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# Prevention of sexual violence in sports boarding schools: a survey from Germany

After a long period of tabooing, in recent years sexual violence has become the focus of attention in the governance of sports organizations and in sports-related research. In addition to the “#MeToo” campaign and numerous cases in the field of churches, the area of organized sports has received a high proportion of attention with issues of sexual violence in English football or in gymnastics in the United States. Cases of sexual violence in boarding schools have also become known, for example, in Great Britain (ITV, 2018) or in the “Odenwald School” in Germany. In particular, children and adolescents are exposed to an increased risk due to the strong dependency structures that are present in the systems of professional sports training and in boarding schools (e.g., Hartill, Rulofs, & Lang, 2021; Rulofs et al., 2019b, c). Therefore, it is essential to analyze the current prevention status of sexual violence in sports boarding schools (SBSs) (e.g., Whelen, 2020).

## Background: sexual violence and its specific risk constellations in SBSs

The term “sexual violence” is usually used as an umbrella term that includes a continuum of different behaviors, ranging from sexual harassment without body contact (e.g., text messages with sexual content), to transgressive behaviors (e.g., sexual touching during training or massages) and sexual violence with body contact (e.g., unwanted kisses, sexual touching, rape). The common characteristics of these different forms

are that the behaviors are based on sexuality and the abuse of power and have intimidating or even traumatizing effects on victims (Brackenridge, Pawlaczek, & Bringer, 2005; Ohlert, Seidler, & Rau, 2018; Rulofs et al., 2019c).

Based on this definition, the state of research shows that professional sport, in particular, has a high risk of sexual violence. In a recent large-scale European survey on child abuse in sports Hartill et al., (2021) found that the prevalence of interpersonal violence against children is lowest in recreational sports and highest in competitive sports. According to this study, the prevalence of any form of interpersonal violence against young athletes in sports is 68% at the recreational level and 84% at the international level of competitive sports. The residents of SBSs are mostly young athletes who compete in elite sports at a national or international level. Following the current body of research, elite sport carries an increased risk of sexual violence compared to other areas in sport due to hierarchical leadership structures, close relationships of dependency, physical and disciplining training regimes, and participation at an early age (e.g., Cense & Brackenridge, 2001; Hartill et al., 2021; Rulofs et al., 2019c). Elite athletes in their respective sports represent a group of people with high training loads who spend most of their days in an athletic environment for a long period of time. In particular, athletes with higher performance levels are more often dependent on their coach and therefore have a higher risk of exploitable dependency and abuse (Leahy, Pretty, & Tenenbaum, 2002; Rulofs et al., 2019c;

Vertommen, Schipper-van Veldhoven, & Wouters, 2016). Furthermore, elite athletes usually invest a lot in their athletic careers, define themselves by their athletic accomplishments, and gain recognition from family and friends for their achievements. This can lead to “hyperinclusion” into the sports system, whereby an exit would be emotionally, socially, and economically associated with high costs. Therefore, even sexual assaults are endured to avoid endangering the desired career goal (Leahy et al., 2002).

In Germany, SBSs have existed since the late 1960s, founded to promote young talents. SBSs are primarily intended for competitive athletes whose residence is not close to the school or training location, which means that they should benefit from the SBS through short distances and an organizational coordination between sports training and school education. However, entry into a SBS can affect the entire social network structure of children and adolescents, as they then often separate from their social environment (family, peer group). In addition, athletes lose contacts outside the sports system and consequently focus increasingly on top athletic performance, up to an existential dilemma between the pressure to succeed and loss of identity, which can lead to strongly perceived dependencies on success in sports (Leahy et al., 2002; Rulofs et al., 2019c; Vertommen et al., 2016). Children and adolescents are likely to be particularly vulnerable in such situations. Since permission to use a SBS is given according to the sporting performance and can also be withdrawn if the performance is too low, a high-

performance pressure and a potential dependency relationship arise.

The different types of SBSs in Germany are intended both for athletes of school age and for athletes after graduation. Such SBSs formally show their focus on sports by working with at least one “Olympic training center” or with at least one “elite sports school”. Olympic training centers offer optimized training options for the compatibility of competitive sports and school education for elite athletes and elite sports schools. Accordingly, over 60% of students at elite sports schools in Germany are also accommodated in SBSs (Borchert, Wartenberg, & Brand, 2014). In addition to providing accommodation and meals, they also offer pedagogical support, up to the substitution of pedagogical tasks of the socialization role the family usually takes. This intimacy may lead to close relationships that might blur the boundary between adequate closeness and distance (e.g., Crittenden, Gimlin, & Bennett, 2021).

