

REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMALE ATHLETES IN THE TURKISH MEDIA: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THREE NEWSPAPERS*

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to analyze the representations of female athletes in major Turkish newspapers. Content analysis method have been used to analyze the news related to athletes over a one month period (01-30 April 2011). The findings of this study indicated that the female athletes were underrepresented in three newspapers (Zaman, Posta, Hürriyet). Of the 1169 news texts in which athletes names were mentioned 6.9 percent were concerned with female athletes, 91.1 percent male athletes, and 2 percent both female and male athletes. It was found that female athletes' gender roles were emphasized in one third of the news in which their names were mentioned.

Keywords: Female athletes, newspapers, representation of female athletes.

TÜRK MEDYASINDA KADIN SPORCULARIN TEMSİLİ: ÜÇ GAZETENİN İÇERİK ANALİZİ

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı Türk gazetelerinde kadın sporcuların temsillerini analiz etmektir. 1-30 Nisan 2011 tarihleri arasındaki bir aylık dönemde sporcularla ilgili haberlerin incelenmesinde içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın bulguları üç gazetede (Zaman, Posta, Hürriyet) kadın sporcuların yeterince temsil edilmediklerini göstermiştir. Sporcuların isimlerinin geçtiği 1169 haber metninin yüzde 6.9'u kadın, yüzde 91.1'i erkek, yüzde 2'si ise hem kadın hem erkek sporcularla ilgilidir. Kadın sporcuların isimlerinin geçtiği haberlerin üçte birinde onların toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin vurgulandığı saptanmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Kadın sporcular, gazeteler, kadın sporcuların temsili.

INTRODUCTION

Mass media have become one of the most powerful institutional forces in society. Most aspects of life in contemporary societies and media have reciprocal impacts on each other to certain extents.

Media is also important in sport (Cunningham et al. 2004: 861). The relationship between media and sport has become of particular interest to media scholars over the last two decades. The study of the ways in which media and sport interact crosses boundaries and can be found in the literature concerned with the sociology of sport, gender studies, cultural studies, journalism and beyond. For

academicians interested in the media in particular, sport is important as a popular content of the media, which can also shed light on a range of related issues central to media studies. Much of the writing on sport and media addresses general issues within media studies, such as the vast field of representation and identity and globalization, as well as aspects of the political economy of the media (Bernstein and Blain 2002: 1).

Researchers from a variety of fields have been interested in studying the representation of gender in media. There are a lot of studies (Bretl and Cantor 1988; Craig 1992) about the portrayal of men and women in media. Various theoretical perspectives and methods have been used in these studies.

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Several scholars and researchers from different disciplines in Turkey have pointed to the under-representation of women in the Turkish media (Arslan and Koca 2007: 313) and the fact that women are represented by existing gender roles and stereotypical norms. Media have a male-dominated structure (Gencel-Bek and Binark 2000: 6). For this reason gender roles of women may exist in the media. .

To understand the representation of female athletes in the media is important. Because people perceptions of athletes are influenced by the gender of the athletes and by the type of media coverage provided in the article (Knight and Giuliano 2002: 223-224).

The presentation of female athletes in media is one of the subjects in the field of communication studies because it gives us a good idea with regard to the way of how media presents a social group and the general attitude of media towards its image. The aim of this work in essence is to determine to what extent and in what way the printed media in Turkey gives place to female athletes. In this context, first of all, a sound theoretical framework consistent of previous similar works relating to the presentation of female athletes in media beforehand was formed. In addition to that *Zaman*, *Posta* and *Hürriyet* which were the most selling newspapers in Turkey in April 2011 were looked into by the method of content analysis. At the end of the research, various findings were inferred on the basis of quantity and quality of the news in which the names and photographs of those female athletes came up.

1. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the review of relevant literature, it can be seen that several studies examined the representation of female and/or male athletes in the media. Some of them focus on the content of newspapers (Koca et al. 2005; Crossman et al. 2007; Tamir and Galily 2010; MacKay and Dallaire 2009; Shields et al. 2004), magazines (Lumpkin 2009; Collins 2011), television (Willms 2005; Koivula 1999), Internet (Grappendorf et al. 2009).

There is a substantial literature dealing the representation of female athletes in the media. In general, the results indicate that women are greatly underrepresented (Bernstein 2002; Capranica and Aversa 2005; King 2007; Arslan and Koca 2006; Grappendorf et al. 2009: 37; Pratt et al. 2008; Bishop 2003; Collins 2011: 296; Koivula 1999: 599).

