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Veena Rani
Research Scholar, Department of
Physical Education, Panjab
University, Chandigarh, India

GS Brar
Professor, Department of
Physical Education, Panjab
University, Chandigarh, India

Prevalence of indecent behaviour of male spectators in sports

Veena Rani and GS Brar

Abstract

Present study aimed to investigate the prevalence of sexual harassment in sports. Forty (N=40) national and international and national level female athletes were selected as subjects for the study. The age of the subjects ranged from 18 to 28 years. Sexual harassment was determined by using the subscale-3 (perception of indecent behaviour from male athletes) of Socio-psychological and Sexual Constraints Questionnaire for female athletes-2016 (SPSCQ-2016 by Brar and Rani). The scale has ten statements based on the verbal and non verbal misconducts as experienced by the female players from male spectators. Sexual harassment was identified by perception and experiences of female athletes. It was evaluated that verbal as well as non-verbal conducts with sexual innuendo was experienced by majority of the respondents

Keywords: Sexual Harassment, Spectators, Verbal Harassment, Non Verbal Harassment

Introduction

Sports represent a challenge for female athletes because it is still considered a men's world (Aybar, 2006) ^[1]. Male dominance was prevalent in almost all sports. Females were considered as the caretakers of family to impart cultural values to children (Singh, 1990) ^[10]. Their lives were limited to the domestic Art. The conservative attitude of society and males were always accountable for her restricted liberty. Cultural views support the aggressive facet for masculinity and passive for femininity. (Cowan *et al*, 1988; Cowan and O'Brien, 1990; Russell, 1993) ^[2, 3, 9].

The prowess of women athletes was always dominated by the masculine outlook of people. Women with athletic abilities have not been accepted by the society rather she used to be physically attractive (Dorothy, 1984) ^[3]. Women in sports are still struggling to be recognized for athletic abilities and prowess. The representation of women athletes has been presented in a gender stereo-typist manner. The image of female players was shown for sexual references. The sports performance has not been being focused at all. Appearance of women athlete is always the focused for onscreen discussions. Instead of shooting a successful fifth penalty shot Brandi Chastain got a large media coverage for removing her shirt gained. More over women and girls are mistreated or sexual harassed on and off the field. Elendu and Umeakuka (2011) ^[6] found that along with sports official, spectators were also responsible for harassing female athletes.

'Sexual harassment in its broad conceptualization as 'unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature' ... which has the effect of 'violating ... dignity, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment' (United Nations, 2007) ^[11]. The examples of verbal harassment and abuse include unwanted or embarrassing intimate questions relating to body, clothes or one's private life, jokes with a sexual innuendo, and proposals or demands for sexual services or sexual relationships. These may also be in the form of unwanted telephone calls, letters, text messages or other communication with a sexual content. The non-verbal examples of harassment and abuse include staring, gestures, showing pictures or objects with sexual allusions (Deutsch Sports 2012) ^[4].

The environment of sports was also contaminated by the indecent behavioral conducts. The perpetrators were found both inside and outside the sports arena. The offensive behaviour includes kisses, sexist comments, sexual remarks, double meaning jokes, physical sexual

Correspondence
Veena Rani
Research Scholar, Department of
Physical Education, Panjab
University, Chandigarh, India

proximity, touching breast, insult, degrading women, staring at one's body, genital contact, and seductive behaviour from male authority figures in sports and audience (Rodriguez and Gill, 2011) [8]. It was revealed by fasting, Brackenridge and Sundgot (2000) [7] that 39% of female athletes were harassed by someone outside sports. The audience or spectators had used degrading word and sexual comments for women. Hence the presence of spectators in sports is not negligible; there behaviour needs to be identified. The present study was an attempt to assess the existence of indecent behaviour of male spectators in women sports.

Method

Data were collected from the national and international level female athletes of Punjab University, Chandigarh. Forty (N=40) female athletes were selected from individual as well as team sports. The age range of the respondents ranged from 20-28 years. The perception or experiences of female athletes were gathered through the subscale of Socio-psychological and Sexual Constraints Questionnaire for female athletes-2016 (SPSCQ-2016). The subscale consists of ten based on the verbal and non verbal misconducts experienced by female athletes from male spectators. The validity evaluated from Scale-content validity index was .94 for full scale. The test retest reliability was calculated at 0.01 level of significance and assessed a value of .755. The split half reliability was .66. The Cronbach Alpha was .83.

Results

It was found that approximately half (or more than half) of the female athletes accepted that they have perceived this type of behaviour from male audience. Verbal as well as non verbal misconducts were experienced by majority of the female players. Unwanted phone calls, lewd/unwanted comments, kissing sounds and whistling were excessively used by male spectators. A greater part of the sample experience one or the other form of sexual harassment from male spectators.

Table 1: Percentage of Responses in relation to the perception of Indecent Behaviour experienced by the female athletes from male spectators

Sr.no	Indecent behaviour of male spectators	Percentage of Responses
1.	Indecent Gestures	57.5%
2.	Unwelcome Comments	60%
3.	Degrading language	50%
4.	Use of vulgar language to get attention	65%
5.	Gathering personal life details from other athletes	67.5%
6.	Unwanted phone calls	45%
7.	Lewd comments	57.5%
8.	Intolerable whistling	57.5%
9.	Kissing sounds	60%
10.	Following after competitions	67.5%

Discussion

It has been noticed from the above results that female athletes suffer from indecent behaviour of male spectators in sports. Elendu and Umeakuka (2011) [6] revealed that 4.33% of the perpetrators were spectators who had sexually harassed female athletes. The practice sessions, training centres and competitions were the venues where offensive behaviour was found. Six international athletes were interviewed by Rodriguez and Gill (2011) [8] and it was assessed that majority of them had experienced one or the other form of sexual harassment either from authority figures in sports or

spectators. Fasting, Brackenridge and Sundgot (2000) [7] investigated the specificity of sexual harassment in sports. It was evaluated that 39% of the athletes experienced sexually oriented conducts from male spectators.

Conclusions

It is concluded that indecent behaviour in form of sexual harassment was prevalent in the field of sports. Both of verbal and non-verbal verbal sexual harassment was experienced by female athletes from male spectators.

Recommendations

1. It is suggested that similar study can be undertaken on larger sample.
2. Similar study can be conducted by comparing the female athletes of national and international levels.
3. It can also be conducted on the state level female athletes
4. It is recommended that the present study may be repeated by selecting subjects belonging to urban and rural area.

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