After pointing out these typical structures of SBSs with regard to risk constellations that can lead to sexual violence, the question arises as to how these organizations can implement preventive measures. To answer this question, the perspective of organizational development is used as a theoretical framework.

### Theoretical framework: organizational development

The problem of sexual violence and its prevention have been neglected in many organizations until recently. However, as organizational change often results from an environmental disturbance (Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards, 1999), the pressure to deal with this issue was increased through discussions in the media and society, for example, the “#MeToo” campaign, but also through cases of sexual abuse in sports (e.g., football in the United Kingdom and gymnastics in the United States). These developments have led to critical reflections and strategies for organizational change to implement or strengthen preventive measures against sexual violence in various organizations of youth work, including the field of sports. Such or-

ganizational development, as defined by pioneers in organizational development research (Beckhard, 1969; Bennis, 1969), aims to modify beliefs, values, attitudes, structures and processes so that organizations can better adapt to their changing environments and cope with uncertainties.

To describe this organizational development in SBSs regarding the prevention of sexual violence, three major pillars of a theoretical framework emerge from summarizing the current state of research: organizational structures, organizational culture, and (as dependent output) the level of change.

First, organizational structures are important (e.g. Burnes, Cooper, & West, 2003; Hitt, Hoskisson, & Harrison, 1991; McGrath & Hoole, 1992). These include the organizational infrastructure, its background, and its resources (Burke, 2008; Slack & Parent, 2006), especially in regard to the prevention of sexual violence (e.g., specific budget or personnel with defined roles). As part of the organizational infrastructure and background of SBSs, the organizational size and the type of sport might also be relevant to consider. In addition, its structures of internal and external decision-making and cooperation with various stakeholders have to be analyzed, including managerial support, the relationship with other fields of activity in the SBS, and the cooperation within and outside the SBS (Slack & Parent, 2006).

Second, the importance of organizational culture concerning organizational development is emphasized (Burnes et al., 2003; Hitt et al., 1991; McGrath & Hoole, 1992; Schein, 1988, 2008; Slack & Parent, 2006). Organizational culture is produced by the interplay of individuals and structures in organizations and includes the values, norms, behavioral patterns, practices, rituals, values, beliefs, and communication processes that are typical and crucial for an organization (Burke, 2008; Schein, 1988, 2008; Slack & Parent, 2006). Because formal structures in organizations are typically incomplete, partial, and cannot deal with all possible contingencies (Jacobs, van Witteloostuijn, & Christe-Zeyse, 2013), a shared belief structure is impor-

tant (Jacobs, Christe-Zeyse, & Keegan, 2008). Related behavioral patterns are influenced by the organization's and personnel's norms, values, and perceptions or attitudes (Jacobs et al., 2013; Slack & Parent, 2006). They are key components of organizational identities (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006), which affect and are affected by organizational change.

Third, the level or “grade of change” (Burnes et al., 2003, p. 458) or “output” (Burke, 2008, p. 15) of an organization defines organizational change (Slack & Parent, 2006). As for indicators for the level of change concerning the prevention of sexual violence, concrete actions might be registered in a sports organization, for example, the appointment of a contact person, guidelines for dealing with suspicions and incidents, or regular qualification and information concerning the topic (e.g., Hartill, Lang, & Ashley, 2014).

Despite these established pillars, there “is no singular, all-encompassing theory” (Burke, 2008, p. 15) of organizational development or organizational change. While the above-mentioned three pillars constitute a widely used theoretical framework, their naming and operationalization have varied in previous research (see, for example, the concept of organizational capacity in Hall, Andruckow, & Barr, 2003; Rulofs, Feiler, & Rossi, 2019a).

