

Television Sports Exposure and Rape Myth Acceptance: The Mediating Role of Sexual Objectification of Women

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Abstract : The objective of the present study is to define the mediating role of attitudes that objectify and devalue women (hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and sexual objectification of women) in the indirect correlation between exposure to televised sports and acceptance of rape myths. A second goal is to contribute to research on the topic by defining the role of mediators in exposure to different types of sports, following the traditional gender classification of sports. Data collection was carried out by means of an online questionnaire, measuring television sport exposure, sport type, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and sexual objectification of women. Data analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS software. The model used was created using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression path analysis. The predictor variable in the model was television sports exposure, the outcome was rape myths acceptance, and the mediators were (1) hostile sexism, (2) benevolent sexism, and (3) sexual objectification of women. Correlation analyses were carried out dividing by sport type and controlling for the participants' gender. As seen in existing literature, television sports exposure was found to be indirectly and positively related to rape myth acceptance through the mediating role of: (1) hostile sexism, (2) benevolent sexism, and (3) sexual objectification of women. The type of sport watched influenced the role of the mediators: hostile sexism was found to be the common mediator to all sports type, exposure to traditionally considered feminine or neutral sports showed the additional mediation effect of sexual objectification of women. In line with existing literature, controlling for gender showed that the only significant mediators were hostile sexism for male participants and benevolent sexism for female participants. Given the prevalence of men among the viewers of traditionally considered masculine sports, the correlation between television sports exposure and rape myth acceptance through the mediation of hostile sexism is likely due to the gender of the participants. However, this does not apply to the viewers of traditionally considered feminine and neutral sports, as this group is balanced in terms of gender and shows a unique mediation: the correlation between television sports exposure and rape myth acceptance is mediated by both hostile sexism and sexual objectification. Given that hostile sexism is defined as hostility towards women who oppose or fail to conform to traditional gender roles, these findings confirm that sport is perceived as a non-traditional activity for women. Additionally, these results imply that the portrayal of women in traditionally considered feminine and neutral sports - which are defined as such because of their aesthetic characteristics - may have a strong component of sexual objectification of women. The present research contributes to defining the association between sports exposure and rape myth acceptance through the mediation effects of sexist attitudes and sexual objectification of women. The results of this study have practical implications, such as supporting the feminine sports teams who ask for more practical and less revealing uniforms, more similar to their male colleagues and therefore less objectifying.

Keywords : television exposure, sport, rape myths, objectification, sexism

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