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## Women empowerment in sports: An analysis of the sports coverage of leading newspapers in Bengal with respect to Rio Olympic

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** Several studies reported about existence of gender disparity in the sports content of print media around the world. The purpose of the research was to find out whether both female and male athletes of India participated in Rio Olympic had received same importance in sports coverage in print media or not.

**Methodology:** For this purpose the content of the sports coverage related with Rio Olympic in Newspapers on and from 3<sup>rd</sup> August to 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2016 were analyzed from the angle of gender inequality in sports news publication. Ten leading daily newspapers on Bengali and English published in Kolkata, West Bengal were considered for this study. Variables considered in this study were area covered for total news (ACTN) and area covered for photograph (ACPH). Measurement was done by calculating the area in Sq. Cm. of the newspaper using simple geometric scale. Mean and standard deviation was used as descriptive statistics and t-test was used for comparison between the male and female athletes' sports coverage. All statistical calculations were done using standard statistical software (Excel, 2010). Only 0.05 level of significance was considered for the present study.

**Results:** Results revealed that mean values of ATCN and ACPH for female athletes were higher than the male athletes. Calculated t-values for ATCN ( $t=2.81$ ) and ACPH ( $t=2.44$ ) has found statistically significant.

**Conclusion:** From above results it was concluded that female athletes received significantly higher coverage in news writing and pictorial section than the male athletes of Rio Olympic. These findings may be considered as women empowerment in Indian sports scenario.

**Keywords:** Sports coverage, print media, leading newspapers, gender disparity, women empowerment

### 1. Introduction

We often say that women should get equal opportunity in every aspect of life. But in reality what is the scenario? Not only in our country, throughout the world there are so many areas that are socially and even sometimes legally banned for females. Sports area was not the exception one. Several studies reported about existence of gender disparity in the sports content of print media around the world. If we go through the history of sports, we'll see that participating in sports were entirely banned for women for a long time. We can take the Olympics, world's most favorite and famous games event for an example. In ancient Olympic there was no space for women. Even the founder of modern Olympic Games Baron Pier De Coubertin was also against the women's participation in Olympic games. There are so many countries where participating in sports event is legally banned for women. National Sport of Football was legally forbidden for women of Brazil and there was no National Female Football Team [1]. In our country wrestling was considered as male's sport before Saakshi Malik got the Olympic bronze medal. But to reach that podium she had to wrestle against the entire society surrounded her.

Gender disparity exists in every sphere of the society. With the sports arena gender inequality has also existed in the media coverage for sports. Several studies in recent years have reported about the existence of gender inequality in sports news publication and pictorial coverage. Media portrayals of male and female athletes in the 1984 and the 1988 summer Olympic Games as reflected in *The Globe and Mail* in Canada and *The New York Times* in USA was analysed and found that men received more attention and more favourable portrayals than women in sports news in the mass media [2].

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*The Globe and Mail* for one year was analysed and found males received significantly more coverage than the females in print, pictorial and editorial space [3]. Sil (2013) reported significant lower news and pictorial coverage for Shelly Ann Fraser- Pryce than Usein Bolt for same achievements in 14<sup>th</sup> World Athletic Championship [4]. Das and Sil (2014) found that Women cricketers received significantly lower sports coverage than male cricketers for ICC World Twenty-20 Cricket Championship in 2014 [5]. Talukdar and Sil (2015) also reported significant lower sports coverage for women athletes than male for XX Commonwealth Games and XVII Asian Games 2014 sports meet [6].

The present study was designed to find out the existence of gender inequality in Print media of Bengal. Investigation was done using the sports coverage of print media for both female and male athletes of India participated in Rio Olympic. Study tried to find out whether both gender of athletes had received same importance in coverage of print media or not.

**2. Materials and Methods**

A total of four daily leading newspapers, published in West Bengal, India on and from 3<sup>rd</sup> August to 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2016 were considered for the present study (list of the papers has attached in appendix).

Variables measured for this study were area covered for total news (ACTN) and area covered for photograph (ACPH). Simple geometric scale was used as tool of measurement. Mean and standard deviation were calculated as descriptive statistics and difference between two means was measured by t-test. Significance level was set only 0.05 level in this study.

**3. Results and Findings**

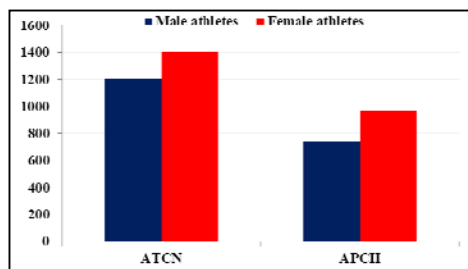
Mean and SD of ACTN (area covered for total news), ACPH (area covered for photograph) for both genders and the result of t-test for both variables between two genders have presented in Table-1.

**Table 1:** Mean and SD of considered variables and t-values between both genders

Variables	Male		Female		t-value
	Mn	SD	Mn	SD	
ACPH	738.32	480.31	975.59	697.17	2.44*
ACTN	1206.87	403.27	1406.381	910.18	2.81*

\*Significant at 0.05 level

Table-1 has shown that mean values of ATCN and ACPH for female athletes were higher than the male athletes. In order to judge the difference between two means t-test was computed and calculated t-values for ATCN (t =2.81) and ACPH (t=2.44) has found statistically significant. The mean coverage of ACTN and ACPH in print media as measured in this study for both gender is presented in figure-1. The figure has shown the inferior coverage in both pictorial and news area for male sportspersons than female.



**Fig 1:** Pictorial and News coverage of print media for both variables in respect of gender

**4. Discussion on Findings**

This discrimination in sports coverage for male athletes is not a regular thing. Previous studies in this aspect have shown that there was a significant gender disparity in sports news coverage where females were always dominated by males [7-9]. But in Rio Olympics the scenario has entirely changed. Not because of a massive change in thinking pattern of entire society and media, but because of the results of India in Rio Olympic. India has got only two medals from Rio Olympic and both the medal winners were females. Beside these result the 1<sup>st</sup> women athlete of India who participated in Gymnastics and has shown super performance in vaulting event in final missing the bronze medal by 0.15 score. So the women athletes only save the India’s grace and pride in Olympic by winning medals and nation’s heart. These might be the reasons for which there was no way other than giving more sports coverage in news and pictorial form to the female athletes. This might be a good indication to the society that time is changing. Women are no more in back foot in sports in India as well as in the world. They already have proven their capability in different sphere of sports. These findings might be considered as women empowerment in the field of sports scenario of India which was noticed earlier in the another study conducted by Sil (2015) [10].

**5. Conclusion**

On the basis of above discussion following conclusion have been drawn for the present study:

1. Print media covered significantly greater sports news for the female athlete than the male athlete regarding the Rio Olympic Games.
2. Print media also published significantly more pictorial coverage for the female athletes than the male athletes regarding Rio Olympic Games.

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### **Appendix**

List of the Newspapers considered for the present study:

- Bengali Newspapers: Anandabazar Patrika, Aajkal
- English Newspapers: The Telegraph, Times of India