### State of empirical research and research deficits

Empirical studies focusing on elite athletes in general, using a broad definition of sexual violence, have found prevalence rates ranging from 28% for female elite athletes in Norway (Fasting, Brackenridge, & Sundgot-Borgen, 2004) to 56% for female elite athletes in Turkey (Gündüz, Sunay, & Koz, 2008). An Australian study by Leahy et al. (2002) examined severe forms of sexual abuse in professional athletes and found a prevalence rate of 13% (8% for males and 17% for females). In Germany, 38% of elite athletes have experienced some form of sexual violence in organized sports and 11% of professional athletes report a severe form of sexual violence (Ohlert

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## Prevention of sexual violence in sports boarding schools: a survey from Germany

### Abstract

Numerous sexual violence cases have been reported in boarding schools as well as in sports organizations. However, no studies have been conducted so far that investigate the prevention of sexual violence in sports boarding schools. Our study explores to what extent sports boarding schools in Germany register sexual violence as a relevant problem in their organizations and which prevention measures they apply. Based on a theoretical framework of organizational development, the organizational structures, the organizational cultures and the grades of change toward the prevention of sexual violence were analyzed. To this end, a survey with representatives from all 59 sports boarding schools in Germany was conducted. The results reveal various aspects that can be improved regarding organizational development and specific prevention measures. Among other results, a regression analysis shows the importance to structurally anchor the topic in the organization, to develop an actively campaigning culture, to establish an internal self-obligation, and to conduct a theme-specific evaluation to ensure better protection of all athletes in sports boarding schools.

### Keywords

Sexual harassment · Sexual abuse · Sexual misconduct · Athletes · Prevention measures

et al., 2018). Studies on the implementation or impact of preventive measures at the level of sports organizations are rare, both in Germany and internationally (Hartmann-Tews, Bartsch, & Wagner, 2020; Ohlert, Vertommen, & Rulofs, 2021; Rulofs et al., 2019a).

Concerning sexual violence in child care institutions without specific sports relations some older studies exist (La Fontaine & Morris, 1991; Utting, 1997). In this setting, a more recent review states that sexual violence by peers accounts for almost half of the known cases, and that both institutional culture and insufficient knowledge of professionals appear to be crucial factors in peer sexual violence (Timmerman & Schreuder, 2014). Also, some research focused on boarding schools without sports relations where offenders used their employment to target and sexually abuse the children with whom they work (Colton, 2002; Sullivan & Beech, 2002). Recent studies focus on the boundaries between consensual sexual relationships and sexual harassment (Crittenden et al., 2021) and elaborate how sexist ideologies remain intact in US college sports (Hextrum, 2020). Regarding Australia, Whelen's call for research into sexual violence in boarding schools underlines the importance of the topic (Whelen, 2020).

In Germany, a study surveyed 97 managers of boarding schools with and without sports focus and found that in the three preceding years 3% of the boarding schools had cases of sexual violence caused by staff members employed at the boarding schools, 28% reported peer-group incidents, and cases with affected boarding school residents caused by persons from outside the boarding schools were stated by 34% (Deutsches Jugendinstitut [DJI]; German Youth Institute], 2011, p. 61f.).

However, no studies on sexual violence in SBSs are known. Therefore, this article aims to examine to what extent SBSs register sexual violence as a relevant problem in their organizational development and which prevention measures they apply. According to the elaborated three pillars of organizational development, this is done in detail along the following research questions (RQ):

- RQ1: Which *organizational structures* constitute SBSs in Germany concerning the prevention of sexual violence?
- RQ2: Which *organizational cultures* exist in SBSs in Germany concerning the prevention of sexual violence?
- RQ3: Which prevention measures on sexual violence are implemented in SBSs in Germany and which activation (*grade of change*) have SBSs reached toward the prevention of sexual violence?
- RQ4: In how far do organizational structures and aspects of the organizational cultures of SBSs in Germany *correlate* with the activation (*grade of change*) toward the prevention of sexual violence?

## Methods and sampling

The study was conducted following the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA), and ethical approval was given by the ethical committee of the German Sport University Cologne. An online questionnaire designed with the software “unipark” was used as a platform for distributing the survey. The study was conducted as a standardized online questionnaire survey and was directed at all 59 SBSs in Germany as part of the research project “Safe Sport” with the support of the German Sports Youth (dsj) in the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), and the German Football Association (DFB).

As the target group, the lead managers of the SBSs were contacted via email. Questions were asked on various topics, such as implementing preventive measures in the SBSs, nominating safeguarding officers, equipping the contact person's position, and the intervention in incidents. Of the contacted 59 SBSs, 42 participated in the survey (response rate 71%). The questionnaire was answered mainly by the SBS managers themselves (76%) and partially by the pedagogical managers (14%), the executive managers (5%), or the network coordinators (5%). The participants were, on average, 47 years old (between 30 and 64 years), two-thirds (67%) of them were

men and one-third (33%) were women, and 98% were full-time employees and had been working in the context of the SBSs for an average of almost 11 years.

