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ISSUES OF PEDAGOGICAL AND LEGAL PROTECTION OF YOUNG ATHLETES IN MODERN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

The protection of young athletes in Uzbekistan encompasses both pedagogical and legal dimensions. As sport assumes a central role in the nation's public health strategy, educational system, and international representation, ensuring the comprehensive protection of youth engaged in athletic activities has become a strategic priority. This article analyzes the current pedagogical approaches in sports education, examines the legal frameworks governing youth sport, identifies persistent challenges in the implementation of protective mechanisms, and proposes policy-oriented recommendations for strengthening the pedagogical and legal protection of young athletes in modern Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Young athletes; pedagogical protection; legal protection; sports education; youth sport policy; coach training; child rights; sports legislation; athlete welfare; Uzbekistan.

Introduction

Sport and physical activity constitute an essential component of societal development, contributing not only to the promotion of healthy lifestyles but also to the comprehensive physical, psychological, and social development of young

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people. Through regular participation in sport, youth acquire valuable life skills such as discipline, teamwork, resilience, and social responsibility, while also strengthening their sense of belonging and national identity. In many countries, including Uzbekistan, sport is increasingly regarded as a strategic instrument for improving public health, nurturing human capital, and enhancing the country's representation on the international stage.¹

In Uzbekistan, state policy places growing emphasis on expanding youth participation in sport and physical education, as well as on the systematic identification and development of athletic talent capable of achieving competitive success at national and international levels. Government initiatives and targeted programs are designed not only to improve athletic performance and sporting results, but also to create safe, inclusive, and supportive environments for young athletes. These efforts reflect an understanding that effective youth sport development must address educational, legal, and social dimensions, ensuring that young participants are protected from potential vulnerabilities and are able to pursue athletic excellence without compromising their overall well-being and personal development.

Despite notable achievements in the development of sports policy and the strengthening of institutional structures, a number of systemic challenges persist in ensuring the effective protection of young athletes. One of the key difficulties lies in the insufficient coordination between pedagogical practices in sports education and the legal mechanisms designed to safeguard the rights and welfare of minors. While legislative frameworks and policy initiatives have expanded, their practical integration into everyday training environments remains uneven.² In particular, gaps in coaching competencies, especially in areas related to child development, ethics, and athlete welfare, limit the effectiveness of pedagogical protection. At the same time, low levels of legal literacy among athletes, parents,

¹ Modern Legal Frameworks And Methods Of Promoting Team Sports in Uzbekistan. Zien Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (2025). (zienjournals.com)

² Sport Legislation Changes in Uzbekistan. *NORMA.UZ* (2024).

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coaches, and sports administrators reduce awareness of rights, responsibilities, and available protection mechanisms. Inconsistent enforcement of existing regulations further exacerbates these issues, creating conditions in which young athletes may be exposed to exploitation, violations of their rights, and excessive physical or psychological pressure.

Against this backdrop, the present study explores the interaction between pedagogical and legal frameworks in the protection of young athletes in modern Uzbekistan. It seeks to assess the effectiveness of current approaches, identify existing shortcomings, and outline potential directions for strengthening integrated systems of protection that support both athletic development and the holistic well-being of young participants in sport.

Pedagogical Foundations of Youth Athlete Protection

Pedagogical protection within the system of sports education is grounded in the principle of holistic development, whereby young athletes are viewed not solely as performers striving for competitive results, but as developing individuals with interconnected physical, intellectual, emotional, and social needs. Such an approach prioritizes balanced growth, ethical formation, psychological well-being, and academic engagement alongside the cultivation of athletic skills. By integrating educational, developmental, and training objectives, pedagogical protection seeks to create supportive learning environments that promote long-term health, motivation, and personal fulfillment among young athletes.³

In Uzbekistan, ongoing educational reforms reflect a growing commitment to these principles. Efforts have been directed toward modernizing physical education curricula, introducing scientifically grounded training methods, and aligning instructional content with contemporary international standards. Parallel investments in educational infrastructure, teacher and coach training, and

³ Measures for Preparing Personnel and Improving the Scientific Research System in Physical Education and Sports (Presidential Decree). Olympic.uz (2022). (olympic.uz)

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methodological support aim to enhance the overall quality of athlete preparation. Collectively, these measures underscore the state's intention to strengthen pedagogical foundations in sport and ensure that athletic development is accompanied by comprehensive educational and personal growth.

These reforms indicate an increasing awareness of the importance of evidence-based pedagogical approaches and structured coach education as fundamental components of youth athlete protection. The adoption of scientifically grounded training principles and modern educational methodologies contributes not only to improved athletic performance but also to the physical safety, psychological well-being, and long-term development of young athletes. Recognizing that coaches play a decisive role in shaping training environments, greater emphasis has been placed on equipping them with interdisciplinary knowledge that extends beyond technical instruction to include child development, ethics, and welfare considerations.⁴

At the institutional level, sustained investments in the professional development of coaches, the renewal of educational programs, and the modernization of training facilities illustrate the state's commitment to enhancing pedagogical quality across the sports system. By strengthening training institutions and expanding opportunities for continuous education, these initiatives aim to raise professional standards, ensure consistency in coaching practices, and create safer, more supportive environments for young athletes throughout their developmental pathways.

