

WOMEN'S ROLE IN SPORTS MEDIA AND THE INTERACTION BETWEEN MEDIA
AND SPORT

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Abstract. This study examines the role of women in sports media and the relationship between media and sport. Sport contributes to social interaction in everyday life and provides psychological relaxation as well as physical well-being for individuals. Media, on the other hand, is a communication tool that informs society about current events through written, verbal, and audiovisual channels. In the literature, it is observed that individuals who adopt a modern worldview are influenced by the development and advancement of technology. With technological progress, digital media elements have developed and diversified. Among these fields, digital sports media also performs its role by informing the public about sports-related developments. When sport is associated with media, it enables people to obtain instant information about sports through various media platforms. As in many other fields, the role of women in sport is highly significant. However, in the field of sport, women often remain in the background compared to men, both in terms of representation and professional positions within the sports industry. A review of the literature generally shows that women tend to remain less visible in the media sector due to male-dominated structures. Studies examining the relationship between media and sport indicate that sport has become more comprehensive and widely disseminated through media platforms. It is believed that this study may serve as a reference for future research conducted in this field.

Keywords: sport, sports media, women, gender equality, digital sports media, hate speech, gender representation, media and sport relations

Introduction

When examining the history of barriers and struggles regarding women's participation in sport, it is evident that discussions about women's place in sport and approaches based on male dominance have existed from the Ancient Olympic Games to modern sports culture. Even influential figures in the history of sport, such as Baron Pierre de Coubertin, opposed the participation of women in competitions and advocated that only men should compete. Various studies indicate that women have historically remained behind men in participation in elite performance sports. For example, in many countries the proportion of female athletes registered with sports federations and actively participating in sports remains lower than that of male athletes. Nevertheless, it is also emphasized that the struggle for women's presence in sport continues and that, in recent years, women have gained greater opportunities to participate in sports and pursue athletic careers [1].

The attitudes of sports media toward female athletes and women's sports in general are frequently criticized. Particularly in a male-dominated sports environment, sexist approaches toward female athletes and the limited coverage of women's sports news make it difficult for women's presence in the sports world to become visible. The representation of female athletes in the media is often framed through their physical appearance, personal lives, and traditional gender roles. This situation leads to a focus on their appearance and private lives rather than on their athletic achievements. In addition, the competitive nature and accomplishments of female athletes are often not valued to the same extent as those of male athletes.



Sexism experienced by women in sports media also negatively affects the number of women involved in sports. While women struggle to obtain the same opportunities and equal treatment as men, the insufficient coverage of women's achievements in sports media may discourage young girls from engaging in sports. Therefore, ensuring gender equality in sports media is essential in order to make women's presence in the sports world more visible [2].

Today, sports media has become an important part of people's daily lives. As the popularity of both media and sport continues to grow, the influence and importance of sports media have also increased. However, it remains a fact that sports media is still largely dominated by men and that women are not adequately represented in this field. It is believed that this study will contribute to the literature and serve as a reference for future research on this topic.

Women in sports media

Another field within media organizations where male dominance is evident is sports media. Media and sport, which have become important parts of human life, continue to increase their popularity day by day. Scientific studies have shown that men occupy a larger presence both among professionals working in sports media and in the news content produced by media organizations. According to the literature, sports media began to gain significant popularity in the 1990s. A content analysis conducted during the Winter Olympic Games in the 1990s revealed the presence of gender discrimination in sports coverage, showing that male athletes were featured more frequently in news reports than female athletes. The study also examined sports branches, the photographs used in news content, columns allocated to sports writers, and the roles of reporters, and it was determined that men were represented considerably more than women in these areas.

A review of the literature also clearly indicates that men show greater interest and participation in sports-related activities compared to women. Studies conducted in the early 2000s examining sports media programs found that women were given very limited coverage in television broadcasts. In addition, research analyzing audiences of sports programs showed that women followed sports broadcasts less frequently than men. Studies focusing on women and media have also investigated women's engagement with sports newspapers and found that only about 9% of women regularly follow sports newspapers. Furthermore, analyses of women's perceptions of sports media show that women score lower in terms of interest and engagement compared to men [3].

In a study conducted with 285 sports editors, it was reported that women's sporting interests and academic experiences related to sport were perceived as lower than those of men. Additionally, it was observed that men showed approximately 58% greater interest than women in following sports pages and sports-related content. The increasing popularity of football compared to other sports branches, combined with the historically male-dominated nature of the sport, has contributed to a situation where women have less representation in fields such as television and sports journalism.

The concept of gender is described in the literature as a social identity beyond individuals' biological characteristics. It refers to the roles individuals assume in society and the ways in which cultural identities are expressed. Sport has traditionally been viewed as a domain where men are more dominant than women, and this perception is also reflected in sports media. As a result of patriarchal perspectives, professionals working in sports media-such as reporters, columnists, and editors-have often prioritized male athletes and male-centered sports content over women's representation [4].

Hate speech in sports media

A review of the literature shows that studies on hate speech in sports media have increased in recent years. Research indicates that hate speech in sports media generally arises



from statements made by rival teams against each other in competitive environments or from reactions directed at referees' decisions. Hate speech is commonly defined in the literature as a concept that includes elements of prejudice and extremism. In some countries hate speech is considered a criminal offense and may lead to legal sanctions, while in others legal regulations differ.

