

MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF MALE AND FEMALE ATHLETES: A TEXT AND PICTURE ANALYSIS OF BENGALI AND ENGLISH NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE 14TH WORLD ATHLETIC CHAMPIONSHIP, MOSCOW, 2013
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Abstract

The purpose of the research was to analyse the content of the sports section of leading Newspapers from the angle of gender disparity in sports news publication. Analysis was done in the light of the stunning results in the field of Athletics occurred in the 14th World Athletic Championship, Moscow, 2013 in the events of 100m, 200m and 4x100m Relay. Usein Bolt of Jamaica won the three Gold medals in these events for Men and Shelly Ann Fraser-Pryce from Jamaica also won the three Gold medals in the same events for female in this championship. Though they summit the same peaks but media gave more coverage for Bolt in sports content in the form of news and photograph than Fraser-Pryce. This has been proved statistically in this study. Variables considered for this study were area covered for news writing, area covered for photograph, size and area of heading of the news, and total area of news coverage. Measurement was done by calculating the area in Sq. Cm. of the paper using simple geometric scale. Mean and standard deviation were calculated and comparison was done between male coverage with female coverage by t-test. Only 0.05 level of significance was considered for this study. Result showed that there was significantly gender disparity in sports news and pictorial coverage in leading newspapers in Bengal.

Keywords: Sports coverage, Print media, Gender disparity

Introduction

Gender inequality refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles as well as biologically through chromosomes, body structure and hormonal differences. There is a natural difference in the relative physical strengths (on average) of the sex. Gender inequality is a result of the persistent discrimination of one age group of people based upon gender and it manifests itself differently according to race, culture, politics, country and economic situation. It is further more considered a casual factor of violence against women. Discrimination against women is an entrenched, global pandemic.

Several study reported about existence of gender disparity in the field of sports in society. Women in Brazil were forbidden by law to play the national sport of Football and continued to struggle to participate this major aspect of the country's social life [1]. Americans holds the popular culture that girls do not play Baseball and there is no national women team for Baseball within the country [2]. In the countries of middle-east Asia girls were often discouraged to take part in sports. Saudi

Arab, Qatar and Brunei have never sent female athletes in Olympic Games before 2012. Gender inequality also exists in modern Olympic Games. Till the last London Olympic Games 2012, male were participated in more events than the female. There were more medals for the men athletes than female athletes in the event schedule. In the history of Olympic Games before 2012 number of sports included for men were always higher than the games considered for women.

Present study attempted to reveal the gender inequality in the section of sports news and photograph coverage in leading newspaper of West Bengal, India. The content of sports section was analysed on the basis of coverage of the results of three athletic events of 14th World Athletic Championship, Moscow, 2013 in respect of the gender. Usein Bolt from Jamaica won three gold medals in 100m, 200m run and 4x100m relay race. In the same championship Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce from Jamaica also won three gold medals in the same three events in this athletic championship at Moscow. Though they achieved the same success in all respect in the athletics championship but media gave more coverage and importance for Bolt's achievement. The media highlighted Bolts success more than the success of Fraser-Pryce. All the newspapers spend more words, space, ink and colour for Usein Bolt than the great performance of Shelly Ann Fraser-Pryce. These points were analysed in the present study and inference was drawn on the basis of statistical analysis about the existence of gender inequality in the print media.

Methods

A total of eleven daily newspapers including Bengali and English within 17th august to 20th august 2013 were considered for the present study (list attached in Appendix). This list includes all leading newspapers published in Bengali and English in West Bengal, India.

Area of news, area of printed photograph, size and area of the heading and total area of coverage of the news for both gender were measured.

Simple geometric scale was used as tool of measurement.

Mean and standard deviation were calculated as descriptive statistics and difference between two means was measured by t-test. Significance level was set only 0.05 level in this study.

Finding and Results

Mean and standard deviation of coverage area of sports news writing, photograph, area of heading and total coverage area of news for both genders have presented in Table-1. The results of t-test of different variables between two genders have also been presented in the same Table no. 1 below. Result shows that the mean values of all variables were higher for male gender than the female and all the mean differences between two gender (t-values) for each variable were statistically significant.