Nevertheless, empirical studies reveal persistent disparities in resource allocation, particularly between urban and rural regions. Limited access to qualified coaches, modern facilities, and structured training programs continues to hinder effective youth engagement and athlete development in marginalized areas.⁵

⁴ Legal Regulation and Prospects of Physical Education and Sport in Uzbekistan (Innoist.uz). (Innoist)

⁵ Encouraging Youth Participation in Track and Field and Addressing Training Challenges in Uzbekistan. Proximus Journal. (proximusjournal.com)

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Coaches are central to the pedagogical protection of young athletes. Beyond technical expertise, they must possess competencies in child development, sports psychology, injury prevention, and ethical conduct. Properly trained coaches create safe and supportive environments that promote long-term athlete development and personal well-being.

Although initiatives to improve coach certification and training exist, challenges remain in standardizing educational programs and ensuring consistent quality nationwide. Uneven implementation of modern pedagogical principles limits the effectiveness of these efforts and undermines athlete protection at the grassroots level⁶.

Legal Framework for the Protection of Young Athletes

Legal protection of young athletes in Uzbekistan is grounded in both national legislation and international legal standards. At the international level, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes fundamental principles for safeguarding children's rights to education, health, and participation in cultural and recreational activities, including sport.⁷

Nationally, the "Law on Physical Culture and Sport" guarantees citizens' rights to participate in sport and regulates the organization of sporting activities, implicitly extending protections to youth athletes⁸. Legislative reforms and the establishment of a dedicated Ministry of Sports indicate increasing governmental attention to the regulation of sport and athlete welfare⁹.

Proposals to introduce sports law education programs and strengthen legal literacy among athletes, coaches, and administrators represent an important step toward enhancing legal protection mechanisms within the sports sector.¹⁰

⁶ International Legal Frameworks, Legal Mechanisms and Practical Approaches to Protecting Youth Rights. Oriental Journal of History, Politics and Law (2025). (supportscience.uz)

⁷ Legal Protection of Children's Rights. International Journal of Political Sciences and Economics. (ijmri.de)

⁸ Sport Law Faculty at Universities. Kun.uz (2023). (Kun.uz)

⁹ Sport Legislation Changes in Uzbekistan. NORMA.UZ (2024).

¹⁰ Youth Union Primary Organization (UZDJTSUNF). (uzdjtsunf.uz)

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While general child protection legislation exists, its application to the specific context of competitive youth sport remains complex. Young athletes often face unique challenges related to intensive training schedules, contractual obligations, and performance pressures that require tailored legal safeguards.¹¹

Implementation gaps persist at the local level, including inconsistent enforcement of safety standards, limited access to legal counseling, and insufficient oversight of contractual relationships. These weaknesses can leave young athletes vulnerable to rights violations and exploitation.¹²

Effective protection of young athletes requires close alignment between pedagogical approaches and legal safeguards. Training schedules must respect educational requirements, and coaching practices must comply with legal standards related to child welfare, health, and personal development.

Intersectoral coordination among ministries responsible for education, sports, youth affairs, and social policy is essential. Harmonizing pedagogical standards with legal obligations ensures consistent support for young athletes throughout their developmental pathway.¹³

Several systemic issues hinder the effective protection of young athletes in Uzbekistan:

- Limited legal literacy among athletes, families, and coaches
- Inconsistent enforcement of safety and child protection standards
- Unequal distribution of pedagogical and legal resources
- Insufficient funding for legal advisory services and educational programs

To strengthen the pedagogical and legal protection of young athletes, the following measures are recommended:

- Expand specialized coach training programs incorporating child development, legal literacy, and ethical coaching principles

¹¹ Legal Protection of Children's Rights. International Journal of Political Sciences and Economics. (ijmri.de)

¹² International Legal Frameworks, Legal Mechanisms and Practical Approaches to Protecting Youth Rights. Oriental Journal of History, Politics and Law (2025). (supportscience.uz)

¹³ International Legal Frameworks, Legal Mechanisms and Practical Approaches to Protecting Youth Rights. Oriental Journal of History, Politics and Law (2025). (supportscience.uz)

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- Integrate sports law modules into university and vocational physical education curricula
- Develop legal regulations specifically addressing the rights and welfare of young athletes
- Establish independent grievance mechanisms or ombudsman services in the sports sector
- Conduct public awareness campaigns on youth athletes' legal rights
- Provide accessible legal counseling tailored to sports participation
- Regularly evaluate pedagogical and legal protection mechanisms using evidence-based research

The pedagogical and legal protection of young athletes in modern Uzbekistan has advanced through educational reforms, legislative development, and institutional restructuring. However, persistent challenges remain in integrating pedagogical practices with legal safeguards, ensuring consistent implementation, and improving legal literacy among stakeholders.

Future policy efforts must focus on creating coherent, youth-centered frameworks that balance athletic excellence with holistic welfare. Strengthening institutional coordination, enhancing professional education, and empowering young athletes with knowledge and legal support will be critical to ensuring sustainable and ethical development of youth sport in Uzbekistan.

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