

Cultivating Male Hegemony: Analysis of Print Media Coverage of the Moscow 2013 IAAF Championship

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Abstract: To purpose of this article is to determine whether there were any differences in the page prominence of mentions of Kenyan male and female athletes in the mainstream print media coverage of the August 2013 World IAAF Championship in Moscow, Russia. Hegemonic masculinity theory and Framing theory of Mass Communication is used to get shape the argument of the study findings. The study employed content analysis methodologies to gather and process material on coverage of sportsmen and women in Kenyan dailies. The findings indicated that the landscape for women's sports in relation to equitable quantitative reportage has not made substantial progress in the Kenyan context. It is also evident that the focus of the media's portrayal of female athletes is neither their sporting talents nor their sporting achievements. Therefore, there exist significant differences in the page prominence and the amount of print space allocated to male and female athletes in the print media.

Keywords: Hegemonic Masculinity, Print Media Coverage & World IAAF Championship.

INTRODUCTION

There has been a dominant belief that women cannot participate in games alongside their male counterparts. Certainly, the media are significant in the perpetuation of these values through the world of sport [1]. Female athletes, compared to their male counterparts, are not given their due coverage with respect to their contribution and participation in athletics [2]. Sportswomen are routinely presented in ways that emphasise their femininity and heterosexuality versus their athletic competence [3]. The basic premise of this study is that because mainstream media ignore, underreport, and denigrate women's athletic achievements they help to maintain belief systems and practices that relegate sportswomen to the sidelines.

It has come to the world attention that women, like men, can participate in games and do as good as men in games [4] [5]. Even with such evidence, discrimination of women in games continues albeit in a different version. Much of that gender difference is seen in the coverage of Olympic Games and other international games. A mentionable example is the coverage of women athletes by Kenyan media during the 2013 Moscow Olympics. It is significant to acknowledge that coverage by sport media are powerful because they send messages to the consumers about who and what is valued in sport. There is, therefore,

little dispute about the assertion that the mass media play a significant role in the transmission of dominant cultural values, especially in the perpetuation of images of gender difference and gender inequality [6]. How others view and even treat members of the society see is determined largely by their media representation [3] because the way the media portray a certain person or issue tends to shape people's perceptions and opinions. The basic premise of this study is that because mainstream media ignore, underreport, and denigrate women's athletic achievements they help to maintain belief systems and practices that relegate sportswomen to the sidelines.

Media Coverage of Sportsmen and Sportswomen

Borchers [7] believes that images are powerful tools and often can be used to take the place of words because they suggest messages to audiences. Images are used today with more force than even words due to the rapid development of digital cameras, internet streaming, high technology of colour separation and its effects on the final product, which is capable of creating emotions among readers [8]. Consequently, they serve to attract the readers' attention and suggest what meaning the reader should assign the images. It is tempting to believe that photographs are the actual representation of reality; but they are not. They are subjective interpretations of reality. Photographs as a rule cannot capture everything and so they include some

details and; leave out others while over-emphasizing some.

Certain variables guide the mass media in deciding the photographs to attach to a story. These variables fall within the required coverage. For example according to Craig [9], Ellen MacArthur, the record breaking solo round the world yacht-woman was photographed with her manager (a Man) on her successful return to Britain. Redmond and Ridinger [10] performed a content analysis of ESPN coverage of the 2007 NCAA men's and women's basketball tournaments. Unsurprisingly, ESPN.com's main page displayed less feature photographs of female basketball players and coaches and saw less links to the women's basketball sub page than their male counterparts [10]. Only top-ranked women's basketball teams or big rivalry games made the main page, while lesser-ranked men's teams could also be found on the front page.

In a study carried out by Vincent and Crossman in the US and Canada winter Olympics games, it was found out that the number of photographs devoted to the men's and women's U.S. and Canadian teams in each newspaper showed a notable differentiation [5]. *The New York Times* contained 20 (65%) photographs of the U.S men's team and 11 (35%) of the women's team. The descriptive statistics revealed greater gender disparity in the photographic coverage of the Canadian teams. The Canadian men's team was featured in 11 (79%) photographs, compared with the women's team, which was featured in 3 (21%). *The Globe and Mail* contained 50 (63%) photographs of the Canadian men's team and 30 (37%) photographs of the women's team. The descriptive statistics revealed that the gender disparity in *The Globe and Mail* was greater in the photographic coverage devoted to the U.S team, where the men's team garnered 12 (80%) photographs in comparison to the women's team, which received 3 (20%) photographs. This pattern mirrors what was found in the article coverage, and it suggests that the national identity of the women ice hockey players was an important factor for coverage they received, with each nation's newspaper providing more coverage of its own country's female athletes. Therefore, the impact of media coverage of sportsmen and women cannot be ignored because it determines who is to succeed and who is to be suppressed.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive research design method to gather written texts as data that was later analysed to answer the study research question. A systematic coding of text was a necessity for content analyses [11]. This process thus allowed a quantitative analysis and trends in newspaper sports coverage in the mainstream print media. The study analysed Kenyan media framing of male and female athletes and so, a collection of written texts of male and female athletes in

the two newspapers during the month of August 2013 were read and analysed. The two newspapers selected *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* rank first and second newspapers in average weekday circulation in Kenya. The independent variable of the study was gender of the athletes (male or female) covered in the newspapers, while the dependent variables were page prominence. Mentions of female and male athletes were coded with gender marking if they were marked by gender, that is, associated openly with gender-specific expressions such as *men's marathon* and *women's team marathon*. The extracted coded data was subjected to qualitative analysis, augmented by quantitative indicators to determine the patterns of male and female athletes' portrayal in the mainstream media. Simple frequency distributions and percentages that depict quantitative differences in the portrayal of male and female athletes were analysed in MS Excel and presented in tables and charts to support the qualitative content analysis of the media frames. Further qualitative content analysis aimed at describing the language descriptors used to describe male and female athletes and gender stereotypes that enhance male hegemony generated results.