The reason of why the news relating to female athletes is given a smaller place may be arising from the point that they take part in the professional and amateur contests less than male athletes or a general perception of the society that their performance is usually lower than their male colleagues. According to GSGM (General Directorate of Youth and Sport) although the number of elite female athletes is less than elite male athletes, there has been a significant increase in women's participation in sport since 2002 (Arslan and Koca 2007: 313). In recent years, there has been an increase in the level of women's participation in types of sport that have been traditionally limited to men (e.g., wrestling, weight-lifting, kick-boxing, body building) in many countries around the world (Koca et al. 2005: 217-218).

Underrepresentation of sportswomen in mass media is connected with their commonly accepted gender roles (Arslan and Koca 2007: 312-313; Knight and Giuliano 2002: 219). Writers often allude or explicitly refer to a female athlete's attractiveness, emotionality, femininity, and heterosexuality. All of them effectively convey to the audience that her stereotypical gender role is more salient than her athletic role. On the other hand male athletes are depicted as powerful, independent, dominating, and valued (Knight and Giuliano 2002: 219).

Feminist writers agree that the media play a central ideological role in reflecting and reinforcing existing ideas about gender (Bernstein and Blain 2002: 5). Media serve to perpetuate a male-dominated sports hegemony by refusing to cover, or very minimally providing coverage to female athletes and women sports (Kian 2007: 5). But Tamir and Galily (2010: 109) found that the public shows considerable interest in women's sports and

would even like to have more extensive coverage of them in the newspapers.

The number of articles about females, the length of the articles about them in comparison with those about males, the number of pictures of females in each article, and the use of sexist language, provided evidence that females remained marginalized in sports. (Lumpkin 2009: 48).

A study sought to prove that female athletes are indeed negatively stereotyped and represented in the media. The media focuses on the female athletes as feminine objects, rather than professional athletes (Jooste 2007: 94).

Sometimes media use a sexist language in news content. The examples of sexist language in the articles emphasize females' body and physical attractiveness. Frequently statements described their hairstyles, clothing, or body parts. These descriptions detracted from or replaced descriptions of their sporting performances (Lumpkin 2009: 48).

Most studies of dominant sport media discourses about gender that compare the amount and type of coverage given to men and women's sports. No matter which country and event are studied, the results mostly show that women's sports are relatively under-represented in the sport media and are framed as less exciting and less newsworthy than are men's sports. While male athletes tend to be predominantly represented as strong, active and independent; female athletes are also often represented as strong, but simultaneously as mentally unsure of themselves and as dependent on men. "In addition, the greater amount of coverage given to men's sports by the media conveys the greater societal importance attached to men's sport. This gender media discourse confirms and reinforces a status quo in western societies, in which stereotypical qualities associated with males in general are rated more positively than stereotypical female qualities" (Sterkenburg and Knoppers 2004: 303).

Pratt et al. (2008: 36) analyzed all Summer Olympics articles from The New York Times and The Los Angeles Times newspapers in

August 14-30, 2004. Their findings indicated that articles focusing on female athletes were more often placed somewhere inside the sports section as opposed to the front pages of the newspapers. Another result of their study demonstrated that articles were more likely to focus on male athletes (n=171) than female athletes (n=116).

"Compared to the research of the media in the United States and other European countries, South African media represents and stereotypes female athletes similarly". The media tend to stereotype female athletes as feminine, emotional and glorious. Especially in unconventional, physical sports like weight lifting and triathlon female athletes are represented as mothers, wives and daughters foremost to being an athlete (Jooste 2007: 94). The media devalue women by highlighting such aspects as physical attractiveness or roles as mothers, daughters, girlfriends, and sisters rather than focusing on women's athletic skill and competence (McGinnis et al., 2003: 12-13).

Based on this body of literature, we may expect the media representation to be different for men and women quantitatively (amount of coverage). The literature presented here suggest that: (1) male athletes receive more coverage than female athletes, and (2) the quality of coverage differs for female and male athletes.

According to Lumpkin (2009: 45), three key factors described the continuing "other" status of females in sports: (1) male sports were reported on by the sporting mass media more often than female sports; (2) females and their achievements in sports were often reported less positively or in a second-class or "other" status; and (3) there remained a persistent emphasis on femininity in the coverage of females in sports.

