that organisations are usually reluctant to commit to more than the bare minimum when they remain capable of attaining funds without a significant commitment to safeguarding. For example, a Director of Caribbean Sports Co. asked rhetorically, "If I am a [stakeholder] or a national governing body, why would I want to operate with [such] standards? Especially if I am still getting funding without it".

As articulated by the Head of Safeguarding at Euro FC, incentives were categorised into "three prongs: protecting [children], protecting yourself, and protecting the [organisation's] reputation". Incentives for protecting children appealed to the morality of individuals (e.g., 'it is the right thing to do'). Incentives for protecting 'yourself' focused on the potential reputational/professional impact of allegations on individuals (e.g., 'it is in your interests'). Incentives for protecting the organisation focussed on the potential reputational/professional impact of allegations on the organisation (e.g., 'cases may harm relationships with actual/potential sponsors, donors and/or partners').

4.2.3 Training

Training was deemed essential to equip contributors to the safeguarding culture, enhancing their knowledge of safeguarding generally, and the organisation's methods. In its ideal form, training was described as practical, one-day workshops that; identify, define and characterise maltreatment, (re)familiarise stakeholders with policy/procedures, and outline appropriate means of responding to allegations. When asked how important training is, an ICRC Child Protection Focal Point said, "it's the most important thing". An Apprentice at Euro FC also argued that "It's important to make sure you are always keeping your head fresh". Consequently, it was deemed essential that training occurs annually, and is mandatory for all

stakeholders, but those with specific safeguarding responsibilities are given specialist training too, regardless of whether governing bodies consider it compulsory.

4.2.4 Communication channels

Findings suggested that by establishing and using various communication channels, stakeholders can benefit from consistent, honest, bi-directional communication. In a focus group, a Euro FC Safeguarding Officer said, "I think communications' a massive thing. People must be willing and able to communicate. Even if it's something that they might not think anything of, just making sure that everything gets communicated to the right people.

The most appropriate communication channel was determined by the organisation's location, size, and structure (e.g., international organisations used technology to engage with partners, members and stakeholders around the world). Nonetheless, popular communication channels for stakeholders included; emails, social media, staff meetings, site visits and conferences. Alternatively, examples of communication with beneficiaries (e.g., parents/carers) included leaflets, emails, community meetings, and parent training days. Communication with beneficiaries was identified as essential on the basis that with greater awareness, beneficiaries will be better at keeping themselves and each other safe. This included communication with children, which often began by educating them on their rights. The Kenya Girls Club Director explained, "children have rights, and they have rights to know their rights!". For some, this progressed to children being given roles on safeguarding panels to ensure their voices and preferences would be heard. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that this increased contact with children may inadvertently increase opportunities for maltreatment, thus caution was advised with such processes.

4.2.5 Planning and Prevention

Findings outlined the importance of established planning and prevention strategies which aim to identify and minimise risk before incidents. Examples included; risk assessments, site

protocols, travel assistance for vulnerable children, and context specific case management processes. Views on the most appropriate strategies differed on the grounds of location, sport, competitive level, and the organisations mission. Nonetheless, all organisations argued for vetting those who will have access to children, and ensuring they are 'the right people' with; rigorous application processes, police (or community based) background checks, probationary periods, and personal references. As put by an ICA coach, "[we] don't just let anybody come in and work".

4.2.6 Monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was deemed imperative in fostering critical introspection. Both were deemed essential, but distinctions were drawn between ongoing observations of the SMS (monitoring), and larger reviews of its applicability and effectiveness (evaluation). Findings suggested that ideally, monitoring describes honest, ongoing communication with stakeholders and beneficiaries regarding the effectiveness of the SMS. This may inform larger evaluations which are annual, organisation-wide investigations of the effectiveness of the SMS.

