

Determinants of Sexual Violence against Tunisian Sportswomen (Case of the GAFSA Region, Tunisia)

Anouar Bettaieb, Houda Bougrine, Hajer Sahli, Louay Bettaieb, Makrem Zghuibi

leah.Mahdia/ Monastir University, Tunisia

Abstract: The issue of sexual violence against sportswomen of different ages in the sports environment remains largely overlooked. The absence of the subject "sex education" in the primary school curriculum could be a main reason. The main objectives of our research is to understand the sexual violence in the context of the Tunisian culture as a gender social aspect. Also, due to the lack of studies that deal with this subject. an exploratory study is necessary to determine the extent of the phenomenon in Tunisia to understand it and to prevent it.

Our hypothesis is that under-aged sportswomen who happen to be less educated and specialized in individual sports are more likely to be subjected to sexual violence. Through a questionnaire carried out on sportswomen aged from 14 to 30 years old in southern Tunisia, the results reveal that 68% of the sportswomen concerned by the study declared having suffered at least one case of sexual harassment in a sports environment. The age effect shows that sexual violence affects both minors and adults, but those who were minors at the time of the incident are much more vulnerable to such violence (85%). The average age at the time of the incident is 13.78 years old. In other words, the age group most affected by sexual violence is between 13 and 18 years of age. However, these acts occur regardless of the intensity of sports practice. No individual or collective sports discipline is immune from these acts. The results also make it possible to question representations of this phenomenon, however, with regard to the least educated sportswomen. This research is aimed at shedding light on, understanding and preventing this phenomenon in the Tunisian sports environment in order to review the strategy of university in high institute of sports for future educators, (teachers, coaches, managers, etc.) In this perspective, the highlighting of the important role that could be played by sex education in the school curriculum.

Keywords: sexual violence, sport, determinants, sex education

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, the issue of sexual violence suffered by athletes in sports has generated growing interest. North American and European research programs testify to the frequency of these acts in most sports disciplines (Brackenridge & Fasting, 2000). Citing¹ in this regard, the study conducted in Norway on 572 athletes selected from

among the elite of women's sports² (Fasting al., 2003) shows that 55% of them experienced a form of sexual violence ranging from mild harassment to aggravated aggression, mainly by other male athletes (37%). Exposure rates increase with the age of the athletes for acts committed by authority figures, 17% among 15-18 year olds, 25% among 19-22 year olds and 42% among those aged 23 and above. However, there is no difference for violence committed by peers. Nevertheless, the study of the extent of the phenomenon and its characteristics is nonetheless proceeding slowly, since other exploratory studies have been carried out, such as the one conducted in Turkey in 2007 on 356 top-level female athletes (Gunduz, Sunay&Koz, 2007), which³ indicates that 56.2% of them have experienced at least one form of sexual harassment or assault.

In Tunisia, the issue of sexual violence against women has recently emerged in the media and the political scene under the impetus of international organizations and activist movements, at a time when the issue of gender-based violence against women has been linked to the increasingly prominent issue of the recognition and protection of women's rights. The first Tunisian survey was carried out in order to highlight the prevalence and extent of the multiple faces of violence against Tunisian women, to analyze its determinants and consequences, and to analyze the use of state structures and NGOs. This survey was conducted in 2010 by the National Office of Family and Population and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation *ONFP-AEC*. "The results show that 47.6% of women aged 18 to 64 years old declare having suffered at least one of the multiple forms of violence during their entire life and 32.9% during the last 12 months as an indicator of overall prevalence. The prevalence of sexual violence is estimated at 15.2% during their lifetime and 7% in the last 12 months. According to a recent study conducted by the Center for Research, Studies, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF)⁴ as part of the project of the study on gender-based violence in the public space in

1. BRACKENRIDGE, C., & FASTING, K. (2000, May). *Sexual harassment issues facing women and children in sport*. 9th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Sport - "Clean and Healthy Sport for the Third Millennium". Bratislava, Slovakia.

²Fasting, K., Brackenridge, C., Sundgot-Borgen, J. (2003). *Experiences of sexual harassment and abuse among norwegian elite female athletes and nonathletes*. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 74(1), 84-97.

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Tunisia and in partnership with the UN published in March 2016. This is a first-of-its-kind study on the lived experience.