2. METHODOLOGY

Sample: In this work, the sports news which were published in the most selling daily newspapers called Zaman, Posta and Hürriyet in Turkey in April 2011 were looked into by the method of content analysis. The study

includes 1169 news in which relevant sportsmen's and 81 sportswomen's names are mentioned in those newspapers in April 2011. The reason of why the study was done in the month of April is that the prospect of the number of the news in which sportswomen's names are mentioned may be higher than usual because various international sports organisations that Turkish sportswomen took part in were held in that period of time. Some of them were European Weightlifting Championship, European Wrestling Championship and European Judo Championship.

Means of Data Collecting: A code table was made up so as to analyse written and visual content of those news. The code table consists of four sections. While the first section of the code table was being applied via 1169 news in those three newspapers, the other sections were applied via the 81 news regarding sportswomen.

In the first section, there are some items that are orienting us to distribution of sports news in those newspapers in terms of gender and also they are classified as the news in which there are all sports people, the news in which there are only sportswomen, the news in which there are only sportsmen and the news in which there are both sportsmen and sportswomen. Then, some items were formed to compare the number of the news that were presented as subheadings, headlines or at the bottom of the front page.

Second section consists of the items relating to written texts of sports news in which sportswomen are. These items are regulated in order to determine the distribution of the news according to their pages.

In this section, distributions of the news which are presented as subheadings, headlines, on the front page, on the back page, on inner pages and on sports pages are determined.

In the third section, the points that how women are seen in the news in which they are (positive, negative or neutral), whether they are taken with their sportive performance or some other features and whether their social gender

roles (as wife, mother and sister) are used were evaluated.

The positive news involving sportswomen are usually related to their sportive achievements, their representing the country successfully and their contribution to the themes they belong to. The negative news involving them are usually related to their failure, their using doping drugs and doing racial discrimination. On the other hand, the neutral news involving them are usually related to their being transferred to another team, participating in a tournament and remaining in player staff.

In the fourth section, the number of photographs in which sportswomen are and in what ways they are presented (woman who shows a sportive performance, woman who laughs, woman who won a medal or cup, woman who embraces or wave her national flag, woman who prays, woman who lives the feeling of victory, woman whose sexual appeal is highlighted and woman who is a wife) are displayed.

The type of classification that Arslan and Koca (2006) have used so far was made use of while the sections of code table were being formed. But some other types of classification that they haven't used at all were added to the code table.

Analysis of Data: Content analysis method was used in the work. It is a method which is used in the systematic and objective study of contents of mass communication. It is possible to reach qualitative and quantitative findings through this method.

Totally 90 newspapers which were published in April 2011 were studied carefully. The news in which sportsmen existed were examined too so as to be able to compare the news in which sportsmen and sportswomen existed numerically. Besides, the news in which sportswomen existed were analyzed in a quantitative way.

Research Questions: In this study it has been tried to answer these questions:

- How is the distribution of the news in which athletes' names are mentioned in terms of gender?

- How is the distribution of the news in which female athletes' names are mentioned in terms of their places in the newspapers?

-How is the distribution of positive, negative and neutral presentations of the news in which female athletes' names are mentioned?

-In what amount of the news are the gender roles emphasized in which female athletes' name are mentioned?

-What is the number of female athletes' photographs and how are female athletes presented in those photographs?

3. FINDINGS

The amount of the news regarding to gender, distributions of the news in the subheadings, headlines and at the bottom of front page in which athletes' names are mentioned in terms of gender, representations of female athletes in news and photographs have been analyzed.

3.1. Distribution of the Newspaper News Related to Athletes in terms of Gender

There are 1169 news in which athletes' names are mentioned. 1065 (91.1%) of them are related to male athletes, 81 news (6.9%) are related to female athletes, and 23 news (2%) are related to both male and female athletes.

Table 1. The news related to female and male athletes in the newspapers

Newspapers News	Hürriyet		Posta		Zaman		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
News related to female athletes	34	8.1	23	6.1	24	6.4	81	6.9
News related to male athletes	375	89.7	346	91.8	344	92	1065	91.1
News related to both male and female athletes	9	2.2	8	2.1	6	1.6	23	2
Total news related to athletes	418	100	377	100	374	100	1169	100

It can be seen that the number of the news in which female athletes' names were mentioned are significantly less than the number of the news in which male athletes' names were mentioned.

3.2. Distribution of the News Related to Athletes in Terms of Their Places in the Newspapers

Subheadings and headlines are the most important elements of newspapers. The most important news takes place in front pages, in subheadings or headlines by newspapers. They

are very important to keep the reader's attention. It can be said that the front pages are the most important parts of the newspapers.

3.2.1. Distribution of the News in the Subheadings of Newspapers in terms of Gender

There are total 22 news in the subheadings of newspapers in which athletes' names were mentioned. 12 of them take place in the subheadings of Hürriyet, and 10 of them in the subheadings of Zaman. There aren't any news related to athletes in the subheadings of Posta (Table 2).