Participants argued that because of a paucity of regulation and guidance on safeguarding (particularly in sport for development), the effectiveness of such evaluations may be influenced by the ability to network with similar organisations. In doing so organisations can benchmark their work, stay up to date with global trends, and contextualise their self-analysis. On this, a Caribbean Sports Co. Director said,

> I think the sport for development network is probably one of the most generous
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> networks with the sharing of knowledge and resources. So, we used that to develop
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> our own policy, and then identified issues and areas for development.

4.3 Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement emerged as a first order theme. 'Engagement' described an enthused form of participation rooted in care and personal investment in safeguarding. This was contrasted with minimalistic compliance of rules, policy, and procedures for the primary purpose of avoiding punishment. The term 'stakeholder' included those who work or volunteer for the organisation, and those who do not, but represent and enact the safeguarding culture (e.g., partners and member organisations). The parties identified as stakeholders varied per organisation, but unanimously this went beyond employees. For example, Kenya Girls Club relied on a large volunteer base with similar responsibilities to employees. Likewise, Caribbean Sports Co., ICA, Euro FC and ICRC worked with partners and/or member organisations to deliver programmes and implement the SMS. Within the first order theme of stakeholder engagement, three second order themes were identified; appreciation, awareness, and motivation.

4.3.1 Appreciation

Participants argued it is important stakeholders appreciate safeguarding as important for them and the organisation. This was encapsulated in the mantra, 'safeguarding is everyone's business' and must be considered integral to the roles of stakeholders and the wider organisation. A Caribbean Sports Co. partner Child Protection Officer said, "It should be a priority of your work and it doesn't matter which organisation". This was also expressed by stakeholders at Euro FC, where even those who had fleeting interactions with children argued it was central to their role, and to the organisations work.

4.3.2 Awareness

Participants argued that appreciation must be accompanied by awareness/knowledge to identify issues. A Caribbean Sports Co. Partner Child Protection Officer said, "It's not always about the child being able to tell somebody. People have to be aware [of] what to look for".

Similarly, when asked what their role may be, a receptionist at Euro FC said, "[I have] got to watch for things…just be aware of it, monitor it and importantly, know what to do with it".

4.3.3 Motivation

Motivation was grouped into those which are intrinsic (e.g., an internalised desire to safeguard children), or extrinsic (e.g., compliant for the avoidance of punishment and/or to gain recognition/reward). Engaged stakeholders were lauded for their intrinsic motivation. An Academy Coach at Euro FC said, this repels the temptation to 'turn a blind eye', or 'shy away' from problems. Participants at Kenya Girls Club described this as having 'the feeling' to safeguard children, and when asked 'what would an engaged member of staff look like?', a Caribbean Sports Co. Partner Sports Officer said, "If [they] see something happening [they] will not want to turn a blind eye because…[they] would feel as though this is [their] responsibility".

4.4 Leadership Commitment

Leadership commitment emerged as a first order theme. This reflected findings that the highest level of authority (e.g., directors, owners, and managers) has the most impact on organisational safeguarding culture, thus can exert positive impact when they demonstrate commitment to it. As explained by ICRC's Safeguarding Manager:

> There's certain levels of influence that someone at senior level can contribute to effective change. They have a role in decision making that can affect the global organisation, the country [base] and culture of staff members. If they're saying and showing that this is a key priority, then it becomes a key priority.

However, participants argued that commitment should not be self-protective or self-interested. An ICA Chief Executive Strategist said:

I can't tell you the number of times I've done background checks, signed pieces of paper to do a talk, or gone to visit some other clubs training practice...but that's it…there's zero commitment. They're covering their own ***.

Consequently, it was argued that commitment should not be assumed by policies or words. It must be translated into daily experiences that reflect the awareness, concern and conviction of leadership. For example, when asked 'what factors contribute to safeguarding culture?', an ICA Founder said, "a total commitment to the concept of safeguarding through children's rights…we (the leadership team) recognise that and see how we can translate it into action". Based on this, two second order themes emerged; stakeholder leadership and SMS leadership.