The coverage of sports news as measured in this study for both gender were converted into percentage value and result presented in Figure-1. The figure has shown the superior coverage in all aspects of sports publication in print media for male athlete than the women.

TABLE-1
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF CONSIDERED VARIABLES AND T-VALUES BETWEEN TWO GENDERS

S. No	Variables	Male Gender		Female Gender		t-value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Area of News	104.16	49.43	5.62	12.01	8.88*
2	Area of Photograph	137.01	91.78	3.94	9.95	6.60*
3	Size and area of Heading	30.78	29.19	0.94	2.06	4.67*
4	Total area of Coverage	287.47	187.29	11.23	26.06	6.65*

*Significant at both 0.05 and 0.01 level (CR 2.02 at 0.05 level and 2.71 at 0.01level).

Disparity and discrimination between genders exists almost in all the areas in our society. Among these the biological difference between male and female is natural. Except this disparity and inequality between gender exists in the different field of society are either imposed or it might be due to traditional matter in the male dominated social structure. In sports female were suppressed from ancient time and society imposed many barrier and obstacles to them to resist their participation in competitive sports event. In ancient Olympic women were not allowed to take part and watch the Olympic Games. In modern Olympic Games women's participation in different games was also restricted for several years. Even the founder of the modern Olympic Games Baron Pier the Coubertin was also against the women participation in Olympic events. This discrimination actually is not due to the lesser strength or relatively weak biological structure of the women but off course due to some social discrimination in the male dominant society.

Present study is designed to search whether there is any inequality exists in print media in their coverage of sports news for female athlete. The enquiry was conducted against a coincidental result occurred in the field of sports in 14th World Athletic Championship at Moscow. Usein Bolt and Shelly Ann Fraser-Pryce of Jamaica won gold medal for 100m, 200m and 4x100m Relay Race for man and women division respectively. As per record book Bolt and Fraser-Pryce both could not made new world record for 100m and 200m event, even they had not achieved their earlier best performance in these event at Moscow. If the performance of relay team is

considered the women relay team won gold medal with establishing a new world record whereas the male team won the gold in this event without any new world record. From this angle as a member of women team, performance of Shelly Ann Fraser-Pryce was more delightful than Mr. Super athlete Usein Bolt. If we considered the achievement of Bolt and Fraser-Pryce, both the athletes should have been got same amount of coverage in print media. Is not it?

To get the answer of this quarry news and pictorial coverage of 14th World Athletic Championship was analysed from the angle of gender disparity. For this purpose, sports content of eleven leading daily newspaper of West Bengal published in Bengali and English language in-between 17th August to 20th August were analysed. Result shows that gender disparity was strongly exist in sports coverage of print media. As the performance of men athlete Usein Bolt and women athlete Shelly Ann Fraser- Pryce in this championship were same, it was expected that they should have got same importance in sports and news coverage in print media. But the reality was different and as same as the other sector of society the discrimination and inequality was existed in the sports news coverage in print media also.

Table-1 shows that news writing area, printed photograph area, size and area of news heading and total area of coverage for Usein Bolt was significantly higher than the coverage of Fraser-Pryce. Mean news writing coverage of Usein Bolt was higher (104.16 sq. m.) than the Fraser-Pryce (5.62 sq. m.) and this difference (t = 8.88) is highly significant in both level. Mean value of the printed photograph area of Usein Bolt in newspaper were more colourful and bigger size (137.01 sq. m.) than Fraser-Pryce (3.94 sq. m.). It was also observed that almost all news of Usein Bolt was represented by his big size colour photograph whereas only three news papers in Bengali published the achievement of Fraser-Pryce with small size colour photograph.