The number of the news in the subheadings of the newspapers related to male athletes are higher than the news related to female athletes (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of the News in the Subheadings in terms of Gender

Newspapers News in the subheadings	Hürriyet		Posta		Zaman		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Related to female athletes	4	80	0	0	1	20	5	22.7
Related to male athletes	8	47.1	0	0	9	52.9	17	77.3
Related to both male and female athletes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total news in the subheadings	12	54.5	0	0	10	45.5	22	100

3.2.2. Distribution of the News in the Headlines of Newspapers in terms of Gender

Posta is the only newspaper which presents the news related to athletes in headlines. There aren't any news related to athletes in the headlines of other newspaper (Table 3).

The number of the news in the headlines related to male athletes are higher than the number of the news related to female athletes (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of the News in the Headlines in terms of Gender

Newspapers news in the headlines	Hürriyet		Posta		Zaman		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Related to female athletes	0	0	3	33.3	0	0	3	33.6
Related to male athletes	0	0	6	66.7	0	0	6	66.7
Related to both male and female athletes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total news in the headlines	0	0	9	100	0	0	9	100

3.2.3. Distribution of the News at the Bottom of Front Pages in terms of Gender

There are total 7 news at the bottom of front pages of newspapers in which athletes' names

were mentioned. 4 of them take place in Posta, and 3 of them in Hürriyet. There aren't any news related to athletes at the bottom of front pages of Zaman (Table 4).

Table 4. Distribution of the News at the Bottom of Front Pages in terms of Gender

Newspapers News	Hürriyet		Posta		Zaman		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Related to female athletes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Related to male athletes	3	42.9	4	57.1	0	0	7	100
Related to both male and female athletes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total news	3	42.9	4	57.1	0	0	7	100

3.3. Representations of Female Athletes in the Written Texts of News of Newspapers

In this section of the study, the written texts of the news were analyzed. The quality and quantity of the news in which female athletes' names were mentioned have been determined. It was also analyzed whether there is a gender role statement in the news.

3.3.1. Distribution of the News Related to Female Athletes in terms of Their Places in the Newspapers

The front pages of newspapers have the most important stories of the day. Most important news takes place in the front pages of newspapers. For this reason to analyze the news related to female athletes in terms of their places in the newspapers helps to understand the attitude of newspapers towards female athletes.

Table 5. Distribution of the News Related to Female Athletes in terms of Their Places in the Newspapers

Newspapers News	Front Pages		Inner Pages		Sport Pages		Back Pages		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Hürriyet	4	11.8	1	2.9	29	85.3	0	0	34	42
Posta	3	13	3	13	17	74	0	0	23	28.4
Zaman	1	4.2	0	0	23	95.8	0	0	24	29.6
Total news	8	9.9	4	4.9	69	85.2	0	0	81	100

According to the findings 85.2 percent of total news in which female athletes' names were mentioned take place in sport pages. 9.9 percent of total news exist in front pages and 4.9 percent of total news exist in inner pages. There aren't any news in which female athletes' names were mentioned in back pages of newspapers (Table5).

3.3.2. The Amount of Positive, Negative and Neutral News Related to Female Athletes

It was determined that the percentage of the positive news in which female athletes' names were mentioned (55.6 %) is higher than the percentage of negative news (11.1%). The percentage of neutral news is 33.3% of total news in which female athletes' names were mentioned (Table 6).

Table 6. The Amount of Positive, Negative and Neutral News Related to Female Athletes

Newspapers News	Positive News		Neutral News		Negative News		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Hürriyet	17	50	12	35.3	5	14.7	34	42
Posta	10	43.5	10	43.5	3	13	23	28.4
Zaman	18	75	5	20.8	1	4.2	24	29.6
Total news	45	55.6	27	33.3	9	11.1	81	100

Female athletes were given place to with their achievements and contributions to their countries in positive news, but their failure, being disabled during the contests and sexual appeal were given place in the negative news.

3.3.3. Gender Role Statement in the News Related to Female Athletes

It was determined that female athletes' gender roles were emphasized in one third of the news in which their names were mentioned (Table 7).

Table 7. Gender Role Statement in the News Related to Female Athletes

Newspapers	The Amount of the news in which gender role was used	
	n	%
Hürriyet	5	18.5
Posta	12	44.5
Zaman	10	37
Total news	27	100

Gender roles were used in 27 news. In these news female athletes were presented as mother, grandmother, wife and sex object.