4.4.1 Stakeholder Leadership

Stakeholder leadership described personal development strategies which build the capacities of stakeholders, increase their motivation, and enhance their safety performance. This includes; forming relationships with trust and open interaction, coaching and mentoring stakeholders, offering guidance and advice, and counselling stakeholders. Though it was also deemed essential that such relationships are not devoid of critique. For example, Euro FCs Head of Safeguarding said:

> You want people to come and talk to you, but [they] fear because potentially, they do so at a risk… I have to make some criticism of [people] and their processes. That is difficult and must be handled in a very sensitive way… I don't think you can ever say 'no you won't get into bother'. If you do uncover a problem, then nobody can escape, certainly not from me.

4.4.2 SMS Leadership

SMS leadership described the actions taken to develop and implement the SMS, ensuring its effectiveness. This includes ensuring compliance, enforcing disciplinary processes, and

promoting incentives. Participants argued that to achieve this, leaders must; present consistency between organisational identity and safeguarding, resource the organisation by 'putting their money where their mouths are', and ensure that safeguarding retains supremacy over competing priorities (e.g. money).

4.5 Contextual Factors

While not emerging as a first order theme to conceptualise safeguarding culture, findings suggested there are a host of contextual factors that act as both mediating factors, and potential resultants of the SMS, stakeholder engagement and leadership commitment. These contextual factors were described as surrounding elements which are associated with, and may impact safeguarding culture. During a focus group, when asked how important context is, a partner Child Protection Officer at Caribbean Sports Co. said, "[it's] always important, the context! You can tell kids things, you can tell teachers things, but you always have to think about the context". While a District Co-ordinator at Kenya Girls Club said, "we have various things in society which impact safeguarding". Findings suggested that contextual factors that impact safety culture may be internal or external to the organisation.

4.5.1 Internal Contextual Factors

Examples of internal contextual factors included resources (e.g., the nature, amount, and distribution), organisational mission (e.g., conflicting values between performance and safeguarding), and organisational structure (e.g., how segmented/fragmented the organisation is). For example, Euro FC staff acknowledged that significant financial resources allowed them to hire a team of safeguarding officers and strategically situate them around the organisation, while ICA stated that a lack of resources often resulted in inadequate safety equipment for partner sports clubs.

4.5.2 External Contextual Factors

Examples of external contextual factors included non-safety specific social norms (e.g., gender, privacy, and family), safety specific social norms (e.g., the definition of 'safe', and conventional forms of discipline) and the policies, systems and frameworks relating to child maltreatment (e.g., criminalisation of child maltreatment, quality of background checks, and the criminal justice system).

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to conceptualise safety culture in sport from a child safeguarding perspective (referred to as safeguarding culture). This study defined safeguarding culture as a subsection of organisational culture that represents the amalgamation of individual, organisational, and societal elements that combine to influence the nature and proficiency of an organisations efforts to prevent child maltreatment in sport. Consistent with previous research which identifies potential for an approach rooted in organisational culture to elicit a more comprehensive, integrated, and efficacious approach to safeguarding in sport (Nite & Nauright, 2020; Sanderson & Weathers, 2020; Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2018), findings suggest safeguarding culture may underpin holistic approaches to safeguarding that permeate all aspects of the organisation. This is influenced by the presence and nature of three first order themes; safety management systems, committed leadership and stakeholder engagement. These themes were identified in all five organisations, but their formation and application were impacted by internal and external contextual factors. Findings are discussed with reference to previous literature.

5.1 Safety Management Systems

Findings were consistent with previous evidence that comprehensive and functional SMSs strengthen and provide direction to the safety culture (Bottani, Monica & Vignali, 2009). However, because of the significance placed on leadership commitment and stakeholder engagement, findings did not support Frazier et al.'s (2013) discovery that SMSs are the most

significant influencers of safety culture. This is perhaps because of socio-psychological contributors of safeguarding that go beyond systems (Roberts et al., 2020). This meant the SMS was deemed as important as leadership commitment, and stakeholder engagement.