So far, studies have focused on gender-based violence in private and public spaces, while interest in the sports world has not yet been expressed. However, in Tunisia, as in all Arab countries, no systematic research has yet been carried out to determine the extent of this violence in the sporting environment. The issue of sexual assaults suffered by Tunisian women athletes in sports remains largely unknown. Given the lack of figures on the subject, the first step was to estimate the extent of the phenomenon as well as its determinants in an exploratory perspective.

Our study focuses on the extent and determinants of sexual violence against Tunisian sportswomen. In this context, we present the following problem:

Which Tunisian sportswomen are the most vulnerable to be victims of sexual violence in sport ?

II. METHODS

This is a field survey conducted in Tunisia, particularly in the Gafsa region in the south of Tunisia, through a questionnaire administered to a sample of 100 women athletes during the months of February and March 2017.

The questionnaire of this research is inspired by the one realized by Jolly, Afflelou & Decamps (2009) within framework of a national survey in France, by including the following modifications: to remove the redundant items, to adapt the language with the Tunisian culture and by taking into account the young age of the population by making it intelligible and sufficiently precise without shocking.

The questionnaire also includes several questions relating to socio-demographic characteristics (age, level of education) and sport practice (sports practiced, number of hours of practice per week), which may refine the results collected.

Questionnaire reliability was verified by Cronbach's alpha with $p=0.91$.

2.1 The Context in which the Questionnaire was Conducted

Given that the questionnaire is aimed at teenage sportswomen, the majority of whom have a modest level of education, we found ourselves obliged to conduct the questionnaire ourselves in French from beginning to end in the same way for all the subjects surveyed in order to provide clarification to those who expressed the need and so that the questionnaire could be completed correctly. These interventions were carried out in several stages:

- Presentation of the context in which the study was set up, with the main aim of placing the intervention in the context of awareness operations.
- Sensitization and information in order to encourage questioning and reflection around these themes and to provide elements of reality in the theme of sexual violence and in particular in their sports culture.

- Linking verbalizations with terminology in order to make the transition to our questionnaire for the study of violence suffered, whose content is based on the forms of violence listed in the proposed terminology.
- Distribution of the questionnaire for the study of the violence suffered by adopting the immediate modus operandi for its recovery, the questionnaire of which was filled in on the spot and recovered afterwards by us.

2.2 The Target Population

The population in question here is that of sportswomen in the various individual (boxing, athletics, karate), and collective (soccer and handball) sports disciplines practiced in Tunisia. The inclusion of women athletes in the survey sample is described here as progressive. In fact, unlike the populations selected in some surveys, the sample was not constituted in such a way as to correspond a priori to a set of predetermined criteria that make it possible to attest to representativeness with regard to the population concerned at the national level.

2.3- Characteristics of the Study Sample

The survey covered a sample of 100 females with the characteristics listed in the following table:

Table 1. Sample of Female Characteristics

Age	Level of education	Intensity of practice	Sporting Disciplines	Breakdown of individual /collective sports
Mean 18.36 years ($\sigma = 3.362$ years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% (n = 2): college • 85 % (n = 85) : in high school • 13% (n = 13): level to the superior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13% (n=13): less than 12 hours of sports per week. • 63% (n = 63): 12 to 18 hours of sport. • 24% (n = 24): more than 18 hours of sport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handball: with 36% (n=36). • Soccer: with 23% (n=23). • Athletics: with 15% (n=15). • Karate: with 14% (n=14). • Boxing: with 12% (n=12). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - individual sports: by 41% (n=41) - team sports : by 59% (n=59)
from 14 to 30 years old				
55% : Minor				
45% : Major				

III. RESULTS

Concerning the prevalence of sexual violence in sports, the results show that 68% of the sportswomen (n = 68) interviewed declared having suffered at least one act of sexual violence in sports (answers "yes, once" or "yes, several times"

at least one act) and 21% (n = 21) of them declared that they had not suffered any act of such violence in sports (answer "...").never"), while 11% (n=11) are unsure about their exposure to possible violence (answers "I don't know").

3.1 Exposure Rate According to the Nature of the Actions

The different types of behaviors suffered in a certain way (answers "yes, once" and "yes, several times" to the behaviors) are organized as follows: sexual abuse is the most frequent, affecting 36% of sportswomen. The next most

common types of abuse are voyeurism and exhibitionism, sexual harassment and sexual assault, at 24.5%, 21.5% and 18.25% respectively. The following table summarizes the responses of the sportswomen on the nature of these behaviours and their frequency:

Question Below you will find 10 sexual acts. Indicate with the help of the proposed answers (no, never / I don't know / yes, once / yes, several times) if you have experienced one or more of them in a sports environment.

