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'Smile more': Women's experiences of sexism while working in sport

Poster · June 2023

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.23755.20002

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“SMILE MORE!”

WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES OF SEXISM WHILE WORKING IN SPORT



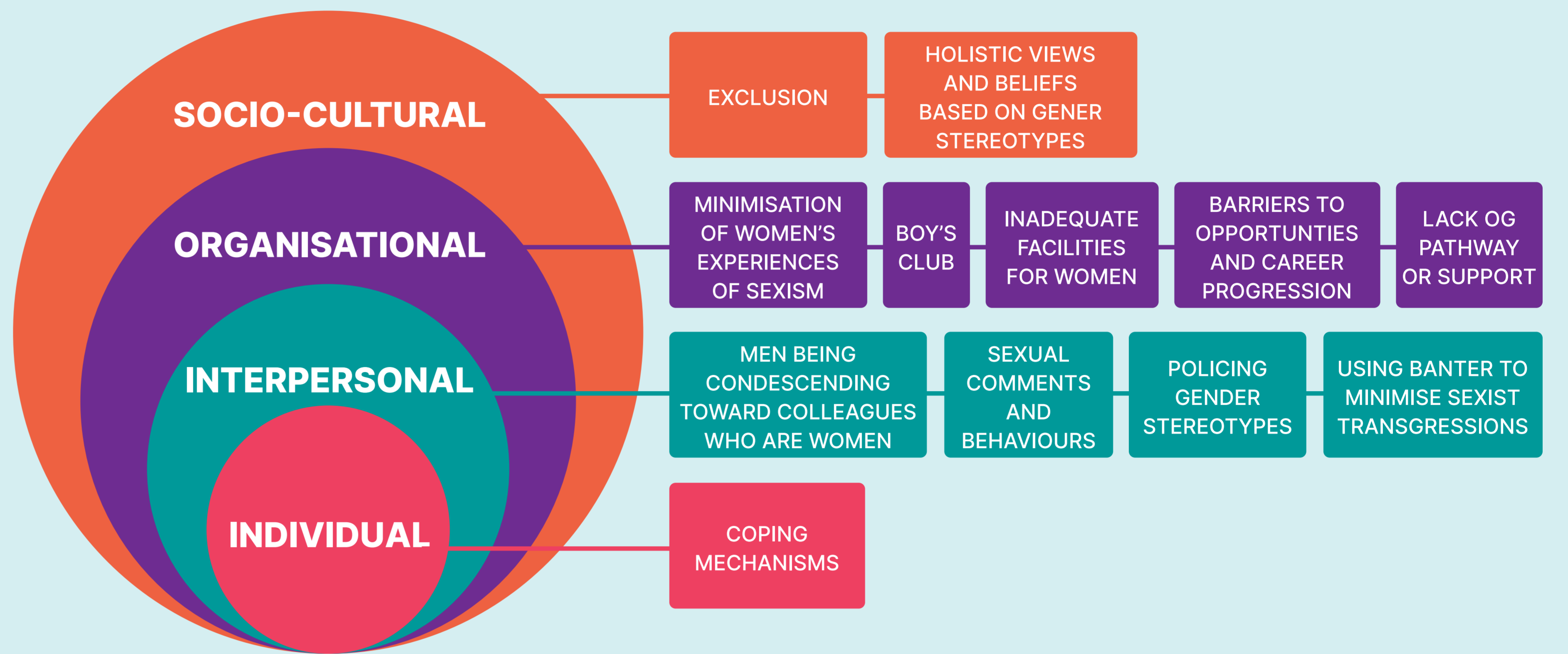
INTRODUCTION

- Gender inequality and sexism have a negative impact on everyone (Fink, 2016)
- Hostile and benevolent sexism are prevalent in sport though rarely discussed

METHODS

- 105 women who work across a range of professions in sport
- 21-68 years old (M = 35.8)
- Everyday Sexism Survey (McDonald et al., 2016) updated to be more sport-specific
- Data were analysed using LaVoi and Dutove’s (2012) Ecological Model
- Qualitative data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) and quantitative data is presented in percentages

RESULTS



INDIVIDUAL LEVEL:

Coping Strategies: The strategies women engaged with to cope with sexism

“It’s pretty much the norm...worst part is you feel like you need to let it slide, or go along with it, otherwise you aren’t seen to be ‘one of the lads’ and thus you’re not integrated within the sporting culture and your work can be rendered ineffective.”

