

The Status of Gender Media Coverage of Sports In Nigeria: A Case Study Of Print Media.

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to establish the status of print media coverage of male and female athletes in Nigeria. The study monitored the frequency of occurrence of print media reporting on male and female athletes. Articles and photographs of athletes in print media within the period of a year were analyzed. The results of the study confirmed that male athletes were more frequently reported in National Daily Newspapers in Nigeria than female athletes. This gives more visibility to male athletes than female athletes.

Keywords: Gender, equity, entertainment, symbiotic, frequency

1. Introduction

Sport and media have continued to live as twin-brothers. It is almost impossible for one to exist without the other. Beck and Bosshart (2003) commented that sport and mass media enjoy a very symbiotic relationship. The 'very symbiotic relationship' between the duos has provided immense entertainment to the people (Ashish, Antara and Ankan, 2011). Gender has been a major division in the sport world (Huggins and Randell, 2007). It also plays a consistent role as the dividing line in the society, and this division is very glaring in sport. In many society of the world, sport is male-dominated, thus the role women play in it is highly stratified from the role men play, creating a marginal space for women and dominating space for men (Adeyanju, 2003). Kian (2007) in her study remarked that women face more intense constraints in sport than men. It is believed that with more media coverage of women sport, most of these barriers will be surmounted. According to Centre for Gender Equity (2005), media plays an influential role in creating images for both female and male athletes. Thus, male and female sport coverage should be placed on the same pedestal for the benefit of both sexes.

At the global level, study has indicated that women have made consistent and significant contributions to sport, yet their achievements on the whole has received limited coverage by the media (Greenwood, 2011; George, Hartley and Paris, 2001; Eastman and Billings, 2000). Eastman and Billings, (2000) further pointed out that the quality and quantity of media coverage of women sport is not an accurate reflection of the amount of women achievements in sport. Duncan, Messner, William and Jensen (1990) in their study of United States of America society found out that women's sport were not only underreported, but also underrepresented. A study of seventy countries was carried out by Erin Research and the Global Media Monitoring Project in 2000, examining one day's worth of news – about 16,000 stories altogether. The study illuminated an indisputable male domination of the news, whose subjects in 78% of the instances were men. In sports news according to the study, 88% of the news subjects were men and only 12% women. In television newscasts, where sports constituted some 8% of all the news stories appearing worldwide, a mere 7% of these sports stories had women as their main focus (Centre for Gender Equity, 2005).

Despite this global trend, little is known about gender media coverage of sport in Nigeria. There is dearth of research works on the status of media coverage for male and female athletes in Nigeria. Thus, this study intend to research into it to ascertain the current status. The results of the study will afford those with vested interest in sport promotion to have access to evidences upon which athletes' promotion can be built and also developed.

2. Methodology

The study adopted the quantitative aspect of male and female athletes' print media coverage in sports. For the purpose of the study, four (4) national newspapers, namely, The Punch, The Guardian, The Tribune and The Nations were analysed. The study was carried out in four months spread across the twelve months in 2011 (January – March,

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April - June, July - September, November – December). A random sampling technique was adopted to select a month within these four (4) periods each. The analysis of the articles and pictures reflecting males and females in these newspapers were based on frequency of occurrence. A total of one hundred and twenty (120) daily newspapers were monitored and analyzed using percentage.

3. Results

The results of the study are analyzed based on the responses of subjects to the questionnaire administered. As revealed by punch in the data in the first quarter (Table 1) of the year 2011, 88.2% total sport coverage for athletes were males and 11.8% were female in the first week. This shows that there is a wide gap of media coverage between male and female athletes. In the second week, 92.4% of media coverage were for male athletes while 7.6% were for female athletes. This shows that the percentage of coverage for male athletes increased by 4.2% and that of female athletes decreased by the same figure, 4.2% at the end of the same week. In the third week, 92.1% of the coverage were for male athletes and 7.9% were for female athletes. Male athletes' coverage for the fourth week was 82.9% and that of female athletes was 17.1%. The minimum level of coverage for female athletes for the first quarter was recorded in the second week, 7.6% and the maximum was in the fourth week, 17.1%. This shows that the level of print media coverage of male had decreased by 9.2% and that of female increased by 9.2% from the third quarter to the fourth quarter. The minimum level of female athletes coverage on the first quarter was recorded in the second week was 7.6%. Male athletes' coverage continued to increase from the first week to the second week, the peak of coverage on the first quarter and continued to decline to the fourth week. On the other hand, female athletes coverage continued to decrease from the first week to the second week, the minimum level of coverage and continued to increase to the maximum the fourth week.

The analysis of coverage in guardian as indicated in Table 2 in the second quarter of year 2011 was 88.5% and 11.5% of male and female athletes respectively in the first week and 81.8% and 18.2% coverage of male and female athletes respectively in the second week. This shows that the rate of male athletes' coverage had decreased by 6.7% and that of female increased by the same figure, 6.7%. 82.8% and 17.2% were recorded for male and female athletes respectively in the third week. This indicates that coverage for male athletes increase by 1.0% while female athletes coverage decreased by corresponding figure 1.0%. In the fourth week, 72% and 28% of coverage was recorded for male and female athletes respectively. This shows that the rate of male coverage had reduced by 10.8% while the female coverage increased by the corresponding figure, 10.8%. The percentage of male athletes' coverage continued to fall and rise from the beginning of the first week to the fourth week, while the level of coverage for female athletes continued to rise and fall from first week to the fourth week. The fourth week recorded the minimum level of male athletes' coverage, 72% and the first week recorded the maximum level of coverage, 88.5%. The minimum level of female athletes' coverage was 11.5% in the first week and maximum was 28% in the fourth week. The average coverage for male athletes was 81.3% and that of female athletes was 18.7%.