Table 2. Nature of the Actions and their Frequencies

Agissements	Cat	No, never	I don't know	Yes
1. Someone who makes you sexual humiliants comments about you .	H	52 (52 %)	20 (20 %)	28 (28 %) 14-14
2. Someone who promises you privileges or rewards in exchange for sexual favours or who threatens you with sanctions if you refuse.	H	78 (78 %)	7 (7 %)	15 (15 %) 11- 4
3. Someone who looks at you insistently when you are in the shower or undressing.	V/E	49 (49 %)	25 (25 %)	26 (26 %) 15 – 11
4. Someone who shows off their nudity, fondles or masturbates in front of you.	V/E	59 (59 %)	18 (18 %)	23 (23 %) 14 – 9
5. Someone who has a behaviour with you that progressively pushes back the established barriers (insistent gestures of tenderness, insistent physical contact.	AT	41 (41 %)	16 (16 %)	43 (43 %) 17 – 26
6. Someone who takes advantage of certain situations (sleep, comfort, encouragement,) to touch or caress you.	AT	54 (54 %)	16 (16 %)	30 (30 %) 22 – 8
7. Having had to be kissed, caressed or touched by someone against your will.	AG	63 (63 %)	4 (4 %)	33 (33 %) 21 – 12
8. Having to touch, caress or kiss someone against your will.	AG	78 (78 %)	7 (7 %)	15 (15 %) 9 – 6
9. Someone who has tried to sexually assault you and failed	AG	75 (75 %)	3 (3 %)	22 (22%) 12 – 10
10. Someone who has managed to sexually assault you.	AG	95 (95%)	2 (2 %)	3 (3%) 1 – 2

3.2 Exposure Rate to Violence According to Sport Practice

The distribution of victims varies according to the sport practiced. Athletics is at the top of the list compared to other disciplines with an exposure rate of 86.66%. Then soccer with an exposure rate of 69.56%, followed by handball and karate with the same exposure rate of 66.66%, and boxing with the lowest rate of 50%.

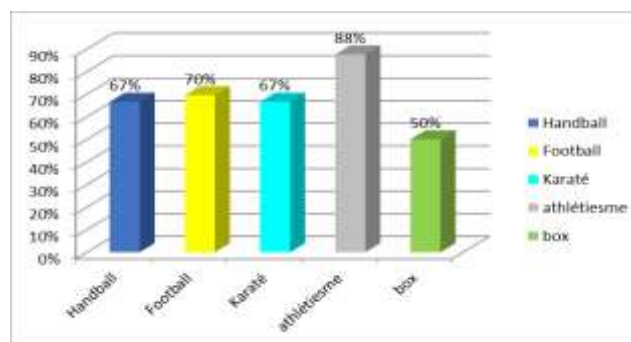


Figure 1. Exposure Rate to Sexual Violence by Age

- The average age at onset is 13.78 years old, with a range from 8 to 22 years old.

According to the three age groups defined above, 36.7% (n=25) of the acts occurred on adolescents under 16 years of age, 41.1% (n=28) on adolescents aged 16-19 years and 22% (n=15) on adult athletes.

Adolescents aged 16 to 19 and 22% (n=15) of major athletes.

- The rate of exposure of the three age groups to sexual violence is no longer the same, since younger sportswomen (under 16 years of age) are more exposed to sexual violence, with a rate of 76%.
- More minors are underage girls, with 63% of the total number of sportswomen and girls who are victims of sexual violence than adults, with 37%.

3.3. The rate of exposure to sexual violence according to school level

1.47% (n = 1) of the athletes who have suffered at least one form of sexual violence are enrolled in middle school, while 86.76% (n = 59) are in high school and 11.76% (n = 8) are in higher education.

- Sportswomen attending middle school have a 50% exposure rate to sexual violence, while those attending high school have a rate of 69%. Also, sportswomen in university are more exposed to sexual violence than those in middle school with 62%.

3. 4. The rate of exposure to sexual violence according to the intensity of the practice:

- 13.2% of victims (n =9) do less than 12 hours of sports per week,
- 63.2% (n = 43) participate in 12 to 18 hours of sports per week
- 24% (n =16) do more than 18 hours of sports per week Sportswomen who practice less than 12 hours of sports per week have a 69.2% exposure rate to sexual violence, while those who practice 12 to 18 hours of sports per week have a 68.2% exposure rate, and those who practice more than 18 hours of sports per week have a 66.6% exposure rate to sexual violence.

