

Gender Differentiation: The Woman's place in the Kenyan Print Media Coverage of Moscow 2013 IAAF Championship

Veronica Bosibori King'oina¹, James O. Ogola²

¹Egerton University, Nakuru, Kenya

²Laikipia University, Nyeri-Nyahururu Rd, Kenya

***Corresponding Author:**

Veronica Bosibori King'oina.

Email: ndonye2010@gmail.com

Abstract: Although more and more women are becoming active in athletics, they are not given the necessary attention in the newspapers like their male counterparts. Since the athletic women's accomplishments are relegated and consigned to the background, they hardly get endorsements like their male counterparts. This study was aimed at finding out whether there were any differences in the presentation of Kenyan male and female athletes in the mainstream print media coverage of the August 2013 World IAAF Championship in Moscow, Russia. The findings of the study show that the media sometimes intentionally stereotype male and female athletes and the media's aesthetics criteria are underpinned by gender differentiation. Male athletes, especially those who play traditional men's sports, such as football, rugby and boxing, are portrayed as being physically strong and mentally tough with real 'manly' manners. Their sporting talents are highlighted as the reporting focus. By contrast, female athletes, even those who play traditional men's sports, are portrayed as emotional and dependent on the support of their family and male coaches.

Keywords: Gender Differences; Framing, Print Media & World IAAF Championship.

INTRODUCTION

Until the mainstream media allocates more space to the triumphs of female athletes, their achievements may continue to be ignored and that leads to lack of endorsements. It is a fact that the messages sent to the consumers determines whom and what is valued in sports. When covering sportswomen the media seems to exhibit subtle forms of subconscious bias that causes them to be treated differently from men. Second men and women are sometimes held to different standards, strange as it may sound, behaviours such as succeeding in sports are at times considered attractive in men but not women. The outdoor advertisements are occupied by male athletes such as the appealing billboard of Ezekiel Kemboi advertising for Safaricom- the leading company in East Africa. Despite the fact that accomplished female athletes have also won gold and other medals in world championship none of them appears in the billboard, which dots Kenyan highways. It is a fact that sports are now huge economic enterprises and stars are paid millions in salaries and receive more millions in endorsements. However, the female athletes seem to be missing endorsements and this could be blamed on inadequate coverage.

The government, corporate organisations as well as pressure groups all seek to make their voices

heard through the mass media [11]. They vie and contend for media influence, participation and representation. This provokes questions as to who secures media access, why and how. Chyi and McCombs [11] contend that the mass media has the power to empower a few by making them credible sources of information and, by so doing, deliberately marginalise other members of society. It is significant therefore to establish whether Kenyan media is differentiating male and female athletes in their coverage, given that their performance and contribution is supposedly the same. Currently, there is inadequate empirical evidence on the differential portrayal of male and female athletes given that no known studies have been done to systematically document the portrayal of male and female athletes in the mainstream media covering the major world athletic events in Kenya. It was against this background that this study was designed to examine the differential portrayal of male and female athletes in the mainstream Kenyan print media.

Media Framing Theory

Framing as a theory of Mass Communication, refers to how the media packages and presents information to the public. According to the theory, the media highlights certain events and then places them within a particular context to encourage or discourage

certain interpretations. In this way, the media exercises a selective influence over how people view reality. Framing occurs in the media mostly because of time and resource constraints on what can be reported. Journalists must choose which events to cover and which ones to ignore. They must also decide which facts; values and perspectives will be mentioned or given prominence. This means journalists apply their own frames when packaging news.

Reporters are also influenced by social norms, pressure from interest groups, journalistic routines and their own ideological and political orientation. As a result, some definitions, evaluations and recommendations contained within news reports are promoted over others. This affects audiences by limiting how they perceive and interpret events. Framing is a term with two meanings. One refers to the way in which news content is typically shaped and contextualised by journalists within some familiar frame of reference and according to some latent structure of meaning. A second, related meaning concerns the effects of framing on the public. The audience is thought to adopt the frames of reference offered by journalists and to see the world in a similar way. This process is related to priming and agenda setting. For example, the mass media not only aids in the promotion of sports but also in the promotion of the people behind the event. Kane (1996) contends that the mass media has the power to empower a few by making them credible sources of information and, by so doing, deliberately marginalise other members in society.