Socio-psychological factors may have also contributed to differences in second order themes. For example, communication is often identified as a sub-component of the SMS (Frazier et al., 2013), and findings suggested that by establishing various communication channels, organisations can facilitate consistent, honest, and bi-directional communication. But findings from this study differed in their recognition of the importance of communication with children and other beneficiaries. This may have been with the knowledge that almost anyone may be a perpetrator or witness of child maltreatment in sport (Alexander et al., 2011; Rhind et al., 2015), thus the parameters of those considered relevant to communicate with are wider.

Another novel finding related to incentives. Findings broadly supported findings in previous literature that incentives are important elements of the SMS (Filho & Waterson, 2018; Parker et al., 2006). They also supported previous findings in sport that organisations and individuals require clear reasons/incentives to be dedicated to safeguarding (Mountjoy et al., 2015). Yet no previous literature on safety culture or safeguarding has made the distinction that this study made between incentives for the individual, child and organisation. Safety culture research from various industries have instead presented incentives as tangible rewards like bonus payments (Lawrie, Parker & Hudson, 2006; Mearns et al., 2003). Thus, by identifying social and professional rewards, findings went beyond the singular focus on financial incentives, which may be useful in encouraging engagement and reducing the risk of bystanders.

However, there were important areas of consistency with research in safety culture and safeguarding. For example, like previous research within sport, participants warned that

policy is often given a magnified sense of importance, which perpetuates false belief that simply having one makes an organisation safe (Jacobs, Smith & Knoppers, 2016). This is an important acknowledgment as research suggests this belief is widespread despite insufficient evidence to substantiate it (Vertommen et al., 2016), and findings that policy is the weakest predictor of safety culture (Fernández-Muñiz et al., 2007a; Frazier, et al., 2013). Similarly, findings suggesting a need for training for all stakeholders, and specialist training for those with specific safeguarding roles were not surprising considering evidence that training is of the most influential factors of the SMS (Fernández-Muñiz et al., 2007a; Frazier et al., 2013), and a statistically significant influencer of safety performance (Bottani, Monica & Vignali, 2009). They also provided support for calls for more role-specific training (Hartill & Lang, 2014), and findings that volunteers and those with less delivery-based responsibilities in sport are often under-scrutinised and undertrained (Kerr et al., 2014; Piper, Garratt & Taylor, 2013),

5.2 Stakeholder Engagement

Employee engagement is consistently identified as a key factor of safety culture (Frazier et al., 2013; Mearns et al., 2003). Findings from this study largely confirmed this, but unlike previous literature on safety culture, participants recognised that there are many other influential people who are not necessarily employees. Therefore, those enactors were called stakeholders, a broader term used in sport to describe those who enact, and thus can impact, the safeguarding work of the organisation (Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2020).

By identifying three second order themes (appreciation, awareness, and motivation) a unique constellation of engagement factors were identified, but in their individual elements, they were not entirely divergent to previous findings. For example, Hartill and Lang (2014) identified that undervaluation of safeguarding can lead to compromised safeguarding behaviour. Roberts et al., (2020) identify knowledge as a key contributor to individual safety

performance. And lastly, Brackenridge (2001) discussed differing motives to safeguard, which may emanate from an 'ethic of care' (e.g., morals and ethics), or a sense of 'self-interest'.

5.3 Leadership Commitment

Previous research has consistently identified managerial commitment to safety as a central facet of safety culture (Fernández-Muñiz et al., 2007a; Wamuziri, 2013), and effective safeguarding (Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2020; Palmer & Feldman, 2017). Yet due to the diversity of organisational size, type, mission and leadership structures in sport, distinctions between employers, operators/middle management and safety professionals which is made in safety culture literature (e.g., Wu, Lin & Shiau, 2010), was not identified. Not all sporting organisations are large or wealthy enough to have such a leadership structure. Even where it did exist (e.g., Euro FC), differences in responsibilities meant that this framework was not applicable. Therefore, recognising the breadth of potential leaders within the organisation, and the diversity of their potential job roles, managerial leadership was reframed as leadership commitment. Nonetheless, consistent with previous research was the argument that leadership commitment is paramount, and should not be assumed by policies/words, but instead be demonstrable (Parker et al., 2006; Palmer & Feldman, 2017).

