What do we know about sexual harassment and abuse in sport in Europe

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“Safer, better, stronger! Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Sport

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Outline

• What are we talking about – definitions
• Why is it so difficult to research and study
• What do we know about:
  • The prevalence
  • The consequences
  • The risk factors
  • The perpetrators
Central in most definitions of sexual harassment and abuse is that the behavior experienced is:

- Unwanted
- Threatening
- Troublesome
- Insulting
- Offensive
- Coerced/Forced
- Abuse of Power
Identifying Gender, Sexual Harassment and Abuse

- **Gender harassment** refers to a broad range of verbal and nonverbal behaviours not aiming at sexual cooperation but conveying insulting, hostile, and degrading attitudes about one gender (male or female),

- **Sexual harassment** refers to behaviour towards an individual or group that involves sexualised verbal, non-verbal or physical behaviour, whether intended or unintended, legal or illegal, that is based upon an abuse of power and trust and that is considered by the victim or a bystander to be unwanted or coerced.

- **Common for definitions of sexual abuse is that it is non-consensual sexual contact and that it is forced or coerced. Sexual abuse** involves any sexual activity where consent is not or cannot be given.
Examples of gender-, sexual harassment and abuse

- **Verbal**
  - Derogatory or demeaning jokes and comments of a sexual nature
  - Repeated unwanted sexual proposals or invitations concerning sexual behavior
  - Ridicule or sexist jokes about women in general

- **Non-verbal**
  - Unwanted sexual suggestions, whistling, sexual staring and leering about one’s body, clothes or private life
  - Unwanted telephone calls, sms or letters with sexual content
  - Being shown pictures or things with unwanted sexual content

- **Physical**
  - Unwanted touching of a sexual nature,
  - pinching
  - attempted kissing
  - unwanted body contact and body pressing
  - Forced into sexual acts
  - Attempted rape and rape
Sexual exploitation continuum (Adapted from Brackenridge 1997)

The spectrum

SEX DISCRIMINATION

GENDER & SEXUAL HARASSMENT

SEXUAL ABUSE

INSTITUTIONAL .......................................................... PERSONAL

"the chilly climate"  e.g. worse pay, facilities or coaching for one sex

bystanding

"unwanted attention"  e.g. sexual ridicule, jokes, stalking, bullying, homophobic taunts

Sexual harassment

Gender harassment

Trans harassment

Homophobia

"groomed or coerced"  e.g. sexual violence, assault, rape, sexual favors, groping, incest

Grooming

Hazing

Sexual abuse
The process of grooming can be said to be the tool the abuser may employ to gain a position from which to carry out the abuse. The process of grooming and/or coercing someone for sexual abuse means that one slowly gains the trust of a person before systematically breaking down interpersonal barriers. The young athletes can become trapped, because his or her compliance is assured by using threats such as being cut from the team and/or giving or withholding privileges (Bringer et al 2002).
Prevalence: Sexual harassment and abuse in sport

- SH varies between 14 - 73 %
- SA varies between 2-22 %


- Belgium
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Turkey
- UK
Female athletes’ experiences of sexual harassment in sport (Fasting et al 2000, Fasting & Knorre 2005)

THE NORWEGIAN WOMEN PROJECT

0.28%

Females, Elite Sports and Sexual Harassment

Ženy ve sportu v České republice
Zkušenosti sportovkyň

0.45%

Kari Fasting
Naděžda Knorre
Forms of sexual harassment and abuse from a coach

• “… when we didn’t perform well, then the punishment was that we should sit on his lap. I remember I thought it was disgusting. He touched us and was really very disgusting. I don’t understand today that we accepted it at all. We had a drill where we had to sprint, and the one who came last had to sit on his lap, so everyone was running like hell…” (Fasting et al 2002)
Forms of sexual harassment and abuse from a coach