With the widespread use of mass communication tools in everyday life, hate speech has become more visible and influential. Studies show that hate speech often includes provocative expressions that may incite hostility and tension. In the context of sports, hate speech frequently appears in the form of racial discrimination. Such situations have occurred and continue to occur in both national and international sporting events [5].

At its core, sport promotes values such as friendship, peace, solidarity, competition, and fair play. However, these values are sometimes undermined. In sports culture, hooliganism is often identified as one of the main environments where hate speech and aggressive behavior emerge. Scientific studies conducted during sports competitions show that the tradition of rival spectators watching matches together in the same environment has gradually decreased, while conflicts and fights among spectators have increased.

In sports media, hate speech often appears through statements originating from the stands, irresponsible actions by sports administrators, and provocative expressions by fan groups that influence wider audiences. Content shared on social media platforms also contributes to the spread of such discourse and sometimes places sports media under criticism. Hate speech is considered one of the main factors that create the foundation for violence.

Sports media generally aims to emphasize that sport brings people together regardless of race, religion, language, or culture and that it represents values of unity and friendship. However, examples of hate speech still appear in sports news. Literature shows that newspaper headlines often include aggressive expressions such as "clash" or "revenge." In sports journalism, competitions are sometimes described using conflict-oriented metaphors; for example, matches are framed as clashes, goals as bullets, disagreements as fights, and victories as destruction. Such language contributes to a more sensational presentation of sporting events [6].

Studies examining sports television programs have also identified expressions containing hate speech and statements that may negatively influence supporters. In addition, research shows that a significant portion of sports newspapers is devoted to betting-related sections such as horse racing and sports betting. The development of new media has also expanded the presence of sports-related discussions and fan expressions on social media platforms. Research indicates that individuals who frequently produce hate speech in social media environments related to sports are often between the ages of 9 and 24.

Digital sports media

With the process of digitalization, instant communication in the field of sports has become possible. Digitalization is defined as a system that enables immediate access to information and news through communication networks. Along with digitalization, many new platforms have also emerged. From both the broadcasting and audience perspectives, digital sports media has enabled sports news to be delivered instantly to the public.

The development of technology and digitalization has strengthened sports media through various broadcasting systems such as cable broadcasting, satellite broadcasting, digital satellite broadcasting, and terrestrial broadcasting. The rapid publication of up-to-date news in digital sports media has also increased public interest in sports.

Internet journalism within social media platforms provides fast communication and easy access to information sources. This situation allows media organizations to share news with the public quickly and effectively. In the past, newspapers collected news one day earlier and then



published it the following day, whereas sports websites and digital platforms now provide instant access to sports news, attracting significant attention from sports audiences [7].

A review of the literature shows that women are represented less frequently than men in sports media. The achievements and performances of female athletes are generally not followed as closely as those of male athletes and are not given sufficient coverage in news reports. It has also been observed that the majority of columnists, reporters, and sports editors working in sports media are men. This situation makes it more difficult for women to build careers and gain strong representation in sports media.

However, in recent years, steps have been taken to increase the visibility of female athletes' achievements and performances and to strengthen the presence of women in sports media. With the increasing number of private television channels, it has become more common to see female presenters and commentators in sports programs. In some cases, this development is also associated with television channels' attempts to increase audience ratings [8].

Female sports journalists have noted that negative reactions arising from club rivalries have decreased over time. Highlighting the stories of female athletes and women working in sports media is considered an important step in improving women's representation in this field. In this context, sports media should give greater attention to women's performances and achievements, present the stories of female athletes, and support women in building careers in sports media.

By doing so, sports media can become a field where women's achievements and performances are represented fairly, where more professional opportunities are available for women, where pressure and cyberbullying decrease, and where gender discrimination is reduced, ensuring equal representation for everyone [9].

Conclusion and recommendations

A review of the literature indicates that women are represented less frequently than men in sports media. The achievements and performances of female athletes are generally not followed as closely as those of male athletes and are not given sufficient coverage in sports news. Studies also show that the majority of columnists, reporters, and sports editors working in sports media are men. This situation makes it more difficult for women to build careers and establish a strong presence in sports media.

However, in recent years, efforts have been made to increase the visibility of female athletes' achievements and performances and to strengthen the role of women within sports media. With the increase in the number of private television channels, it has become more common to see female presenters and commentators participating in sports programs. In some cases, this development may also be related to television managers' efforts to increase audience ratings.

Female sports journalists have emphasized that negative reactions arising from club rivalries have gradually decreased over time. Highlighting and sharing the stories of female athletes and women working in sports media can contribute significantly to increasing women's visibility and representation in this field. In this context, sports media should provide greater coverage of women's achievements and performances, present the stories of female athletes, and support women who wish to pursue careers in sports media.

In this way, sports media can become a more inclusive field where women's achievements and performances are represented fairly, where professional opportunities for women increase, where pressure and cyberbullying decrease, and where gender discrimination is reduced, ensuring equal representation for everyone.

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