As recorded in the survey data of Tribune (Table 3) on the third quarter of year 2011, 71.6% and 28.4% of male and female coverage respectively in the first week, 82.2% and 17.8% of male and female coverage respectively in the second week. This shows that the percentage of male athletes' coverage had increased by 10.6% and the percentage of female athletes coverage decreased by the same figure, 10.6%. In the third week, male athletes' coverage recorded 74.6% and females' was 25.4%. This indicates that the level of male athletes' coverage from the second week to the third week had decreased by 7.6% and female coverage increased by the same percentage, 7.6%. In the fourth week, the result indicates 76.5% of male and 23.5% of female athletes' coverage. This shows that the percentage of male coverage had increased by 1.9% and females' coverage had reduced by 1.9%. The minimum level of males print media coverage was recorded on the first week, 71.6% and the maximum in the second week, 82.2%. The minimum level of female athletes' coverage was recorded on the second week, 17.8% and the maximum on the first week 28.4%.

As indicated in the survey data of The Nation (Table 4) for fourth quarter, 83.1% and 16.9% of male and female athletes respectively on the first week at 85.7% and 14.3% of males and female athletes' coverage on the second week. This indicates that the percentage of coverage for male athletes had increased by 2.6% while female athletes decreased by the same figure 2.6%. In the third week, the percentage of males and females print media coverage were 91.4% and 8.6% respectively. This shows that the percentage of coverage for male athletes had increased by 5.7% and female athletes decreased by the same figure, 5.7%. In the fourth week, the percentage of male and female athletes' coverage were 81.2% and 18.8% respectively. This shows that the percentage of male athletes

coverage had decreased by 11.2% and the percentage of females participation increased by 11.2% indicate a corresponding changes. The average males and female coverage in the fourth quarter were 85.4% and 14.6% respectively.

4. Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the minimum percentage coverage for male athletes was 71.6% and the maximum coverage was 92.6% whereas the minimum coverage for female athletes was 7.6% and the maximum percentage coverage was 28.4%. The results confirm previous proven statement that female athletes are awarded less space and articles in newspapers. Greenwood (2011) reported that female sports received disproportional low amount of coverage in Australia media compare to male sport. According to Duncan, Messner, Linda and Jensen (1990) women sports were underreported and underrepresented in six weeks of televised sports news sample study. Men sport received 92% of the airtime, women's sports 5%. Lavrinc and Topic (2000) and Huggins and Randells (2007) commented that numerous empirical studies investigating the relationship of sport, media and gender have consistently found out that the coverage of female athletes is low when compared with their male counterparts. What is clear from these studies is that they do not mirror female athletes' athletic achievements. This point was supported by Audu (1999) who posited for instance, that women have boosted Nigeria's image with their scintillating performances in continental and international sporting competitions. At the Atlanta Olympics in 1996, Nigerian's female athletes won gold medal, one silver and two bronze medals. The first individual gold medal won by Nigeria after 38 years of Olympic participation was by the female long jumper, Chioma Ajunwa. As analysis of Gold medal won by Nigerians in All African Games since inception shows, while men have won 28 gold medals, while their female counterparts have won 57 medals. This shows that the media is not fair enough to female athletes in Nigeria in terms of media coverage.

According to Morna (2002) the low level coverage of print media for female athletes were caused by lack of women in the sport media profession, particularly in positions of power (i.e. editors, producers, managers etc.). Kian (2007) in his study reported that a survey of more than 300 daily newspapers indicated that women comprised 12.6% of newspaper sport staff employees. He further mentioned that women were most represented in lesser positions. Women made up 24% of the support staff and clerks, while men accounted for 95% of sports editors, 87% of assistant sports editors, 93% of columnists, 93% of reporters, and 87% of copy editors/designers in U.S. newspaper sports departments.

5. Conclusion

The trend at which female athletes are underreported in media news items when compared to their male counterparts should be discouraged, because of its perceived negative implications for sport development. The male bias in sport news is likely to present young boys with a far greater number of role models than young girls. For instance, in rural villages in Africa, children are seen wearing T-shirts and carrying notebooks depicting pictures of their favourite football stars in European leagues. These stars serve as role models, yet female star athletes are conspicuously absent. The male athletes' visibility in the media may also results into more endorsement money from sponsors.

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Table 1: First Quarter Frequency of Print Media Coverage

Wk 1 (Punch)				Wk 2 (Punch)				Wk 3 (Punch)				Wk 4 (Punch)			
Total 170				Total 171				Total 140				Total 175			
Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%
150	88.2	20	11.8	158	92.4	13	7.6	129	92.1	11	7.9	145	82.9	30	17.1

Table 2: Second Quarter Frequency of Print Media Coverage

Wk 1 (Guardian)				Wk 2 (Guardian)				Wk 3 (Guardian)				Wk 4 (Guardian)			
Total 61				Total 77				Total 145				Total 175			
Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%
54	88.5	7	11.5	63	81.8	14	18.2	120	82.8	25	17.2	126	72	49	28

Table 3: Third Quarter Frequency of Print Media Coverage

Wk 1 (Tribune)				Wk 2 (Tribune)				Wk 3 (Tribune)				Wk 4 (Tribune)			
Total 218				Total 180				Total 232				Total 324			
Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%
156	71.6	62	28.4	148	82.2	32	17.8	173	74.6	59	25.4	248	76.5	76	23.5

Table 4: Fourth Quarter Frequency of Print Media Coverage

Wk 1 (The Nations)				Wk 2 (The Nations)				Wk 3 (The Nations)				Wk 4 (The Nations)			
Total 243				Total 203				Total 187				Total 277			
Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%
202	83.1	41	16.9	174	85.7	29	14.3	171	91.4	16	8.6	225	81.2	52	18.8