The questionnaire data were imported into SPSS (version 27, IBM, Armonk, NY, USA), and all analyses were conducted with this software. A data screening procedure according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) was performed, including a check for nonplausible answers and univariate outliers. To analyze the correlation between the organizational structures and cultures as well as the grade of activation, both Spearman and Pearson correlations were calculated, and subse-

**Table 1** Importance of topics in the sports boarding schools (scale from “very important” (1) to “not at all important” (5);  $n = 40$ )

How important is with regard to the boarding school residents in your sports boarding school ...	Mean	SD	Agreement (1 + 2) (in %)
... educational support?	1.03	0.158	100
... promotion in sport?	1.10	0.379	98
... personal development?	1.15	0.366	100
... prevention against doping/drug use?	1.30	0.516	98
... opportunities of self-determination/co-determination?	1.60	0.672	90
... prevention against sexual violence?	1.67	0.982	85

SD standard deviation

**Table 2** Cultural aspects of sexual violence prevention in the sports boarding schools (scale from “fully applies” (1) to “does not apply at all” (5);  $n = 39$ )

Item	Mean	SD	Agreement (1 + 2) (in %)
The prevention of sexual violence is a relevant topic for boarding schools in organized sports	1.76	0.751	82
The prevention of sexual violence is one of the responsibilities and duties of our boarding school	2.21	1.080	57
In our boarding school, sexual violence and preventive measures are discussed openly	2.46	1.192	57
The prevention of sexual violence is a relevant topic for our boarding school	2.55	1.132	50
Our boarding school has in-depth knowledge of the prevention of sexual violence	2.72	0.999	39
Our boarding school actively campaigns against sexual violence in sports	2.82	1.411	47

SD standard deviation

quently a multiple regression analysis was applied. The statistical requirements of a multiple regression analysis were all fulfilled because the condition numbers were smaller than 30, the eigenvalues were larger than 0.01, and the variance inflation factors were smaller than 10 for all independent variables. Furthermore, heteroskedasticity was ruled out by a visual analysis of the scatter plot, and no outliers could be detected in the residual normal distribution.

On this basis, a detailed picture of the prevention and intervention in the area of sexual violence in SBSs in Germany can be described.

## Results

A total of 42 persons answered the survey, each as representative of one SBS in Germany. However, since not everyone answered every question, the respective number ( $n$ ) was mentioned in each case. The presentation of the findings is di-

vided into subchapters, each related to one research question.

### Organizational structures regarding sexual violence

To determine which organizational structures constitute SBSs in Germany concerning the prevention of sexual violence (RQ1), key facts about each SBS have been investigated. Half of the SBSs state that they have a specific contact person to prevent sexual violence or a child protection officer (50%,  $n = 19/38$ ). For the other half, according to their own assessment, a specific officer is not required. Wherever the position of a contact person to prevent sexual violence exists, it has been in existence, on average, since around 2009. In these SBSs with a contact person, three-quarters (74%) of the officers are anchored at the boarding school itself, and one-quarter (26%) at the level of the (sponsoring) association. A written task description of these officers is

