

# Differentiated health problems according to gender among adolescents reporting sexual or physical assault

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## Abstract

Gender differences among traumatized adolescents are understudied but we found previously efficacy in such studies. We hypothesized that comparing health problems between adolescents reporting physical assault and adolescents reporting sexual assault could show a gender difference and could help to identify risks. In our 1993 cross-sectional epidemiological representative survey of adolescents in France – 14 278 enrolled in the school system, and 3005 who had left school – we selected the 5893 adolescents in the 16-20 age span, and extracted the sub-sample of 1324 who reported sexual or physical assaults (23%). The symptoms noted were not necessarily a consequence of assault, but they clearly captured health states in these groups. The rate of sexual assault reports by adolescents who left the school system (9.4%) was higher than in the other group (4.2%,  $p < 0.001$ ). The symptoms selected for the comparisons sexual / physical were chosen because they were significantly more frequent ( $p < 0.001$ ) among adolescents reporting assault compared to non-assaulted adolescents. For each gender and type of assault, these symptoms were explored using logistic regressions, adjusting age and schooling status (being inside or outside the school system): among boys, health problems seem more salient when the assault report was sexual rather than physical (e.g. suicide attempts:  $OR = 3.9$ ,  $95\%CI = [1.9 - 8.0]$ ); in contrast, among girls, the two groups seem equally affected.

This gender study highlights the risk of suicide among assaulted adolescents. Sexually assaulted boys require care, including suicide prevention, even though they seem to cope effectively with physical assault.

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## Biography

Qualified to supervise research (Univ. François-Rabelais) in 1999

Judicial expert in psychiatry (Orléans Court of Appeal) in 1999

Doctorate in psychopathology and neurobiology (Univ. Sorbonne Paris 6) in 1996

Head of Psychiatry Clinic in 1992

Doctor of medicine (Univ. François-Rabelais) in 1992

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