

The Experiences of Women Basketball Players about Bullying: A Case from Turkey

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Abstract—: Bullying is defined as using power misappropriately against a person. It can also be seen as a problem which occurs almost all parts of the professional life affecting individuals or groups via one or more negative attitudes in certain times. Bullying bears all its forms including physical- emotional or social types in sports as this field naturally reserves competition. This study aims to get qualitative results in terms of the bullying experiences among Turkish female basketball players. The participants are 6 female basketball players who have worked in different categories in National Team level aged between 22-41. They have been interviewed via the semi-structured interview technique. The results state that the source of bullying against the female basketball players is the male trainers. In the general sense, the female players state that they are humiliated, insulted, not included in the team, violated physically and verbally, criticized in terms of their private life, despised in front of their team mates or spectators. The participants also state that they remain silent and unresponsive.

Keywords—: Bullying, Women, Women Basketball Players

I. INTRODUCTION

BULLYING has been a common problem that can be seen in several fields including sports. Since early 1970s, scientists have been trying to understand complicated social problems of bullying and the subject has had an extensive research field [1]. Several negative results of bullying such as internal and external disorders (e.g. [2]- [3]- [4]- [5] academic (e.g. [6]) social (e.g. [7]) and psychological problems have been documented [8].

Stirling et al [9] identified bullying as a pattern of physical, verbal, or psychological behaviors between peers (e.g. teammates) that have the potential to be harmful. It has been stated that bullying can take several forms including physical bullying (such as shoving, hitting, pulling, physical threat), verbal bullying (name-calling, taunts, threats, ridicule, and insults, commenting on one's sexual orientation, race or disability, questioning one's style and capacity in sports), relational bullying (ignoring, gossips, taunts, exclusion, dismissal from the team) and cyber bullying (sending hurtful messages via internet sources such as Facebook) [10]. Respect in Sport [11] indicated that all forms of bullying occur in sports environments. Examples of bullying in sports are shown in Table I.

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TABLE I
EXAMPLES OF BULLYING IN SPORTS

Kind of Bullying	Example
Physical bullying	Hitting, kicking, punching, slapping or biting. Stealing teammates' sports equipment. Excluding a peer in office or change room.
Emotional bullying	Taunts, spreading rumor, making threatening comment, ridiculing or insulting peers
Social bullying	Isolating from social activities, not being recognized among a group of friends, casting out.

Source: [12]

The competitive nature of sports can unwittingly establish a supporting environment for bullying. For example, Besag (1989) has suggested that bullying can take some forms that can be seen as socially acceptable. While competitive behaviors can be rather pleasing for some athletes, it can cause trouble for the athletes who are less competitive and less talented, and can cause inferiority complex.

II. METHOD

As a result of the literature research conducted, no information has been found on bullying behaviors female athletes faced, who bullied them and effects on the athletes. In this research, experiences of female basketball players on bullying behaviors against themselves or someone else during their athletics lives have been studied. The purpose of this study is to state by whom, where and how the athletes were bullied, what they felt as a result of that behavior and how they reacted to bullying.

A. Participants

The participants of the research were determined by using snowball sampling among other purposeful sampling methods. Accordingly, P1 was contacted and asked if she wanted to participate in this study. After receiving a positive answer, P1 was interviewed by using prepared structured interview form. Then P1 was asked if she knew any female athletes who would want to participate in the study and she were asked for help to contact these athletes. 5 athletes that accepted to participate and P1 (6 athletes in total) have constituted the participants of this study. An "Informed Consent Form" was sent to each participant not to have a problem or violation regarding ethics and the forms were read and signed by the participants. Table II shows the characteristics of the participants.

TABLE II
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Participant	Characteristic
P1	34 years old. Ex national athlete. Has still been playing in Turkey Women's Basketball 2nd League (TKB2L)
P2	24 years old. Has a degree in substructure Turkey Champions. Has still been playing in Turkey Women's Basketball 2nd League (TKB2L).
P3	41 years old. Ex national athlete. Director of a basketball team.
P4	22 years old. A player in young team and u-21 national team. Made a break in playing basketball due to the behaviors she faced.
P5	27 years old. National athlete. Plays basketball actively.
P6	32 years old. National athlete. Plays basketball actively.

A. Instruments and Statistical Analysis

The data to be used in the study has been collected by using semi-structured interview method. After the face-to-face interview with P1, which was recorded with tape recorder, P1 sent the interview form to 7 athletes who enlisted to participate in the study. 5 athletes sent the form they filled back to P1 via e-mail. Participants were asked questions under 6 categories. İyem's [14] study was used to constitute related categories. The categories used in the study can be listed as follows:

- The place they faced bullying,
- Who bullied,
- What kind of bullying they faced,
- The effects of bullying
- The identifier of the person who was bullied (age, the age she started playing basketball, career etc.)
- Their reactions to bullying.

The data have been analyzed by utilizing qualitative analysis methods. First of all, the voice recordings of the interview made with P1 were turned into texts (transcription). The data collected from the interviews in this study and interview forms were analyzed in accordance with the categories and classified.

III. RESULTS

People and institution names given by the participants about their bullying experience were either not stated originally in the findings or changed. Besides, the striking points of the interviews have been decided and conveyed by the participants.

A. Finding on Place Athletes Faced Bullying

"The place of bullying was a team which had championships in Turkey Women's Basketball First League, during Turkey Women's Basketball 1st League 1998-1999 season" (P1)

"Secondary school team (8th grade).Antalya Koleji. While going to Gümüşhane for tournament, in intercity bus" (P2)

"In one of Turkey Women's Basketball 1st League teams" (P4), (P5), (P6).