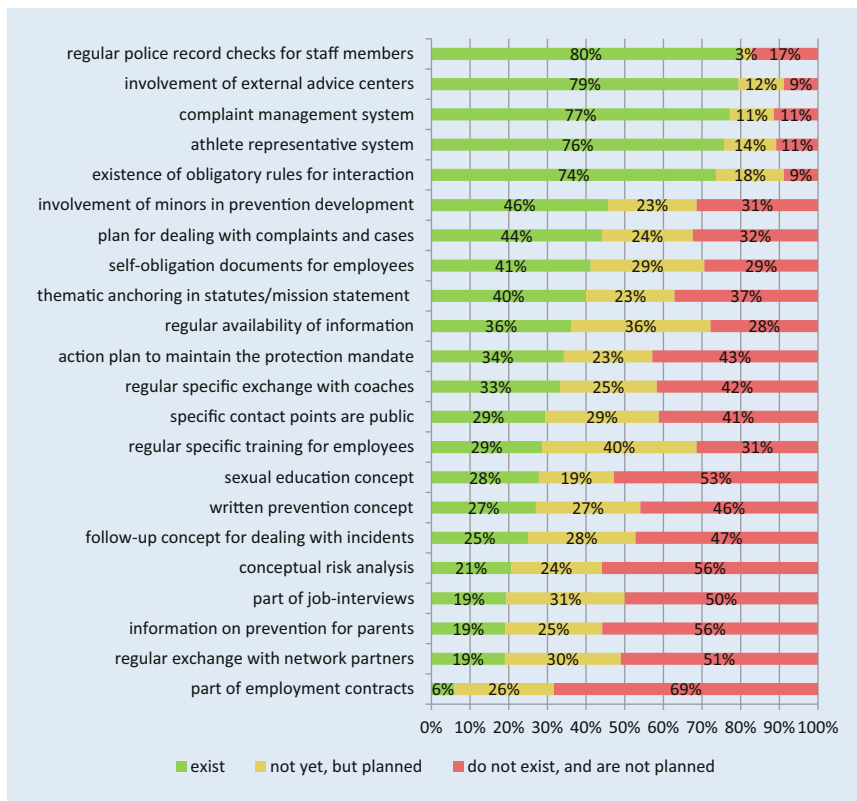
only available for around a quarter (27%;  $n = 3/11$ ), and no SBS has fixed an amount of working hours for the safeguarding tasks. At the same time, three-quarters (75%;  $n = 27/36$ ) did not structurally anchor the topic in a particular department or division (e.g., in prevention in general) and did not implement evaluations of topic-specific measures. Only 8% ( $n = 3/38$ ) of the SBSs have a specific budget for preventing sexual violence.

Concerning cooperation or relationships with other stakeholders, around a third (31%;  $n = 11/35$ ) of the SBSs recommend that cooperation partners such as Olympic training centers, elite sports schools, associations, or clubs implement preventive measures against sexual violence. More than three-quarters (78%;  $n = 28/36$ ) of the SBSs also receive support with regard to the prevention of sexual violence (e.g., information materials, further and advanced training, advice) from these cooperation partners as well as the DOSB or youth welfare offices and specialist advice centers. Depending on the type of sport, each institution has specific cooperation networks. The sports that are professionally focused are diverse, with the most common being football (at 19 locations), athletics/track and field (14), swimming (13), handball (10), judo (8), and rowing (8).

### Organizational cultures regarding sexual violence

To assess the organizational cultures in SBSs in Germany (RQ2) and their core values and norms regarding sexual violence prevention, the survey inquired about the importance assigned to the topic of prevention against sexual violence in each SBS and other topics from constitutive areas of responsibility (Table 1).

Compared with the theoretical mean ( $= 3$ ), all task areas and topics were seen as (very) important. Although the prevention of sexual violence was assigned the lowest importance overall, it was classified as (very) important (mean = 1.67). Correspondingly, 85% of the SBSs agreed that the prevention of sexual violence was a(n) (very) important topic for the SBSs. In comparison, for example, 98% of those



**Fig. 1** ▲ Implementation of prevention measures against sexual violence at sports boarding schools ( $n = 37$ )

surveyed considered the prevention of doping to be (very) important.

To further evaluate the belief structures regarding the prevention of sexual violence, it was surveyed whether an organization has been obliged from outside to deal with the prevention of sexual violence or has committed itself internally. It was reported that 62% ( $n = 24/39$ ) of the SBSs saw an internal self-obligation to deal with the topic; thus, more than a third did not. Also, 40% said they had not received any external requests at all. Interestingly, only 28% ( $n = 11/40$ ) of the SBSs stated that they were obliged to deal with the topic within the scope of the operating license from the authority that issued them. The official requirements varied from participation in counseling meetings to the submission of written prevention concepts.

Information about norms and belief structures was also obtained by assessments of questions about the prevention culture (Table 2). Around four-fifths of the respondents (82%) agreed that the prevention of sexual violence was a rele-

vant topic for SBS in general, but only half (50%) saw it as a relevant topic for their own SBS. Slightly more than half (57%) stated that the prevention of sexual violence was one of the responsibilities and duties of their own SBS and that sexual violence and preventive measures were openly discussed. Less than half (47%) perceived that their own SBS actively combated sexual violence and that their organization had in-depth knowledge of sexual violence prevention (39%).

Concerning the cooperation between different groups of personnel and their different responsibilities and sets of values, 72% ( $n = 28/39$ ) of the respondents opined that the sports coaches supported the boarding school residents' participation in the educational programs, and 82% ( $n = 38$ ) considered the educational boarding school personnel to be appropriately included in the coordination processes of the network system. However, about one-fifth (22%;  $n = 8/37$ ) said that the educational work of the boarding school staff was insufficiently supported in the network system. The educational

work was based on an own educational concept in 93% of the SBSs ( $n = 37/40$ ), and one-third (33%;  $n = 13/40$ ) stated that they also orientated the educational work of their own SBS on the educational framework requirements of organized sports, that is, concepts of DOSB/dsj (20%), state sports associations (13%), Olympic training centers (10%), or professional associations (10%).