5.4 Contextual Factors

According to Cooper (2000), "safety culture does not operate in a vacuum: it affects, and in turn is affected by other non-safety-related operational processes or organisational systems" (p.113). This is recognised in Edwards and colleagues (et al., 2013) definition of safety culture which references the contextual setting, and research in sport which encourages safeguarding with contextual understanding (Mountjoy et al., 2015; Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2018). In this sense, recognition of contextual factors was unsurprising, but findings did further knowledge of contextual factors in safeguarding by distinguishing between

internal and external factors. This was consistent with the conceptualisation offered by Armenkis and Bedein (1999), and explains why seminal work has found that matters like funding and political systems can impact the nature/quality of safeguarding (Brackenridge, 2001).

5.5 Relationships Between Key Influencing Factors

When reviewing the relationships between identified factors of safeguarding culture, findings suggested that SMS, Leadership Commitment and Stakeholder Engagement may impact and/or be impacted by each other. For example, when participants explained that leadership commitment can have a direct influence on stakeholder engagement. Similarly, the suggestion that stakeholder engagement may influence the development and nature of the SMS. Or, that the SMS can impact the level and nature of leaders' commitment and stakeholder engagement, respectively. Consequently, these factors were described as having a reciprocal relationship which impacts the nature, strength, and proficiency of safeguarding culture. Evidence was also offered of the potential impact of internal and external contextual factors that function as peripheral but potentially mediating factors of those first order themes, or the nature, function and/or effectiveness of the resultant safeguarding culture. Based on these findings the Safeguarding Culture in Sport Model was developed (as shown in Figure 2).

(INSERT FIGURE 2)

This model is a visual representation of safeguarding culture in sport. At the centre of this model is the three key influencing factors of safeguarding culture (SMS, stakeholder engagement and leadership commitment). These factors are presented as interconnected, representing their potential to impact each other. This is consistent with safeguarding in sport research which has discussed the interaction between individual, interpersonal, and systemic elements (Brackenridge & Rhind, 2014; Everley, 2020; Nite & Nauright, 2020), and seminal

safety culture research which outlines reciprocity between key influencing factors (e.g., Cooper, 2000; Fernández-Muñiz et al., 2007b). Findings of the influence these factors may have on safeguarding culture is represented by a solid arrow towards safeguarding culture, while the potentially mediating role of contextual factors on these factors and the resultant safeguarding culture are represented by dashed arrows.

6. Conclusion

This study was the first to apply safety culture to safeguarding, and conceptualise safeguarding culture in sport. Findings suggest this approach may address the need for a comprehensive and multi-facetted approach that considers both those tangible and intangible factors that can impact safety. Findings also suggest that safeguarding culture is influenced by the presence and nature of three interconnected first order themes; SMS, leadership commitment and stakeholder engagement. These factors may be impacted by various internal and external contextual factors, while contextual factors may also impact the resultant safeguarding culture. Based on these findings, this study presented the Safeguarding Culture in Sport Model. This represents an advancement of knowledge in both the safeguarding children in sport, and safety culture literature.

As this study was conducted with 52 units of qualitative data from five organisations around the world, it can be said that the volume, scope, and spread of participants is a significant strength of this study. Another strength is the multitude or practical implications it has. Findings have direct relevance to all involved in sport who are responsible for safeguarding children, but may be of particular interest to those with leadership responsibility (e.g. management and governing bodies) who may apply these findings to develop and maintain safeguarding cultures in their organisations.

Nonetheless, there are limitations to this study. Firstly, because of global disparities in research (Hayhurst et al., 2015), literature which underpinned this study cannot be considered

globally representative. There was also the risk that in a bid to not criticise their organisation, some may have presented an idealistic representation of it. Lastly, despite efforts to address a selection bias, it is worth noting the potential that the gatekeeper's selection and briefing of participants may have impacted participants responses.