3.3.4. Sports Fields of Female Athletes Whose Names' were Mentioned in the News

It was determined that female athletes who were mentioned in the news are the ones who deal with basketball, volleyball, handball, tennis, wrestling, swimming, weightlifting, golf, gymnastics, athleticism, judo, riding, and bodybuilding. But female athletes which were mostly mentioned in the newspapers were the ones who deal with weightlifting, basketball, volleyball and tennis.

3.4. Photographs of Female Athletes in the Newspapers

In this section of the study, distribution of female athletes' photographs in terms of newspapers and the presentation of female athletes in the photographs was determined.

3.4.1. Distribution of Female Athletes' Photographs in terms of Newspapers

There are total 85 photographs of female athletes in the newspapers. The number of female athletes' photographs (41) in Posta is higher than other newspapers (Table 8).

Table 8. Distribution of Female Athletes' Photographs in terms of Newspapers

Newspapers	Photographs of female athletes	
	n	%
Hürriyet	23	27.1
Posta	41	48.2
Zaman	21	24.7
Total photographs	85	100

3.4.2. Representation of Female Athletes in Photographs

Gender roles were used in 9 (10.6%) of 85 photographs related to female athletes. In these photographs female athletes were presented as mother, wife and sex object. In five (5.8) of 85 photographs female athletes were presented as sexual object. In most of the photographs female athletes were presented with their sports performance. Some photographs emphasized success of female athletes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this work which is concerned with the representation of female athletes in some newspapers Turkey, relevant news articles were analyzed and reached various qualitative and quantitative findings. First of all, it was seen that the number of the news in which female athletes' names were mentioned were less than the number of the news in which male athletes' names were mentioned. This result is parallel with the results of many of the previous similar works (Arslan and Koca, 2006; Lumpkin, 2009: 48; Pratt et al., 2008; Grappendorf et al., 2009; Koivula, 1999). One of the reasons of this case may be the fact that there are less sportswomen with a license compared with the number of sportsmen who have a license. Female athletes with a license in Turkey is only one third of total athletes (Karahüseyinoğlu et al., 2005: 78). Another reason may be the fact of male-oriented hegemony in the media. The number of the women who work in the decision-making mechanisms in the media in Turkey are less than men (Gencel-Bek and Binark, 2000: 6). Sports journalism is usually perceived as a mannish business in Turkey just as in other parts of the world. As the number of women rises in media, news with regard to female athletes may be expected to increase both in number and quality.

The reason of why the news of female athletes is less in media may be the fact that the biggest publics for sports in the country consists of men, particularly male football fans. In a research, it was seen that the rate of following the sports pages of the newspapers among men was 61 percent and it was 18 percent among

women. In another research, while the rate of people who constantly follow the news and comments concerned with football events is totally 56.7 percent, this rate is only 14.6 percent among women (Özsoy, 2008: 203). The newspapers may not be giving much place to the news related to the female athletes for that reason. The number of the news about male athletes who do sports out of football is less than the news involving male athletes in general.

Female athletes who are mostly mentioned in the news are subsequently the ones who deal with weightlifting, basketball, volleyball and tennis. The reason of female weightlifting athletes' taking place in the news emerges from the contests of European Weightlifting Championship held in that period of time.

It was determined that female athletes were presented in the news in a positive way. In addition, there were various negative news about them. Sportswomen were given place to with their achievements and contributions to their countries in positive news, but their failure, being disabled during the contests and sexual appeal were given place in the negative news. On the other hand, it was turned out that female athletes' deficiencies and weaknesses were not taken into consideration at all, but their sportive performances, successes and values were paid attention in those news.

It was determined that female athletes' gender roles were emphasized in one third of the news in which their names were mentioned. This result is parallel with the results of many of the similar previous works in this field (Arslan ve Koca, 2006: 6; McGinnis et al., 2003: 12-13). Social gender roles such as "mother", "grandmother" and "wife" are emphasized in those news in which female athletes are presented.

It was seen that gender role was emphasized in 10.6 percent of female athletes' photographs. The rate of photographs in which their sexual appeal is told about was only 5.8 percent. Female athletes were presented as "successful women" and "women who displays excellent performances" in many photographs.

If we evaluate available findings in general, it can be said that female athletes were not sufficiently represented in the most selling three newspapers in Turkey in the month of April in 2011. Female athletes were generally presented positively in the news. But in some of the news their gender roles were emphasized. Gender roles were emphasized in few of female athletes' photographs. But in most photographs, only their sportive qualities were presented.

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