In mass media studies, the term framing is used to refer to the social construction of a social phenomenon by mass media sources or specific political or social movements or organisations [12]. It is an inevitable process of selective influence over the individual's perception of the meanings attributed to words or phrases. A frame defines the packaging of an element of rhetoric in such a way as to encourage certain interpretations and to discourage others [11]. Facts alone have no meaning of their own. It is only through being placed in some context through emphasis or focus as part of a frame that facts take on relevance [4]. It is through this process of framing that the media select some aspects of a perceived reality and makes them more salient in a communicating text, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described [4].

Frames reside in the specific properties of the news narrative that encourage those perceiving and thinking about events to develop particular understandings of them. News frames are constructed from and embodied in the keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols and visual images influenced in a news narrative [12]. According to Giuggioli [4] frames are journalistic descriptions embedded in news stories

to create different depictions of news subjects. Frames provide, repeat and reinforce words and images that reference some ideas and not others.

Through placement and repetition, the media increase the salience of certain ideas while decreasing the salience of others [12]. This emphasis on, or exclusion of information may be either intentional or unintentional and the information that is de-emphasised or omitted can be just as important as the information that is presented in an article [13]. In addition, several frames may appear in a single news article. According to Barforosh [14], a single news story can contain more than one frame because frames are elements that appear within a news story.

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

Gender Representation in Sports Writing

The few women in the sport media profession, particularly in positions of power such as editors, producers and managers, support the notion that the sport media is a masculine institution [1]. Back in the early 1970s, the Associate Press estimated only about 25 women was employed as full-time sportswriters at

American daily newspapers [2]. The Association for women in Sports Media (AMWA), which represents female journalists from a variety of field, estimated in the early 1990s that women comprised just 3 per cent of the United States' roughly 10,000 professional print and broadcast sports journalist [2].

In the most recent and through study of female representation in newspaper sports department, Bishop [3] surveyed more than 300 daily newspapers, finding women comprised 12.6 per cent of sport staff employees. However, women were most represented in lesser positions. Women made up 24 per cent of the support staff and clerks, while men accounted for 95 per cent of sports editors, 87 per cent of assistant sports editors, 93 per cent of reporters, and 87 per cent of copy editors/ designers in U.S.A newspapers sports department [4].

Some authors have placed the blame for the disparities in coverage directly upon members of the sports media [5]. However, few researchers have examined media members' attitudes towards women's sports. Most of these studies have focused either entirely on the attitudes and responses of female sports journalists, or on media members in positions of power, such as newspaper editors.

In both print and electronic media in Kenya, only one female journalist has risen to the position of sports editor, Carol Radul in the electronic media. Male reports and editors dominate the sports desks in the mainstream newspapers. Majority of the female journalists in Kenya are in the electronic media where they are mainly newscasters. In the print media, they report news and quite a number are sub-editors but the editors are few and none in the sports desk. During the August 2013 World IAAF championship in Moscow, male reporters did the entire coverage. Maybe that might explain why the coverage of women athletes was not fair despite the fact that they won more medals than men did.

Until recently, Kian and Hardin [6] were the only researchers to explore female sport journalists' belief and attitudes towards media coverage of women's sports. They found that carrying a women's sports beat drastically hinders opportunities for advancement [6]. Therefore, many female sports journalists do not seek to cover sportswomen; due to career enhancement opportunities and a perceived lack of interest in women's sports from newspaper readers.

Kane and Greendorfer [7] had found similar results in recent interviews with female sports journalists. This implies female writers may help

uphold masculine hegemony in sports. Kane and Greendorfer [7] noted most journalists described a lack of respect directly to their gender from male colleagues and fans as a regular part of their work experience. In addition, most female journalists feel they have to prove themselves as competent more than their male colleagues do. This would be difficult to do through primarily covering women's sports, which are not generally held in high esteem by most employees in newspaper departments.

Female sportswriters also believe they are more likely to be pigeonholed into covering women's sports or writing human-interest stories [3]. Kane and Greendorfer [7] found 58 % of surveyed female sports journalists disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "If more women worked in the sports media, women's sports would get more coverage" (p.813).