Women avoided reporting sexism because they thought there would be...

- 38.1%** negative consequences for their reputation
- 33.3%** negative consequences for their career overall

INTERPERSONAL LEVEL:

Condescending Behaviour: Men treating women as inferior

77.2% experienced men interrupting or talking over them in meetings

70.3% experienced not having their views listened to until re-stated by a man

Sexual comments and behaviour: Direct or indirect comments and behaviours towards women that are sexual in nature

Policing Gender Stereotypes: Enforcing behaviours and expression based on assumptions made about how gender norms apply to their bodies, emotions, behaviours, and roles
“smile more in meetings”

Using Banter to Minimise Sexist Transgressions: Using jokes and ‘teasing’ as a method of engaging in casual or explicit sexism, or to minimise sexism
“sexist jokes being passed off as banter plays down the whole problem. Raising awareness is very difficult”.

ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL:

Boys’ Club: Informal groups of men that exclude women, often keeping women from integrating into the organisation

“The men have a “boys’ club” and regularly meet up during the work day for coffee, the gym, a chat, etc. If the women do this we get reprimanded and branded as lazy. Important work information is discussed amongst them.”

Minimisation of Women’s Experiences of Sexism: Minimising reports or experiences at an organisational level (excusing it as the norm, banter, untrue, etc.) One woman stated that there is *“a culture of accepting the sexism as just part of the job”*

Lack of Pathway for Support: The inability to progress with complaints about sexism within an organisation; no support for individuals who experience sexism in their organisation.

Inadequate Facilities for Women: Sport organisations being built and designed primarily for men’s needs

Barriers to Opportunities and Career Progression: Being a woman is a disadvantage to opportunities and career progression within sport

“A colleague was over-looked for promotion. I heard the interviewing male manager say ‘she will just pop out another kid, I’m not promoting her to fund her baby-making.’”

Intimidating the person targeted by the sexism (e.g. threats, bribes) **71%**

Gaining support from managers to avoid any negative consequences **15.5%**

Encouraging sexist behaviours (e.g. laughing, joining in) **22.6%**

Devaluing the person who experienced the sexism (e.g. calling them uptight or dishonest) **35.7%**



SOCIO-CULTURAL LEVEL:

Exclusion: Exclusion from equal treatment and opportunities to work and/or lead in sport based on gender

	Never	Once	Sometimes	Often
Had assumptions made about your career/role/interests on the basis of gender	18.1%	9.5%	26.7%	45.7%
Missing out or being looked over for career opportunities because of your gender	31.4%	12.4%	29.5%	26.7%
Someone assuming you do not hold a senior role or that you are in a subordinate role to a male colleague	25.7%	5.7%	28.6%	38.1%

Holistic Views and Beliefs Based on Gender stereotypes: Gender stereotypes influencing people’s beliefs about men and women

“I was asked (at a work event) how strange it was that I drink black coffee and beer, and I play a contact sports, they said “this is not what a lady does”. The UK education system segregates in school by gender, women play netball, men play rugby and football, is automatically telling the society that women should not play “men’s sports”... society tells the girls that “this is not what a lady does”.

TAKE HOME MESSAGES

- Sexism evident at all four levels of model
- Connection between all levels of ecological model in women’s experiences of sexism
- Burden at the top to create change due to unique culture of sport, but we can make changes at organisational and interpersonal levels particularly by working with:
 - Women with privilege
 - Male allies

CONSIDER...

How can I be a better ally?

How might experiencing or witnessing sexism impact my work?