B. Finding on the Bullying People (Choach, Director, teammate, Other)

"I was bullied by a head coach of a team which has championships in Turkey Women's Basketball first league." (P1).

"Head coach" (P2).

"Coach" (P3), (P4), (P5).

"Coach and Director" (P6).

C. Finding on the Type of Bullying They Faced

P1: "... Actually it wouldn't be right to limit it with a single behavior."

"...The man usually had an attitude that was putting me and my play down, surrounded himself with high walls that I couldn't spring over and had a hatred against me and there was an endless miscommunication between us."

"... He was constantly insulting me during our trainings. Even though I had a good success level in the team, he didn't include me in the games. What he had done to me at the beginning of the season was a good example of the term bullying"

"...Although I cannot remember the details of the speech completely, I remember one single sentence that curdled my blood: I will make you quit playing basketball at the age of 18 at the end of this season."

P2: Because the distance between Antalya and Gümüşhane is considerably long, they sent us there by intercity bus."

"...I dozed off at the late hours of the night, just like my teammates and others in the bus. I was woken up by a hand stroking my breasts and then my body slowly."

P3: "I remember him having an angry attitude towards my older teammates, including swearing sometimes. The scariest was him kicking the balls so hard that we wouldn't know to whom the ball would hit. He would say bad things about my and another girl of my age's intelligence and mention that we wouldn't be successful."

P4: " violent use of language and humiliation in front of other players and audience and removing from the game and not letting playing again because of a single mistake"

P5: "violence, humiliating words, unfairness and unnecessary restrictions, throwing a water bottle or any other material to a player"

P6: " The coach always claims himself right and the player wrong. The manager thinks that we need to score in our first shoot because they have paid too much for us and they are very strict about having a boyfriend."

D. Finding on the Effect of Bullying (Insomnia, Depression, Physical Reaction etc.)

P1: "I was certainly affected negatively after the incident. It ran in my head for days, and I felt really upset, I got

exhausted. But I wasn't able to go and communicate. Trying to find a plausible reason day by day, I began to lose my wish about the trainings and matches. I was there physically but I wasn't around with my soul and body. After speaking with my family, we even thought about returning back to where we come from. I decided that I would not be able to beat this guy and I gave up already. My classes and basketball were affected negatively. My presence would not be felt even in the junior team matches that I had shown great performances. Despite the intensive tempo, I put on weight and affected negatively. Everybody was asking me why I wasn't playing, saying that I got fatter and I was not like this when I first arrived."

P2: "Gümüřhane tournament was a really inefficient one for my basketball career. I was not in depression, I just could not understand because I really liked my coach. My family was meeting with his family, and I was just thinking about what would happen or what should I do because I was not able to speak with anyone. And for this reason, I was usually unable to sleep at nights."

P3: "...This kind of behavior, which was I guess aimed at impassion and motivation to work harder and in his mind, caused me to cry day and night, but surprisingly, it did not affect my growing love of basketball. The behaviors to which I was not continuously exposed caused my team mates to get sad. Although I cannot remember the words specifically, I still experience the anxious trainings with the oppressive attitudes. "

P4: "There is fear and insecurity on the court. There's always an anxiety that the coach may give a negative reaction"

P5: "Rhythm disorder emerged in my heart because of stress and pressure. There was lack of self-confidence. Generally, there was discouragement. The point to give up basketball is reached."

P6: "As a result of stress, she began to use medication. She could not show the expected performance because they were not comfortable in the court. "

E. Finding on the Reactions toward Bullying

P1: "... I felt alone and empty at that moment. "

P2: " ... I didn't say anything. I avoided him throughout the tournament and I think he realized it and he didn't do anything. During the game, I was acting angry at him and didn't obey his words. I acted weird for a while after the tournament but I never mentioned this neither to him nor anybody else."

P3-P4: "said and did nothing"

P5: "I raised my voice for what the coach had done. I almost quitted basketball."

P6: "I didn't say anything to the coach. Although I had I more year on my agreement, I left the team and had a financial damage."

IV. DISCUSSION

Data acquired from the study shows that all of the participants of the research have played in the professional leagues, also taken place in national teams in different categories and have important careers as athletes. Although they are high class athletes, they all mentioned that either themselves or one of their friends have experienced bullying. They were bullied by people in their teams such as their coaches or managers.

Most of the female basketball players have stated that they were humiliated or abused by their coaches, were not included in the games, faced physical or verbal violence, criticized about their boyfriends and humiliated in front of other players and audience.

It has been observed that bullying has a considerably negative effect on the female basketball players. These effects have been detected as depression, anxiety, insomnia, decrease in their performances, reluctance to work, rhythm disorder, psychological disorders that require medication and quitting their job. According to this information, data obtained from the research shows similarity with Stirling et.al.'s [9] research on potential symptoms of negative behaviors on athletes.

According to the findings that are acquired from the research, female basketball players have stated that they were bullied neither by their teammates nor by other women. Women are able to establish a healthy and genuine communication with other women [15]. Giving this information, findings of this research show similarity with Volk and Lagzdings' [15] research.

Kerr's [16] research on female coaches' being exposed to harassment and bullying states that there are some female coaches who have experienced harassment and bullying. Studies on business world show that the main reasons behind bullying and harassment are sex and experience [17]- [18]. Gender based harassment generally includes humiliating statements, behaviors or symbols [19]. According to findings of this research it can be stated that there are similarities in the main reason, form and effects of bullying and harassment against female players and coaches.

As a result, it has been found out that there are psychological and physical reactions in female basketball players in consequence of bullying. When this research's and previous research's findings are compared, it has been determined that although occurrence of bullying changes according to age, sex, and culture, no matter in what way the players are bullied, the effects of bullying show similarity in all research.

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