## Organizational grades of activation regarding the prevention of sexual violence

To measure the grade of activation (e.g., Hartill et al., 2014) toward the prevention of sexual violence in SBSs in Germany (RQ3), these organizations were asked about their specific activities and concepts in this area. In the survey, the SBSs were requested to indicate for 22 specifically listed prevention measures whether these already “exist” at their SBS, “do not yet exist but are in planning”, or “do not exist and are not planned” (Fig. 1). The selection of the specific measures was based on the recommendations for sports organizations by the German Sports Youth and on general professional standards for the prevention of sexual violence in institutions (Sportandev, 2022; Hartill et al., 2014).

According to the detailed individual questioning of measures, an average of 8.2 of the 22 questioned measures were implemented in the SBSs ( $n = 37$ ). Figure 1 shows that the implementation of a block of five prevention measures was stated by about three-quarters (74 to 80%) of the SBSs; all other measures were implemented in less than half the organizations (maximum 46%). Those five measures comprised regular police record checks for staff members (80%), the involvement of external advice centers in the event of problems or suspected cases (79%), a complaint management system for children and adolescents (77%) as well as an athlete representative system (76%), and the existence of obligatory rules for interaction (e.g., for entering the room, for consultation) (74%).

A distinction can be made between the three different types of further measures. As a first area, the anchoring of

**Table 3** Results of bivariate correlations and multiple regression analysis

		Correlation	Multiple regression analysis		
		With the sum of implemented measures	B-coeff	Beta-coeff	Sign. of coeff
Parameters of organizational structures regarding sexual violence	Existence of a specific budget for the prevention of sexual violence	0.408*	–	–	–
	Existence of a specific contact person	0.600***	–	–	–
	Formal duty of regular reporting	0.616*	0.933	0.101	*
	Topic structurally anchored in a particular department or division	0.485**	6.371	0.750	***
	Implementation of specific evaluations	0.397*	1.385	0.160	**
	Sum of supportive cooperation with other organizations	0.651***	–	–	–
Parameters of organizational cultures regarding sexual violence	Internal self-obligation to deal with the topic	0.575**	0.671	0.237	**
	The prevention of sexual violence is a relevant topic for boarding schools in organized sport	0.395*	–	–	–
	The prevention of sexual violence is one of the responsibilities and duties of our boarding school	0.559**	0.447	0.070	*
	In our boarding school, sexual violence and preventive measures are discussed openly	0.513**	–	–	–
	The prevention of sexual violence is a relevant topic for our boarding school	n.s.	–	–	–
	Our boarding school has in-depth knowledge of the prevention of sexual violence	0.579**	–	–	–
	Our boarding school actively campaigns against sexual violence in sports	0.582**	2.653	0.684	***

n.s. not significant

\*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$ 

the topic in formal documents was investigated. Two-fifths (40%) indicated the thematic anchoring in the organization's statutes or mission statement as well as in internal self-obligation documents (e.g., codes of honor) that have to be signed (41%). Even so, only in 6%, the issue was part of employment contracts. A second area can be summarized as prevention concepts, which were implemented at a range from 44 to 21%. In detail, 44% of the SBSs had a procedural plan for dealing with complaints and cases, one-third (34%) had an action plan to maintain the protection mandate (according to Sect. 8a of the German legal requirement SGB VII), a sexual education concept had 28%, a written prevention concept 27%, a follow-up concept for dealing with incidents a quarter (25%), and a conceptual risk analysis for the occurrence of sexual violence in their own SBS a fifth (21%). A third area constitutes prevention measures regarding the flow of information on the prevention of sexual violence (between 46% and 19%). In almost half (46%), children and young people were

involved in the development of measures (such as rules of conduct). A topic-specific exchange with sports coaches took place in a third (33%) of the organizations, and information on prevention for parents existed in a fifth (19%) of the SBSs, while just as many (19%) also stated a regular exchange with the network partners (school, sports club, Olympic training center) on the prevention of sexual violence. A regular availability of information via flyers, notices, or information events on the prevention of sexual violence was provided by 36%. Less than a third (29%) stated that a specific contact point had been made public (e.g., through the homepage, newsletter, notice), 19% of employees were sensitized to the topic in job and recruitment interviews, and almost a third (29%) received regular training on the subject. In addition to the training, it was determined that 42% of the SBSs ( $n = 16/38$ ) carried out general training courses themselves, of which slightly more than half (56%) also included content on the topic of

preventing sexual violence in their own training courses.