IV. DISCUSSION

Adding to the growing literature, findings of this study make several important contributions to our understanding of the determinants of sexual violence for young .The general exposure rate of female athletes to sexual violence in sports is 68%. These initial results are slightly lower than those already observed before two years in the recent study conducted by CREDIF on Gender-based violence in the public space in Tunisia. Conducted on a population of 3873

Tunisian women (CREDIF, 2015), this study revealed that 75.4% of Tunisian women report having experienced sexual violence in the public space.

However, the national survey on violence against women in Tunisia conducted in 2010 showed the prevalence of sexual violence against Tunisian women to be 15.2% throughout life and 7% in the last 12 months (ONFP -AECID, 2010).

Exposure rates in sports are higher than those collected in other countries. A recent study of 356 elite female athletes in Turkey (Gunduz, Sunay & Koz, 2007) indicates that -56.2% had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment or assault, while another study of 572 elite female athletes (Fasting et al., 2003) in Norway found that 55% had experienced some form of sexual violence ranging from mild harassment to aggravated assault.

It should also be noted that other results from studies with heterogeneous gender samples show significantly lower results than those collected in our survey. Citing the 2006 French study (Jolly & Décamps, 2006) of STAPS students, which indicated that only 10% of female sports students had experienced some form of sexual violence.

As an indication, the table below summarizes the main results of several international studies.

Investigations	Our survey	Turkey : Gündüz & al, 2007 (sports)	Norway: (Fasting & al, 2003) (sports)	France: Jolly & Décamps, 2006 (STAPS students)	France: (Afflelo u & al, 2009). (sports)
Exposure rates	68%	56,2 %	55 %	10%	13%

Sexual violence affects both minors and adults, but those who are minors at the time of the incident are much more vulnerable to such violence. The average age at the time of the incident is 13.78 years old and the age group most affected by sexual violence is between 13 and 18 years old. This violence also affects sportswomen who practice low-intensity sports and those who practice intensive sports. But this violence increases gradually with the intensity of sports practice.

The rate of exposure to sexual violence is 13.5 for low-intensity sports practice of less than 12 hours per week, while it is 63.2 % for practice between 12 and 18 hours. This result is explained by the fact that intensive sports practice automatically implies a greater expenditure of time in the sports environment where the sportswomen are immersed. The probability of exposure in this context also increases. It should also be noted that a certain fragility may take place as a result of the intensity of sports practice, which encourages sportswomen to be subjected to actions that less committed

athletes would refuse, by abandoning sports activity, which may in fact modify the exposure rates collected.

No sport discipline is safe from sexual violence. But some sports have higher exposure rates than others. As there are 5 sports disciplines in our sample. The comparison therefore shows that Athletics is at the top of the list compared to other disciplines with an exposure rate of 86.66%. In second place is soccer with an exposure rate of 69.56%. Just after handball and karate with the same exposure rate of 66.66%, and Boxing with a rate of 50%. However, no significant relationship or difference is observed between team sports and individual sports in terms of the rate of exposure to violence, unlike the work carried out with Turkish athletes (Gunduz & al. 2007), which reported a positive and significant correlation between exposure to sexual violence and the practice of team sports. On the contrary, the diversity of disciplines identified as having higher exposure rates than the sample as a whole makes it possible to identify an individual sport and a team sport.

This result then denounces the representations that can be made of the phenomenon, and of the disciplines that are more vulnerable. There is therefore no "typical" discipline that can be considered to be more at risk than others. As regards the differences observed in the exposure rates identified within certain disciplines, this can be explained by the specific atmosphere and culture of each of the disciplines or the tolerance of certain acts and practices are more or less tolerable and acceptable. These practices and acts are embedded in the spirit, lifestyle and culture of certain disciplines.

Sportswomen attending middle school, high school or university are all affected by sexual violence, but not to the same extent. These results therefore call into question the idea that it is possible to review this phenomenon. Moreover, sportswomen with less schooling are more vulnerable to sexual violence. Women with more schooling report more violence in the sports world. As a result, 69% of women with secondary school education report having been victims of sexual violence, compared to only 50% of women with secondary school education. This result confirms that of the recent study conducted by CREDIF on Gender-based violence in the public space in Tunisia, which showed that the more women advance in their studies, the more they report having suffered violence in the public space. In fact, 76.4% of women with higher education report having been victims of GBV in the public space compared to only 26.3% of women who have never been to school. Several hypotheses can be put forward to explain these figures.