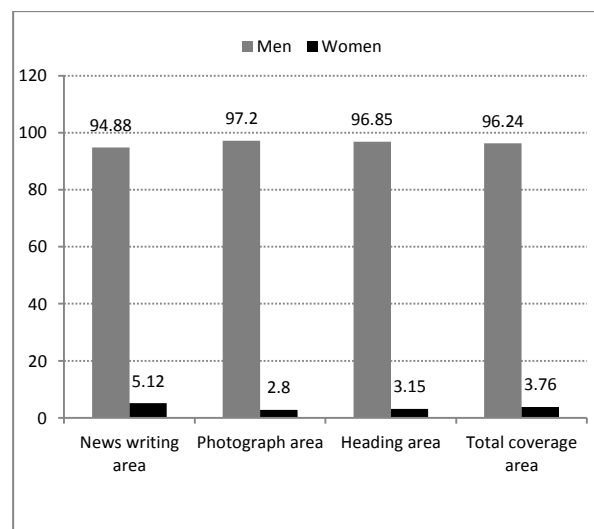


Figure-1: Sports coverage of print media for different variables in respect of gender

Out of eleven newspapers, eight newspapers had not published any single line news for Fraser-Pryce achievement though they published news for their readers about the achievement of Usain Bolt continually with his big colour photograph. One newspaper printed a small size photograph of Fraser-Pryce inset the big size picture of Bolt. All the newspapers used big size heading and spent more amount of area (Mn=30.78 sq. m.) for the news of Bolt but paid little attention (Mn=0.94 sq. m.) to the Fraser-Pryce. Table-1 also shown that mean total area of coverage for Bolt was much higher (287.47 sq. m.) than the Shelly Ann Fraser-Pryce (11.23 sq. m.) and this mean difference was statistically significant ($t = 6.65$) in both the 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance. Figure-1 also revealed that news coverage for Bolt was 94.88% but for Fraser-Pryce it was only 5.12%. This difference was highest for pictorial aspect between two genders. For Shelly Ann Fraser-Pryce the area of picture coverage was only 2.8% whereas for Bolt it was 97.2%. Heading was always bigger size and covered more area for Bolt (96.85%) than Fraser-Pryce. Total area of coverage for Bolt was 96.24% but for Fraser-Pryce it was only 3.76% area of newsprint.

This discrimination in sports news coverage for female athletes or female team is not only exists in the print media of West Bengal, India but it is the general trend of some other countries in the world also. Media portrayals of male and female athletes in the 1984 and the 1988 summer Olympic Games as reflected in The Globe and Mail in Canada and The New York Times in USA was analysed and found that men received more attention and more favourable portrayals than women in sports news in the mass media. The contents of the sports section of Canada's national newspaper The Globe and Mail for one year was analysed and found males received significantly more coverage than the females in print, pictorial and editorial space. A study conducted on sports casting on ESPN and CNN and sports reporting in The New York Times and USA Today and revealed that there was very high degree of embedded favouritism towards men's sports and men athletes, even at times when major women's sporting events were peaking in newsworthiness. The quantity of gender bias was significantly greater on ESPN's Sports Centre than on CNN's Sports Tonight. Week-by-week cross media comparison demonstrated the much greater marginalization of women's sports in the electronic and print media. British National newspaper coverage of male and female athletes' competing at Olympic Games since 1948 was examined and reported that within both newspapers The Times and The Daily Mail, female athletes were underrepresented until the 2004 Athens games and female athletes received greater

newspaper equality in recent years. They also highlighted about the fact that the profession of sports journalism was dominated by men. The coverage of three newspapers from three different countries namely The Times from UK, The New York Times from USA and The Globe and Mail from Canada in respect of female and male players competing in the 2004 Wimbledon Championship was analysed and found that male players had significantly more total coverage and more articles and photographs than the female players. The Times had the greater disparity in total space allocated to males verses females. The sports coverage of ESPN's website for the Australian Open was examined and found that ESPN.com framed the man's game as more important than women's game in amount of coverage dedicated to each gender.

Conclusion

On the basis of above discussion following conclusion have been drawn for the present study:

The print media covered significantly more news and photograph in favour of male athlete than women. Almost 96% of sports news coverage is in favour of male athlete but for the female athlete it is less than 4%. Gender inequality exists in sports news and pictorial coverage in all the leading Bengali and English daily newspapers published in West Bengal.

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