Despite these limitations, this study presents a new approach to safeguarding children in sport and provides the basis for further advancement of knowledge in this area. As the first of its type in sport, there is rationale for a replication. This may explore means of demonstrating that safeguarding culture has been developed and provide more evidence of its impact. Future research may also analyse the Safeguarding in Sport Model, consider the strength of the relationships between the identified safeguarding culture factors, and question whether practitioners may be justified in prioritising particular areas. Conversely, future research may focus on particular factors, questioning whether the definitions and conceptualisations used in this study are appropriate. This may be used to develop more uniform criteria for essential components of safeguarding culture in sport.

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Table 1.
Overview of participating organisations.

Organisation name	Size	Mission	Location(s)	Description	Interviews	Focus Groups
Caribbean Sports Company (Caribbean Sports Co.)	Regional	Coach education, activism & capacity building	Caribbean islands	Regional activist for sport for development & safeguarding. Provider of training and administrative support for the organisation and delivery of sport. Partners include local, national, regional & international sporting organisations and governments.	8	2
Kenya Girls' Club	Local	Sport delivery	Kenya, East Africa	Regional and global promoter of safeguarding and child rights. Award winning provider of programmes to address gender-based imbalances for women and girls. Host and competitor of youth football leagues.	8	2
The Club	International	Sport delivery	Europe	Globally renowned professional football club with world-class, multi-site facilities. Deliverer of sport via an academy, community development programmes and international football development programmes.	11	1
International Coaching Agency (ICA)	International	Coach education	Based in the USA, delivery in developing countries	International sport for development organisation that trains and educates coaches/organisations in developing countries to use sport to address social issues in their community. Partners with local governing bodies.	9	0

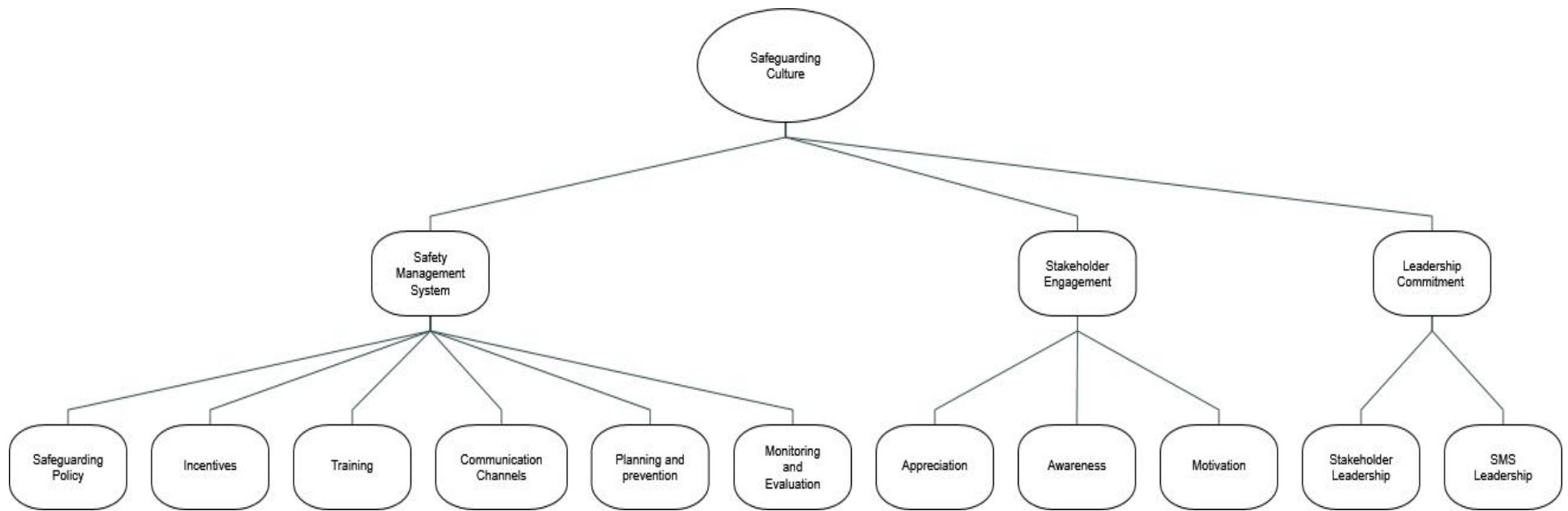| International Child Rights Company (ICRC) | International | Coach education & sports delivery | Headquarters in Canada with sites in over 20 countries in three continents. | Global network of sport for development organisations.

