Sport Management Female Faculty Experiences of Harassment from Colleagues, Department Heads, and Deans

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Similar to the landscape of leadership positions (e.g., coaching, athletic director) within intercollegiate athletic departments, sport management departments are often dominated by white men. Jones, Brooks, and Mak (2008) reported 66% of sport management programs had fewer than 40% female faculty members, and 81.39% of sport management programs had fewer than 40% female students. The male dominated nature of this field may see a greater number of instances of unethical or unprofessional conduct between colleagues due to the high value that is placed on masculine characteristics such as power, dominance, competitiveness, aggressiveness, and toughness (Vogt, Bruce, Street, & Strafford, 2007). Studies consistently show that women in male-dominated industries experience higher rates of sexual harassment than women in gender-balanced or female-dominated industries (McCabe & Hardman, 2005; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007). McLughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone (2012) found that women working in these male-dominated industries reported they believed this harassment was simply part of the job and came with the territory.

Sexual harassment and incivility can take several forms, but is typically the uninvited attention one might receive from another individual (Rospenda et al., 1998). Sexual harassment might be verbal, non-verbal, or physical acts that are deemed sexual in nature (Lampman, 2012). Incivility might include showing disrespect toward the female faculty member (i.e., rolling eyes, interrupting), but can also include professional bullying and more aggressive behaviors such as verbal abuse (Lampman, 2012).

Organizational culture can be defined as, "the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration" (Schein, 1984, p.3). These patterns and basic assumptions are an evolved milieu within which explicit circumstances are embedded and where assumptions and acceptable behaviors are socially transmitted (Bock, Smud, Kim, & Lee, 2005; Chelladurai, 2014). Organizational culture is also influenced by the implicit, unwritten rules that guide organizations. These unwritten rules also guide behaviors, and must be displayed by new group members in order to be an accepted member (Chelladurai, 2014). Unlike formal philosophy, new team members must learn these implicit rules through observation or current team members. Since these rules are not documented, new team members will not be able to find them in any training manual. The nature of the industry influences the organizational culture of a business or department. For instance, as previously discussed, industries that are male-dominated (e.g., sport or business) may embrace an organizational culture that is different from industries that are female-dominated (e.g., elementary education or nursing). The male dominated structure of these organizations may create a "gendered culture" that is misogynistic, patriarchal, and resistant to change (Bagihole, 2014).

The purpose of this study was to examine the harassment (i.e., sexual and professional/incivility) experiences of female sport management faculty members from their colleagues as well as superiors. Strategies for negotiating and preventing harassment were explored as well. Qualitative interviews were utilized in order to gain deeper insight into the inner thoughts and experiences of study participants (Corbin & Straus, 2008). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 female sport management faculty members in June and July 2016. Interviews are grounded in discussion, and the open-ended format of the interview questions provided an opportunity for the participants to express their feelings, emotions, and perceptions on harassment in their academic setting (Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Interviews were transcribed and formatted for analysis by the principle investigator and were sent to the participants for member checking. A constant comparative content analysis was used to analyze the interview
transcripts. Segments of data are compared to one another in order to find similarities and differences during this type of analysis (Merriam, 2009). "Meaningful and manageable themes" were created through the categorization of quotes of analogous experiences or challenges (Patton, 1987, p. 150). Rospenda, Richman, and Nawyn (1998) used similar methods to examine how gender, race and class influence contrapower sexual harassment in the workplace.

Ages of the female faculty ranged from 30 to 61, and number of years as a faculty member ranged from 1 to 31. Two women identified as full professor, six identified as an associate professor, and six identified as an assistant professor. Ten respondents identified their institutions as teaching intensive and four identified their institutions as research intensive. All 14 participants identified as White or Caucasian. Eight of the women identified as lesbian while five identified as straight or heterosexual, one participant preferred not to disclose her sexual orientation.

All 14 of female faculty members interviewed for this study indicated they had experienced harassment (i.e., sexual or professional/incivility) from a colleague of superior. Harassment was experienced from male and female colleagues, as well as male and female department heads and deans. Participants discussed instances of subtle sexual harassment such as comments on their dress in addition to more overt forms of sexual harassment such sexual advancements on the participants, taking pictures of their bodies, and comments of a sexual nature about their bodies. Discussions of and questions about qualifications to work in a sport management department due to being a woman were also discussed by several participants. Participants also mentioned uncomfortable experiences with a comments from colleagues and superiors around their pregnancies.

Professional harassment, incivility, and academic bullying came from both male and female colleagues and superiors. This type of harassment also took form as subtle incivility or professional bullying, such as devaluing the work being done by participants and being left out of departmental events/gatherings outside of the work setting. Several participants also discussed experiencing disrespect from male colleagues and department heads during faculty meetings when they disagree or suggest alterations to suggestions or comments being made. Participants also discussed having to be more productive than male colleagues to get respect in their departments. On the more overt end of the spectrum, female faculty reported experiencing verbal abuse involving cursing and belittling comments and well as male colleagues attempting to get them fired from their positions. Many of the participants discussed feelings of surprise and disappointment when experiencing harassment from other female faculty.

Strategies for negotiating and preventing harassment include documenting instances of harassment and bullying, securing support from a mentor or senior faculty member, and setting boundaries from the beginning. This type of behavior is unacceptable but appears to be prevalent in the sport management academic setting. This issue needs to be brought into the forefront of discussions to create a positive professional environment for all involved.