

## INVESTIGATION OF CYCLE OF WOMEN'S SPORTS, FEMALE CHAMPIONSHIP ATHLETES AND SPORT MEDIA

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**Resumen:** Los Juegos Olímpicos de Londres 2012 han sido declarados como el año de las mujeres, por lo que cada país envió a una atleta femenina para competir en este torneo y casi el 45% de los atletas eran mujeres. De hecho, la participación de mujeres y niñas en el deporte es muy alta en comparación con el período anterior y las mujeres muestran el rendimiento deportivo y los indicadores notables. Sin embargo, el deporte de las mujeres en comparación con el deporte masculino, en términos de atención en los medios de comunicación, es completamente diferente. En este estudio intentamos investigar las diferencias cualitativas y cuantitativas en los deportes femeninos y masculinos, y los efectos negativos de estas diferencias en la noticia en la comprensión de las personas sobre el deporte femenino y sus actividades atléticas.

**Palabras claves:** Atletas femeninos, deportes femeninos, medios de comunicación, marketing

**Abstract:** London 2012 Olympics has been declared as the year of women so that each country sent a female athlete to compete in this tournament and almost 45% of total athletes were women. In fact, the participation of women and girls in sports is very high compared to the previous time period and the women show the sport performance and remarkable indicators. However the sport of women compared with men's sport, in terms of attention in the media, is completely different. In this study, we attempt to investigate the qualitative and quantitative differences in female and male sports and the negative effects of these differences in news in understanding of people on the women's sports and their athletic activities.

**Keywords:** Female championship athletes, women's sports, media, marketing

## 1. INTRODUCTION

After dazzling glory of American female athletes in Summer Olympics of 1996, many researchers have warily mentioned on the role of media coverage and marketing in promoting the athletic sports among women. It can be understood that after the championship of female athletes, there has been attracted the tremendous advances in the field of sport media. However as mentioned in this article, the female athletes and the championship of women, from all aspects, have been rarely taken into consideration in sport media (Janet, 2015).

The difference in media coverage has the numerous impacts on the lives of women during sports activities. In fact, researchers have shown some method by which the media context can impact on people's perceptions. So, the difference in media coverage can be very harmful leading to stereotyped gender roles and the negative impact on the perception of women's abilities. Unfortunately, the difference in the media coverage has been strongly formed in the media leading to the limitation of women's participation in sports, economic and social differences and political restrictions and increasing patriarchal processes in society (Lisec & McDonald, 2012).

Environmental limitations do not allow the comprehensive review on this subject. However, it is hoped that this subject suggests the qualitative and quantitative differences between them which have worsened in some cases over the past 15 years (Angelini, 2008). Due to mentioned issue, in following, we discuss the various reasons of these differences and provide suggestions for the future studies.

### 1.1. Quantitative Differences

In London 2012 Olympics, each country sent a female athlete as the representative to compete in this tournament and almost 45% of total athletes were women. In UK, the number of women who participated in exercise activities after the election of London as Olympic host in 2005, increased to a million. According to Football Federation of Australia, the number of women participating in football during the years 2011 to 2012 increased about 43%. In America, today, 3 million girls participate in high school sports activities and 46% of scholarships between collage are formed by women (Acosta and B, 2012; Carpenter, 2012).

Earlier, women's sports in recent years have remarkable progresses. According to available information, the women run more and faster than 50 years ago and they were the majority of participants (56%) completed the entire race of track and field and 42% persons who finished the terminator marathon in America. According to available information, 12 times from 100 first times in the New York Marathon 2013 were assigned by women (Angelini, 2008).

Despite the progress observed in records in women's tournaments and improvement of their performance, the media coverage and marketing in women's sports and championships are not improved in line with the progress (Cooky et al, 2013). The various researchers have stated in their studies in different countries that the athletic women compared to their male peers are considered less in written media (Fink, 2015).

### 1.2. Studies Conducted in Traditional Media Field

The most important concern is that despite the progress observed in records in women's tournaments and improvement of their performance, the media coverage of these competitions have decreased over years. For example, when we investigating the media coverage of Olympics Summer and Winter during 1996-2006, we do not observe any significant increase in media notices about the championships of women during these years (Cooky et al, 2013). In a study performed by Cooky et al in 2013, this alert status is shown. In this study, the longitudinal studies were performed with an interval of 5 years from 1989. The researchers have investigated the sports news in different sports channels of USA and have reported the share of female sport through different years as follows: 1989=5%, 1993=5.1%, 1999=8.7%, 2004=6.3%. Also, in reviewing the covers of sports magazines between 2001 and 2011, it was observed that only 4.9% of images were related to the female athletes but during 1954-1965 was 12.6% (Weber & Carini, 2013).

### 1.3. Quantitative Differences in New Media

Theoretically, the use of online communication leads to more media coverage of women's Championship news because there is no the old restrictions on the media between them (Angelini, 2008). So, most

studies in relation to the news coverage of new media are in line with other media. For example, Jones in 2013 investigated the news coverage of 2008 Olympics Games and showed that the news reported on the male athletes are 4 times higher than the female athletes. In 2012, Burch et al investigated the website of 2010 Olympics Winter and compared the photos of male and females athletes. Their study showed that the participation levels of men are higher than the women. However, by comparing the number of male and female athletes participating in competitions with photos published, there is no significant difference between them. The results are very promising and show that online media can improve equity between male and female athletes (Fink, 2015).