In summary, it can be stated for the implemented measures that a selection of measures existed in around three-quarters of the SBSs. After all, various measures were being planned so that a development in the direction of improved prevention against sexual violence could be expected. In addition, however, it can be seen that around half of SBS did not even plan to introduce certain measures. Also, three-quarters (74%;  $n = 28/38$ ) of the SBSs had not carried out an evaluation of their own preventive measures.

In addition, specific measures related to the entry and exit procedures at SBS were investigated. Data showed that before entry, the psychological suitability for boarding school life had not been checked in advance in more than a quarter (29%;  $n = 12/42$ ). Special measures to make it easier for new boarding school residents were in place at 93% of SBSs ( $n = 38/41$ ), such as common activities (32%), trial periods (29%), counseling interviews (29%), or resident mentorships

(15%). However, for newly accepted athletes, in nearly a third (30%;  $n = 11/37$ ) did not exist any special measures to enable them to maintain contact with their parents and existing friendships outside of the boarding school. Boarding school residents who no longer met their sporting performance requirements did not have to leave a SBS immediately ( $n = 39$ ), as at slightly more than a third (39%) of the SBSs, the residents were allowed to stay in the boarding school until they achieved their desired educational qualification. In a further third (33%), solutions were found that took the individual situation into account in general. However, in almost a third (28%), the SBS must be left by the end of the school year at the latest.

Interestingly, around half (53%;  $n = 19/36$ ) did not want any additional support with regard to the prevention of sexual violence. Those SBSs that indicated a need for support for better implementation of the prevention of sexual violence needed this for workshops (50%;  $n = 18/36$ ), for intervening with suspected incidents (42%), the design of information materials (36%), a risk analysis (25%), the creation of a protection concept (22%), and the establishment of a specific network (17%).

### Correlation and regression analyses regarding sexual violence

To determine how far organizational structures and aspects of the organizational cultures of SBSs in Germany correlate with the activation toward the prevention of sexual violence (RQ4), a multiple regression analysis was conducted. As a dependent variable, the sum of implemented measures (between 0 and 22) was defined. The independent variables (described in Sects. 6.1 and 6.2) and the corresponding bivariate correlations are shown in [Table 3](#), as well as the results of the multiple regression analysis. Parameters with a high variance explanation ( $R^2 = 0.999^{***}$ ,  $R \text{ corr.} = 0.997^{***}$ ) have been identified as a structural anchor in the organization (beta-coefficient: 0.750), an actively campaigning culture (0.684), an internal self-obligation (0.237), specific evaluations (0.160),

regular reporting (0.101), and thematic acceptance as responsibility (0.070).

### Discussion

Organizational structures of SBSs in Germany reveal potential risk constellations for dependency, especially since about 90% of the inhabitants in SBS are minors and specific entry/exit measures are only partly implemented in the organizations' structures. In addition, only half of the SBSs state that they have a specific contact person to prevent sexual violence or a child protection officer, and in 75%, the topic is not structurally anchored in a particular department or division of the SBS. Moreover, only 8% allocate a specific budget for the prevention of sexual violence. It would be desirable to provide time and financial resources, to anchor the prevention of sexual violence and child protection in the task portfolio, and to link the topics to a position in the management body. The regression analysis revealed, in particular, the structural anchoring of the topic as an important parameter to establish preventive measures, but also the implementation of regular reporting and specific evaluations. Incentives to foster these organizational structures could be created by tying funding via public subsidies to specific prevention or child protection requirements. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that a specific budget for the topic is not particularly correlated with the number of measures implemented (as in Rulofs et al., 2019a), even though practitioners often complain that they have too few financial resources to deal with all the issues.

