

Sexual Violence Against Children in Sport: Definitions of concepts, prevalence, perpetrators and impacts

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*Pro Safe Sport +
Kick off event 1
Strasbourg 24-25 of April*



Sexual Violence in Sports Outline

- Definitions
- Prevalence
- Perpetrators
- Risk factors
- Impacts



Types of violence

- Neglect
 - The failure of parents, coaches and athletes' entourage to meet an athlete's physical and emotional needs or failure to protect an athlete from exposure to danger
- Physical
 - Physical injuries caused by punching, beating, kicking, etc. it can also include forced or mandated inappropriate training loads, forced alcohol consumption or systematic doping practices
- Psychological/Emotional
 - A failure to provide appropriate and supportive environment (denigration, ridicule, intimidation, etc.) **At the core of all other forms of violence**
- Sexual (gender, sexual harassment and abuse)

Gender-based Violence (EC 2014)

"Violence directed against a person because of that person's gender (including gender identity/expression) or as violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately"

Non-accidental Violence (Brackenridge 2010)

Used to distinguish between violent behavior deemed to be a normal part of a game, from that considered to overstep the ethical mark, i.e. deliberate or non-accidental violence, i.e. maltreatment through harassment and abuse

Child Maltreatment

- Includes all types of abuse and neglect of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caregiver, or another person in a custodial role (e.g., clergy, coach, teacher). There are four common types of maltreatment.
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Neglect



Sexual Violence – an umbrella concept

- Sexual violence is defined as a sexual act committed against someone without that person's freely given consent (<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/definitions.html>)
- Sexual violence is defined as: any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work. (WHO World report on violence and health 2002)



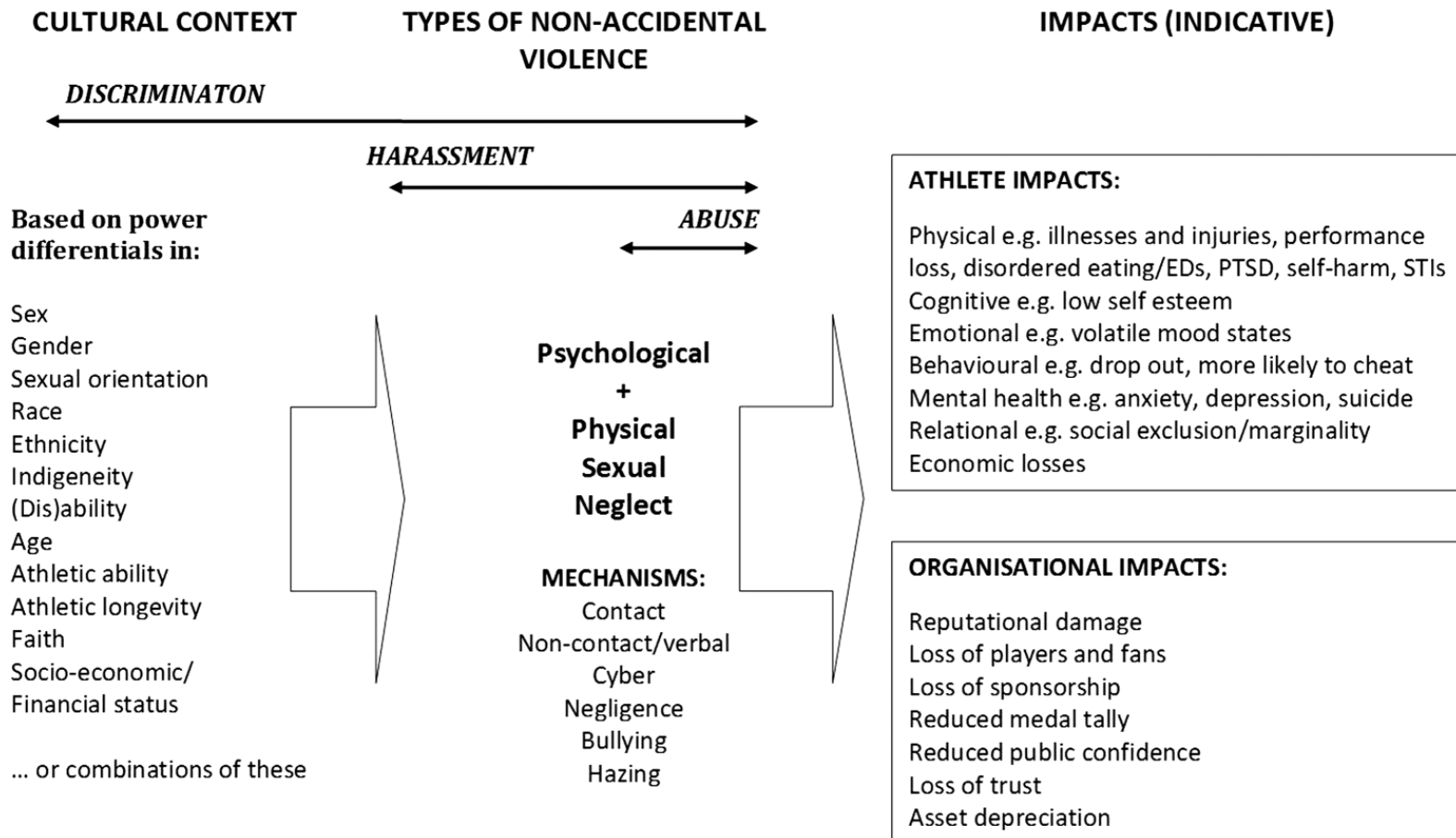
Sexual harassment and abuse in sport stem from abuses of power relations facilitated by an organisational culture that ignores, denies, fails to prevent or even tacitly accepts such problems