• “It happens quite often that people try to hug people, but with this particular coach it is very clear that it was in a sexual context, so you have to be really insistent to keep him away from yourself. I experienced it as unpleasant…..It mainly happens during the training where he uses opportunities like when someone is coming to practice and he comes to hug and says I’m really glad to see you. But during the hug he can move his hands on the body, which is unpleasant.” (Fasting and Knorre 2005)
Sexual harassment and abuse seems to occur in all sports.
The experiences of children participating in organised sport in the UK. London: NSPCC. (Alexander, Stafford and Lewis 2011) N= 6000

- Experiences of sexual harassment: 29 %
- Experiences of sexual behaviour and sexual harm (abuse): 3 %
Czech female athletes’ experiences of sexual harassment in sport for different sport groups (Fasting & Knorre 2005)

- Elite: 55%
- Non-elite: 44%
- Exercisers: 30%
The experiences of children participating in organised sport in the UK. London: NSPCC. (Alexander, Stafford and Lewis 2011) N= 6000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of SHA</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual harassment</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>2 %</td>
<td>5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-physical SH</td>
<td>73 %</td>
<td>58 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical SH</td>
<td>33 %</td>
<td>38 %</td>
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Sexual harassment from men inside sport experienced by female sport students in Czech Republic, Greece, and Norway
European female sport students experiences of sexual harassment in sport and education (Fasting et al. 2012)

- SH from males in sport and/or in education: 50.5%
  - SH from males in sport: 33.5%
    - SH from male coach: 17.8%
    - SH from male athlete: 22.6%
  - SH from males in education: 38.0%
    - SH from male teacher: 17.0%
    - SH from male student: 28.7%
Key messaging: the power of the coach

• There seems to be a higher prevalence of sexual harassment experiences from coaches among athletes who have experienced authoritarian behaviors compared to athletes that have not had such coaches.

• Authoritarian coaching behavior is characterized by negative feedback, screaming, rough language, directive communication, coach-led decision making, task-centered role orientation and goal oriented performance.

• One of the characteristics of authoritarian coaching is therefore the risk of overlooking and intruding on the needs and wills of the athletes since the athlete is left out of important processes in the relationship. (Sand et al 2011)
What is the impact of experiences of sexual harassment in a sport setting? (Fasting et al 2002)

- Drop out/leave sport
- Damaged coach-athlete relationship and changes in behavior towards the coach
- Difficult to concentrate when the harasser was around
- Feelings of anger, irritability, confusion, and anxiety
- Negative effects on self-esteem and body image
- Changes in behavior towards other men and other coaches
- Decline in practice and performance
- Decreased satisfaction with one’s performance
- Decreased self-confidence in relation to one’s sport’s skill
- Decreased motivation for participating
- A negative effect on the relationship to teammates
Risk Factors - Athletes

- Poor relationship with their parents so the perpetrator has a chance to get close to the victims:
  - especially on tours,
  - during massage,
  - at the coach’s home and
  - during drives to and from practice

- affords the coach complete control of her life
- is totally dedicated to the coach or authority figure who assumes the status of a father figure

- When athletes are unaware of their rights and those that work with them do not know how to identify indicators of harassment and abuse or what to do when they are concerned

- They are at pre-peak performance level and dependent on coaches and their entourages for success, team selection, are more likely to be away from home
Selected risks factors - Sports

(Brackenridge 2001, Fasting 2011)

The organizational structure
- involves an hierarchical status system
- gives rewards based on performance
- has no formal procedures for screening, hiring and monitoring staff
- technical/task demands legitimate touch
- there is no guidance about expected standards of behavior such as codes of conduct and ethics
- there are no mechanisms for athletes and others to report concerns or to have them responded to, i.e. there is a lack of protection, such as protection policies and procedure, education and training

The organizational culture
- Cultures of tolerance to homophobia and gender harassment exist unchallenged
- has an autocratic authority system
- involves close personal contact with athletes
- sets up clear power imbalance between athlete and coach
- gives scope for separation of athlete from peers in time and space
- involves mixed sexes and ages sharing room on away trips
• Peer athletes -- a major source of gender, sexual harassment and abuse
The importance of Educating sport organizations, as well as athletes and coaches