Regarding the organizational cultures in SBSs in Germany, it can be stated that the prevention of sexual violence is seen by around 80% of the respondents as a relevant topic for SBSs, but the importance of prevention is rated lowest in comparison to other key tasks. Only half of the SBSs consider this topic to be relevant for their own boarding school. Probably, it is assumed that sexual assaults in one's own SBS are rather unlikely. It is also noteworthy that only half of the boarding schools include the prevention of sexual violence in the area of responsibility of their own boarding school, and less than

a third state that they are obliged to do so and are committed to the prevention of sexual violence within the framework of the operating license. Findings from the regression analysis underline the importance of acceptance as a responsibility or even duty and of an internal self-obligational and actively campaigning culture. These findings lead to the assumption that, although inhabitants of SBS in Germany are mainly minors and spend a lot of time in the SBS, the responsibility for safeguarding their integrity in the network system of elite sport is not sufficiently clarified—at least in terms of protecting young athletes against sexual violence. Here, the higher-level authorities responsible for issuing the operating permit could use their control potential even more effectively to provide incentives. A clarification of the assumption of responsibility and the introduction of a comprehensive protection concept in the network system of competitive sports seems necessary for all organizations involved. In particular, there may exist conflicts of interest between educational personnel and sports coaches that hinder a shared understanding and acceptance of the organizational values and objectives. Some sports coaches are in insecure jobs and may feel under enormous pressure to achieve sportive victories. It may be an opportunity to concentrate resources on a few influential individuals, for example, to establish a prevention officer in the sense of a “culture manager” (Schein, 1988, p. 326), who fosters the organization's cultural change toward a stronger “culture of awareness”.

There may be various reasons why the SBSs have not yet been activated more strongly with regard to the prevention of sexual violence. The turn to child protection in educational institutions is still a relatively new phenomenon for society as a whole, so SBSs will probably need more time for sensitization and specific actions. However, some proposed measures and organizational changes do not go beyond a formalization and refinement of already existing but not yet formalized practice; they are well aligned with the organizational identity. Yet, others are partially in conflict with organizational identities or can be experienced as

fundamental challenges to valued organizational identities. Thus, to endeavor organizational change may turn out to be risky, as it is often related to the violation of an organization's core cultural values and identity (Jacobs et al., 2013). Cunningham (2002, p. 279) argues that there are two types of organizational change: incremental change, which takes place within the original organizational template, and radical change, which represents a complete break. Between these poles, the implementation of prevention of sexual violence may seem as an incremental change but may also be perceived as a radical new organizational orientation that contradicts measures to ensure sportive success. Because individuals identify with their employing organization, the organizational identity reflects on how people see themselves. Therefore, changes to the organization's identity may be experienced as threats to members' individual identities (Jacobs et al., 2008, 2013). This may also lead to a reduction in their identification and loyalty to the organization. Thus, an organizational change to better prevent sexual violence must take these perceptions into consideration.

### Limitations

Methodical limitations are given as only one person per organization answered the survey and their perceptions are not necessarily representative of the whole organization. However, as they are mostly part of the management, they represent important stakeholders. Since not all participants answered all survey questions, the results of some items could only be reported but not be used in the regression analysis (e.g., organizational form and size). For similar reasons, no statements with regard to specific sports types, age groups or gender compositions could be derived from the data. For the future, it may be advisable to examine these aspects in a differentiated manner with regard to prevention measures.

As this analysis is based on correlations, not all interdependencies may have been detected. Therefore, even though theoretically derived assumptions are un-

derlying, a causal relationship cannot be stated.

It should also be considered that some respondents may have answered in terms of social desirability and presented themselves more positively with regard to protection against sexual violence. If this were correct, the data reported here would have to be assessed even more negatively with regard to the degree of activation against sexual violence.

Moreover, organizational change is a long process; here presented is a status quo. Furthermore, organizational change is often specific to the context, and what works in one organization, culture, or country may not work in another. It is to consider that the German SBSs, as part of a network with schools and sports organizations, may differ from other countries where schools include the boarding home. Organizations from different cultural settings may vary in codes, practices, procedures, and values. Thus, research in other countries is needed, for which the presented framework and the results could be used as orientation.

### Conclusion

To protect the athletes in sports boarding schools (SBSs) from sexual violence and to offer them help in the event of any negative experiences are on the one hand, obvious, but, on the other hand, they seem to be insufficiently anchored in the structures and the cultures of the organizations. The presented data show the need for organizational development and specific measures. For practitioners in SBSs, the study suggests that all organizations, regardless of whether there has been a recent case of sexual violence or not, should put (more) effort into the prevention of sexual violence. They should intensify their efforts and shift their focus to a "culture of awareness", as risk constellations can seemingly be found within SBSs.

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All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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