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's 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.
- The core in the definitions of *sexual abuse* is that it is non-consensual sexual contact and that it is forced or coerced
- Behaviours that are characterized as sexual harassment may also be considered as sexual abuse depending on the context, such as severity, the age of the victim and the local legal system



Conceptual model of harassment and abuse in sport showing cultural context, types of non-accidental violence, mechanisms and impacts (BJSM 2016 – IOC consensus statement).



Examples of sexual violence: gender- , sexual harassment and abuse

- **Verbal**

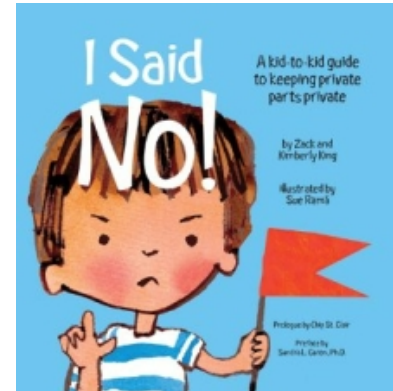
- Derogatory or demeaning jokes and comments of a sexual nature
- Repeated unwanted sexual proposals or invitations concerning sexual behavior
- Ridicule or sexist jokes about women and men, girls and boys in general

- **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



Difficult to compare studies on GBV internationally

- Difference in definitions
- Differences in sampling procedures
- Methodological approaches
- Vocabulary and connotative meaning of questionnaire items
- Anonymity
- Confidentiality of disclosures
- Statistical analyses employed, etc

Example of forms of sexual violence 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)*
- *”---when we didn’t perform well, then the punishment was that we should sit on his lap. I remember I thought it was horrible. He touched us and was really very displeasing. 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 2007)*
- *”He says things in a way that maybe is meant as a joke, but sometimes I get very hurt by it. He can for example say something about that I have too small ‘boobs’ or comments on other parts of my body,...and it doesn’t at all have anything to do with the sport I am competing in..”*



Forms of SHA	Women	Men
Sexual harassment (1)	34%	17%
Sexual harm (1)	2 %	5 %
Sexual violence (2)	17%	11%

1) The experiences of children participating in organized sport in the UK. London: NSPCC. (Alexander, Stafford and Lewis 2011) N= 6000