#### **1.4. Qualitative Differences**

The point is more important than the media coverage is that when the photos of female athletes are placed on the covers of the magazines, they achieve less success than male athletes among people. The results show that in different sports, showing the photos of women leads to various and different results and ultimately the negative attitude to the field of women's sports (Angelini, 2008).

#### **1.5. Sexual Marketing**

It is one of the most common conditions which indicated visual and verbal displaying of male athletes in the sports of men is common while reviewing the sports of women is placed in second step. For example, in many women championship competitions, the gender is expressed: Women's World Cup, women's World Tour NCAA, women's golf tournament and other items (Fink, 2015). Similarly, many reporters are also differentiated with respect to women's sports. In a survey conducted in golf, the gender in women's sports has identified 36 times and in men's sports has identified 8 times (Angelini, 2008).

#### **1.6. Different Production Methods**

In addition to above gender differentiation, the methods applied in production of sports in women and men are different specifically. It leads to some understanding that women's sports have less importance than men's sports (Angelini and Billing, 2007). The studies performed on NCAA basketball tournament for men and women show that graphics

and multiple cameras can be used in competitions of men (Bissell & Duck, 2007). Kane in 1995 has stated the different processes of photographing and producing the programs leading to less importance of women's sports. He has stated that the video coverage of sports competitions can be artificially covered the better performance in women than men (Fink, 2015).

#### **1.7. Qualitative Differences and New Media**

It is possible that new media change and challenge the dominant ideology of men in sports not only by the extensive coverage of women's sports but also by the different methods (Antunovic & Hardin, 2012). By reviewing ten popular sport sites in USA, it is obvious that the only 7.1% of the images are related to women (Fink, 2015). So, it can be concluded that the media has investigated women's sports differently. These differences lead to an indifferent in representation of the achievements of the female athletes and the reinforcement of the importance of male sports compared to women (Fink, 2015).

#### **1.8. Impact of Differences in News Coverage of Competitions**

When the producers and reported are asked about the lack of attention in women's sports, they state that there is no tendency to women's sports in order to attract the satisfaction of audience (Cooky et al, 2013). In fact, the researches show that the distinction in media coverage, as mentioned before, has the negative on the understanding of the audience about women's sports. In supporting a producer-consumer cycle in the media, some cases such as the requests of viewers and their satisfaction have been stated (Fink, 2015). In fact, some studies have suggested that it can have the negative impact even in media coverage of men's sports. In the experimental studies on the main articles printed in newspapers about the male and female athletes, if the article has focused on the appearance of the athlete (man or woman), the readers show little interest. It should be noted that all studies performed in this field have only a few seconds or minutes (Fink, 2015).

#### **1.9. Reasons for Difference in Media Coverage**

Many media has suggested that in response to the need of audiences, these attitudes reflect a conscious effort to force men in sports media and satisfy the

audience. Sports and commercial sectors of the sports are considered some potential power to empower the men.

All mentioned cases have effects together on the marketing and development of the championship sports of women (Kane et al, 2013). Finally, some has stated that women's sports should pass a long way with different paths. As mentioned in this study, women's sports need to pass a long way in order to achieve the equity with men due to marketing and earning.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF SPORT MEDIA IN IRAN

The mass media are one of the main tools to investigate the social and educational issues as the effective factor in shaping the social values. The physical education and sports are the social phenomenon that has grown through recent years affected people. Sports can be developed in support of national objectives in each country and it is included different aspects and the media can be effective in most cases. Sports and recreation as the main process of a comprehensive system are divided into four major components including development strategies and policies, the development of sports and recreation, support for the development of sport and recreation, coordination and supervision. Sports and Recreation, as a comprehensive system processes are divided into four categories such as the public sport, athletic sports, championship sports and professional sports (Moradi et al, 2013).

According to the studies conducted in Iran, the promotional programs offered through the mass media, have the huge impact on the development and promotion of sports in the championship aspect. The mass media have the effective role in reinforcement of the public sport, education, championship and the professional sports of women. Given the current situation, it is suggested that each sport, particularly women's sports have the special place in the sports programs. In this regard, the current study has shown that between current and desired status of mass media in the development of sports in groups of public sport, women's sports, schoolchildren sports, students' sports, disabled people and workers is the significant difference (Moradi et al, 2013).

The media can be considered as the progressive steps for the sports including women's sports. The presence of women as half of society in sports and physical education is considered as an inevitable and vital issue for the health of the body and mind and

prevention of social deviations, reduction of health care costs and the increase of production and productivity.

According to evidence, in video, audio and written media of our country, there is paid less discussion on the women's sports leading to this belief that women are largely absent from the sports and these collisions resulted in disparaging the efforts of women's sport. So, due to the importance of women's sports at the national level and the role of mass media in shaping the mindset of the public, it seems that there should be taken the process of policies and strategies in women's sports, a fair allocation of sports facilities between men and women and the increase of researches and studies in the field of women's sports.

It seems that some activities can be helpful including more interactions and communications of managers in charge of championship sport through the media committee in different sport federations, holding periodic meetings in order to report the actions performed in this field and exchanging with experts of the media about the strategies to develop and promote components of championship competitions and also paying more attention to women's sports in different federations.

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