The first hypothesis refers to the fact that women are more exposed to the risks of violence related to attending schools and various sports structures and therefore suffer the violence that takes place there.

The second hypothesis refers to advancement in studies and having an advanced level of education would gradually

weaken the taboo on such violence and the fear of revealing and disclosing these acts. Athletes report a greater degree of uncertainty as to whether or not to suffer sexual violence in the face of acts of exhibitionism and voyeurism and acts of harassment. This uncertainty can be explained by the fact that this type of behaviour involves situations in which the perception and interpretation of conduct is very important and ambiguity is major.

The first observation verified by the statistical results concerns the confirmed reality of sexual violence in Tunisian sports. Indeed, following the example of the cases that have been in the media in recent years, it is now possible to affirm that this phenomenon is not anecdotal in Tunisian sport and must be taken into account in future policies. Indeed, the results of the study break the classic representation of sexual violence in sport, which is based on a vision of the educator using his or her power to abuse a young athlete when she is on her own.

The fact that this representation is in the majority in the minds of a large number of individuals is not insignificant since it corresponds to certain cases that may have been the subject of a form of media coverage. Through our results we can deduce that all sportswomen are concerned by sexual violence, nevertheless the underage teenagers are the most affected by these acts. In addition, all disciplines are also affected, but not in the same proportions, and one of the greatest lessons learned from this survey is probably the over-representation of horizontal violence between young people. This is probably due to the large number of sexual abuse situations and exhibitionism or voyeurism described by the sportswomen who are confronted with them.

These results do not call into question the seriousness of the violence less frequently described by athletes, such as sexual assault. They do, however, provide a more accurate picture of the extreme diversity of forms that sexual violence can take in sport, which makes it possible to better envisage various forms of action to be implemented to combat it and help the sportswomen who are victims of it.

It is interesting to note that although the perpetrator of violence is mostly known by his (female) victims, he is not always male. For a long time marginalized, obscured and apprehended as a fact that does not concern our Tunisian sports context, the question of homosexuality in the sports sphere arises here as a reality that needs to be studied rigorously. As recommendations for the Tunisian case, which is the subject of our study in southern Tunisia, the school curriculum should include specific teaching units on sexual education, with a content that is well transposed according to the age category of the learners. In addition, the professional competence of those involved in this area is of paramount importance.

Sex education in schools for both sexes with a view to abolish and eradicate violence in general and sexual violence in particular in its different forms should be encouraged. To this

end, clear instructions and recommendations must be formulated for authors and publishers of textbooks and children's books to eliminate degrading and devaluing representations of relationships between women and men, girls and boys and even between the same sexes. It is therefore necessary to work on the content of Tunisian textbooks and encourage the integration of sex education as a compulsory subject in schools in order to purify them of stereotypical and pejorative images of women. Similarly, civic education courses should be devoted to the prevention of violent behavior in general and gender violence in particular. In addition, the training of future educational managers in professional ethics is crucial.

On besides, The Tunisian government should recommend specific measures against sexual violence . A number of concrete steps that can be taken by the government, the private sector, and the international community. Future policies and programs should also strengthen their focus on abuse and eliminate the acceptance of an impunity surrounding sexual violence.

The government should spend more efforts to put a strategy for individual approaches by Psychological care and support counselling, therapy for the victims.

We recommend as well, educational programmes that improve the Life-skills that help the girls to understand the basic legal procedures and how to present evidence, and helping victims reintegrate into society for extremely cases.

Such department advises the women on their rights and obligations and on available forms of protection against abuse

Several limitations of this study should be noticed. First limit that the

results concern only the region of Gafsa and we can not generalize it. Second limit concern the economic and social level of the victims can be a criterion in this study for deeply analysis.

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Abbreviations:

WHO: World Health Organization

United Nations: United Nations Organization

GBV: gender-based violence

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

ONFP: National Office of Family and Population

AEC: Spanish Agency for International Cooperation

CREDIF: *Center for Research, Studies, Documentation and Information on the Tunisian Woman*

INS: Tunisian National Institute of Statistics

AT: sexual abuse

GA: sexual assault

V: voyeurism

Ex: exhibitionism

H: Sexual harassment