Facilitators of social change by training teachers and coaches to provide quality education, build peaceful communities, ensure gender equality and teach positive health practices.

Deliverers of long-term projects which include working partnerships with key organisations such as local schools and governmental departments. | 9 | 2 |

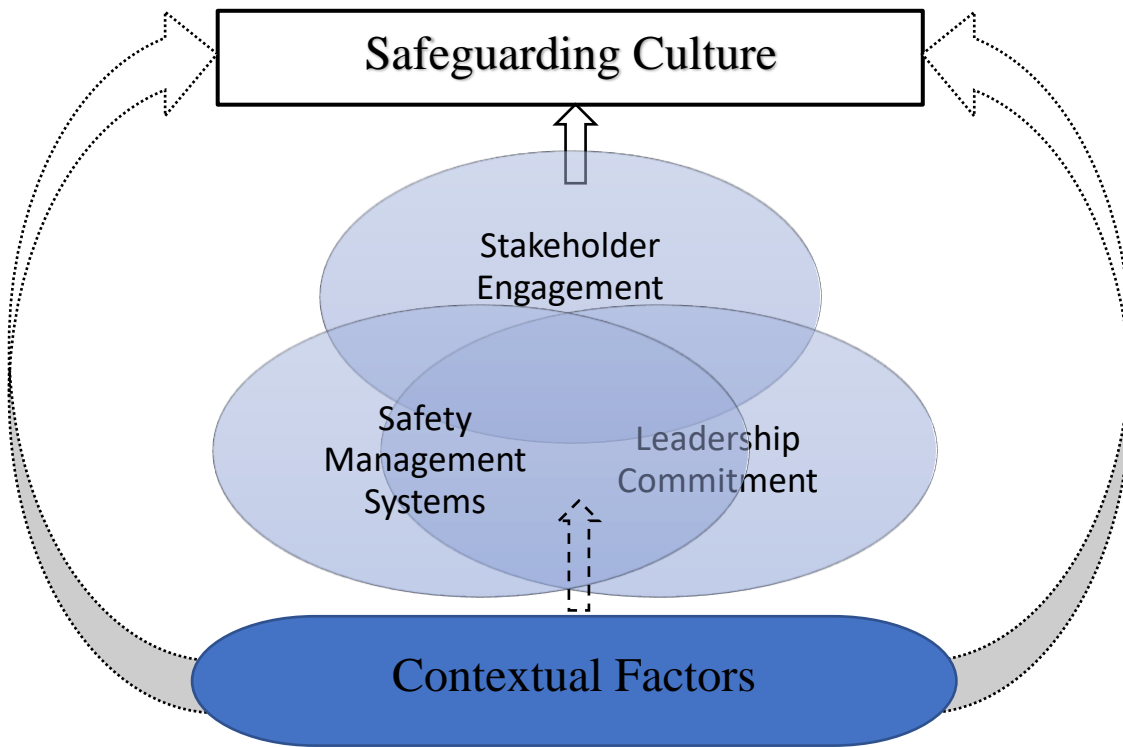Figure 1. First order themes that represent the concept of Safeguarding Culture in Sport.

Figure 2. The Safeguarding Culture in Sport Model.