RESULTS

Page Mentions of Kenyan Male and Female Athletes

The objective of the study was to determine whether there were any differences in the page prominence of mentions of Kenyan male and female athletes in the mainstream print media coverage of the 2013 IAAF championships in Moscow. The study results showed that the total Kenyan delegation to the World IAAF Championships in Moscow comprised 50 participants, 29 men (57.8%) and 21 women (42.2%). This delegation won 12 medals, women athletes obtaining 7 medals (58.3%) while male athletes won 5 medals (41.7%).

The frequency of mentions of male and female athletes was determined by counting the number of times the names of the athletes appeared in the sports pages of each of the two newspapers that were included in the study for the entire period under consideration. The results were as shown in the Table below.

Table: Frequency of Mentions of Male and Female Athletes

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	832	57.46%
Female	616	42.54%
Total	1448	100%

As for the above table, the collection of texts studied had 616 cases in which one or more women athletes appeared and 832 that mentioned one or more male athletes. In terms of percentages, mentions of women accounted for about 42.5% and those of men for

about 57.5%. These percentages indicated that with regard to objective distribution of Kenyan male and female participants at the World IAAF championships in Moscow, the prominence of mentions of female athletes is slightly above the level of participation (participation 42.2%). At first glance of these results, it would appear that women are slightly over-represented if not equitably represented in the written coverage of the games.

However, comparing these figures with those in the Table in relation to the number of medals won by women (58.3%), it is noted that written coverage informs less about women than what would practically be expected, that is, less representation at 42.5% against the 58.3% of medals won by the female athletes. When these percentages were compared with the number of medals won by women, it was noted that written coverage informs less about women than what would practically be expected, that is, less representation at 42.5% against the 58.3% of medals won by the female athletes.

From the hegemonic theory perspective, Messner [3] defined hegemonic masculinity as the general acceptance of masculinity as the primary characteristic of Western society that places women in positions below men. In hegemonic masculine societies, masculinity is the standard from which everything else is measured, and masculine traits are the most desired and valued in society. Direct competition of physical skill and strength is a feature of masculinity, which appears in some form in virtually every culture [9]. Numerous scholars have contended sport serves as a hegemonic institution to preserve the power of men over women [3] and that was the findings of this study.

The results also support Cunningham and colleagues [13] who analyse that mass media have reinforced the differences between the sexes by presenting a masculine sports hegemony. With regard to our results, this is accomplished in at four different ways. First, media serve to perpetuate male-dominated sports hegemony by simply refusing to cover, or very minimally providing coverage to female athletes and women's sports. Second, the limited overall coverage of female athletes, in turn, results in the general public under-estimating the number of women participating in competitive athletics. Furthermore, print media in Kenya often only covered sporting events that help reinforce stereotypical feminine images and portrayals of women athletes. Finally, when sport media professionals do cover female sporting events, they often minimise or trivialise women's athletic accomplishments through their use of language or commentaries.

Thus, the objective of the study is supported by these findings and validated. Given that the

quantitative and qualitative aspects of medals obtained in sporting events is one of the cornerstones of media reportage of the athletes, it would be expected that female athletes should have received more written coverage to match up their medal achievements. It would therefore suffice to conclude that there were significant differences in the page prominence of mentions of Kenyan male and female athletes in the mainstream print media coverage of the 2013 Olympics, where women received less than it would practically be expected.

CONCLUSION

The landscape for women's sports in relation to equitable quantitative reportage has not made substantial progress in the Kenyan context. The results show significant differences in the page prominence and the amount of print space allocated to male and female athletes in the print media. This shows that the print media in Kenya is not innocent of perpetuating hegemonic masculinity by quantitatively presenting male athletes more than it is not innocent of perpetuating hegemonic masculinity by quantitatively presenting male athletes more than female athletes are [6]. For example, although female athletes obtained more medals at the August 2013 World IAAF Championships than male athletes their coverage in terms of page prominence remained relatively lower than that of male athletes hence validating earlier studies in the developed world's contexts [12]. If men and women are given equal opportunities in coverage by the media, a platform can be created to catalyse equitable sports growth and development [12]. While the media are eagerly creating sports 'supermen,' they try to confine contemporary female athletes to the traditional image of a good wife and mother who always gives domestic duty the top priority. Sociologists argue that the rationale underlying such media treatment of female athletes is that, although these female athletes have 'invaded' the traditional men's domain, they are still 'normal' women who are heterosexual, feminine and vulnerable [9] [2].

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, there is need for the media stakeholders to provide gender-based training to journalists to equip them with the necessary skills and tools to ensure that sportswomen are given a fair and balanced media coverage in their reportage. Through training sessions, journalists can also be made aware of the need to balance newspaper sales with a fair and objective reporting. Too often, journalists are tempted to write articles based on the demand of the readers. This can be prejudicial to the image of women in society.

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