It is difficult and unjustified to blame exclusively sportswriters for lack of coverage of women's sports in daily newspapers because those in managerial positions often take decisions regarding which sports receive coverage. Participating sports editors rank diversity issues last among major problems facing the field of sports journalism. Hardin [8] discovered only 59 % of surveyed sports editors felt they had any obligation to have any female representation on their staffs.

However, Hardin [8] found, female sports editors may be slightly more likely to include coverage of women's sports in daily newspapers, but the sample size of the five female editors out of 283 responding sports editors was too low to generalise. Female editors do not provide more equitable coverage of women in sports than male editors did [3].

In the above studies, which have been carried out, there was virtually no evidence to support any notion that there are attitudinal differences towards women's sport [9], while qualitative analyses have revealed media content often portrays female athletes through sexualizing their bodies, comparing their abilities and athleticism to men, and casting them in stereotypical gender roles [10]. Therefore, differences in gender specific experiences and attitudes towards women's sports may affect the quality of coverage given to female athletes by sports reporters.

Print Space Allocated to Kenyan Male and Female Athletes

The table below shows the amount of print and pictorial space in square centimeters (surface area) allocated to male and female athletes (individual and team) as featured in the two newspapers.

Table-1: The amount of print media space allocated to male and female athletes

Gender	Male		Female		Total	
Print Space (CM ²) (Individ)	2355.625	(46%)	2793.56	(54%)	5150.185	(100%)
Print Space (CM ²) (Team)	3616.94	(73%)	1308.61	(27%)	4926.55	(100%)
Print Space (CM ²) Total	5972.565	(59%)	4102.17	(41%)	10076.735	(100%)
Pictorial Space (CM ²) (Individ)	5344.32	(55%)	4329.17	(45%)	9674.49	(100%)
Pictorial Space (CM ²) (Team)	5726.625	(68%)	2651.63	(32%)	8379.255	(100%)
Pictorial Space Total (CM ²)	11070.945	(61%)	6980.8	(39%)	18052.745	(100%)
Medalist Print space	965.095	40%	1473.72	60%	2439.815	(100%)
Medalist Pictorial space	3719.11	58%	2641.68	42%	6361.79	(100%)

The percentages in the table reveal that the surface area of print space allocated to women athletes accounted for 41% while that of male athletes accounted for 59% of the total print space. The surface area for print space for individual female athletes accounted for 54% while that of male athletes was 46% when the print space for reportage of individual athletes is considered while when team reportage is taken into consideration separately. The male team takes the lion's share of the print space at 73% compared to women's team at with only 27% of print space.

Overall, the surface areas of photos account for 39% and 61% in the cases of female and male athletes respectively. For individual athlete coverage, the surface areas for female and male athletes account for 45% and 55% respectively and when team coverage is taken into consideration the surface areas of the female and male photos account for 32% and 68% respectively. On the other hand, when the surface area of print and pictorial space allocated to the female and male athletes who won medals is considered, it is noted that female athletes who won medals account for 60% of print space. On the other hand, male athletes medal winners account for 40%, while with regard to pictorial space, the surface areas for female and male athlete medal winners account for 42% and 58% of the space respectively.

CONCLUSION

The objective of the study was to establish whether there were any differences in the presentation of Kenyan male and female athletes in relation to gender differentiation in the mainstream print media coverage of the August 2013 World IAAF Championship in Moscow, Russia. The results revealed that in total, there were 96 gender differentiation cases (16%) attributable to female athletes compared to 55 (7%) of such cases for male athletes. In 84% of the times in which one or more women appeared they were not accompanied with sexist comments compared to 93% of male mentions without sexist attributions. Across all the five stereotypical gender differentiation

elements (gender marking, heterosexuality, femininity, infantilisation and non-sport stereotypes), women athletes appeared to suffer most as the percentages for women were higher compared to those of men expect in infantilisation where they suffered equitably. Generally, these findings revealed that significant differences existed in presentation of Kenyan male and female athletes. The findings reveal that the media sometimes intentionally stereotype male and female athletes and the media's aesthetics criteria are underpinned by gender differentiation. Male athletes, especially those who play traditional men's sports, such as football, rugby and boxing, are portrayed as being physically strong and mentally tough with real 'manly' manners. Their sporting talents become the reporting focus. By contrast, female athletes, even those who play traditional men's sports, have been portrayed as emotional and dependent on the support of their family and male coaches.

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