2) Interpersonal violence against children in sport in the Netherlands and Belgium. Child Abuse & Neglect 51 (2016) 223-236 (Vertommen et al) N= 4043

Canadian Study (Quebec Youths' Romantic Relationships study) – representative sample of the general population between 14-17 years (N= 6450) in Journal of Interpersonal Violence 2016, 2666-2686 (Parent et al)

In general

- Sexual abuse among athletes: 9%
- Adolescents involved in Sports experience less sexual abuse during their life than adolescents who are not involved in organized sport. Girls experienced more sexual abuse than boys



In sport by a coach

- Sexual Abuse by a coach: 0,5 % (N= 32.75 adolescenta) 0,4 % for girls and - 0,7 % for boys – no significant gender difference
- Sexual Contacts perceived as consensual with a coach last year among those who were involved in organized sport; 1,6% (N= 1625) No gender difference. These acts are considered as sexual abuse according to Canadian Criminal Code (2013)
- Sexual Harassment by a coach last year : 0,4 % among those involved in sport (N= 1131) but no significant gender differences

Prevalence: Sexual harassment and abuse in sport

SH varies between 14 – 92 %

SA varies between 2 - 49 %

Holman 1995; Kirby and Greaves 1996; Tomlinson and Yorganci 1997; Klein & Palzkill 1998; Brackenridge 1997; Cense & Brackenridge 2001; Feigin and Hageby 2001; Leahy et al 2002; Haydn 2003; Toffegård Nielsen 1998; Fasting et al 2003, 2004; Fasting & Knorre 2005; Jolly & Décamps 2006; Mazidivire et al, 2006; Gündüz et al 2007; Vanden Auweele et al 2008; Chroni & Fasting 2009; Alexander et al 2011; Hartill 2011; Fasting et al 2010, 2011, 2014; Elendu & Umeakuku 2011; Rintaugu et al (2014); Parent et al (2015); Vertommen et al (2015); Fasting et al (2015)

- Australia
- Belgium & Netherlands
- Canada
- Czech Republic
- Denmark & Norway
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Israel
- Japan
- Turkey
- UK
- Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya & Zambia

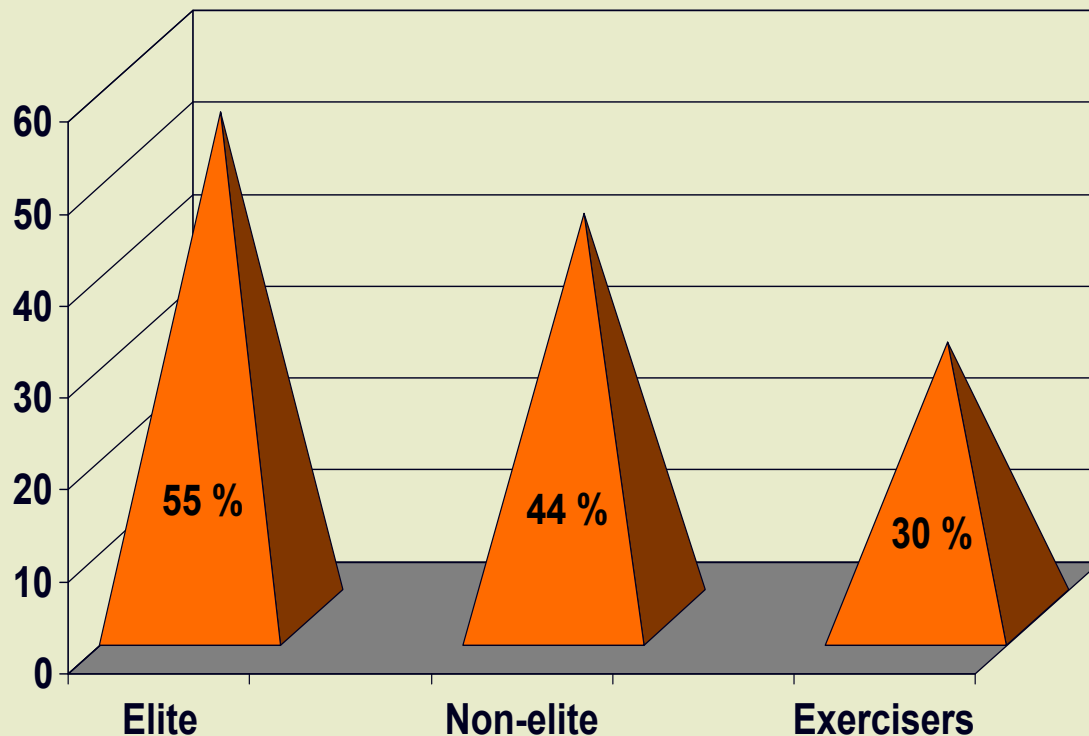
Sexual harassment and abuse seems to occur in all sports (Fasting et al 2004)



Violence against young athletes in sport in the Netherlands and Belgium (Vertommen et al 2015)

Type of Violence	TOTAL SAMPLE % N = 4043	ETHNIC MINORITY % N=334	LGB ATHLETES % N=308	ELITE ATHLETES % N = 112	DISABLED ATHLETES % N=183
Sexual Moderate or severe experiences	12,8	17,6*	24,4*	25,9*	31,4*

Czech female athletes' experiences of sexual harassment in sport for different sport groups (Fasting & Knorre 2005)



Perpetrators

Most perpetrators of SHA never face the criminal justice system, because of victims' fears of reprisals, 'deselection', or not being taken seriously.

Athletes also seldom tell their parents or their club.





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- Peer athletes
-- a major
source of
gender, sexual
harassment
and abuse

SHA	From athletes	From coaches	From other adults	
Sexual harassment (1)	66 %	21 %	20 %	
Sexual harm (1)	88 %	8 %	6 %	
Sexual violence (2)	33%	17%	41%	

1) Perpetrators of those who had experienced sexual harassment and abuse in organized sport among children in the UK. London: NSPCC. (Alexander, Stafford and Lewis 2011) N= 6000

2) Perpetrators of those who had experienced sexual violence as children in the study in Belgium and Netherlands, Child Abuse & Neglect 63 (2017) 172-182 (Vertommen et al)

Impacts

The athlete

- Mental health issues
- Physical illnesses and injuries
- Low self-esteem
- Emotional e.g. volatile mood states
- Increased drop out
- Disrupted relationships
- Economic losses

The organisation

- Reputational damage
- Loss of players and fans
- Loss of sponsorship
- Reduced medal tally
- Reduced public confidence
- Loss of trust
- Asset depreciation

Impacts of GSHA: Relational difficulties with trust and intimacy

- *" It has been years since I have been able to be close to a boy. I just don't trust them. So, for someone that I cared about, you know, I 'd throw it away, because, you know, I just don't trust them" (Leahy & Fasting 2014)*



Main risks



- Locker-room
- Playing field
- Trips away
- Coach's home or car
- Social events, especially with alcohol
- No policies and procedures for prevention



The need for more scientific evidence

- Need for a common terminology
- Need for developing prevalence measurements in the context of sport that are valid and reliable
- Important-- with not only threshold data
- Need for more studies of different age groups also prevalence data
- The necessity of doing observational and ethnographic studies among children and youth (not only retrospective data)
- Need for more knowledge about the consequences, particularly the long term consequences
- Need for knowledge about preventive initiatives and their impact
- Need for more studies about the interaction and communication between the athletes, team-mates and the athletes' entourage





A new international agency "Safe Sport International" (SSI) seeks to end violence and abuse against athletes.

- SSI is:
- Setting the **standard for the minimum infrastructure** that should be in place internationally, and nationally, to safeguard athletes involved in sport.
- Developing and **communicating safeguarding practices** for sport.
- Assisting organisations with their **capacity to deliver safe sport** through **training and consultancy**.
- Organising its first **International Convention for Safe Sport in November 2017 in Madrid** focusing on excellent practice, research and support.



<http://www.safesportinternational.com>

