

A Content Analysis of Turkish Daily Newspapers Regarding Sportswomen and Gender Stereotypes

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ABSTRACT • The purpose of this study was threefold: (1) to compare the number of female and male sport articles in Turkish daily newspapers, (2) to examine the gender stereotypes in both written and visual texts of the female articles, and (3) to examine the differences in gender stereotypes in both written and visual texts among different newspapers. The findings of this study indicated that 6.05% of the total sport articles were devoted to female athletes, 87.02% to male athletes, and 6.93% to articles combining both males and females. The results showed that gender stereotypes were found in both written (37.5%) and visual texts (13.9%). Moreover, according to chi-square analysis, there was a significant difference in gender stereotypes in both visual and written texts among different newspapers. As a conclusion, this study highlighted the gendered nature of sport coverage within Turkish newspapers.

Key words: Gender stereotypes, male and female athletes, media, content, analysis

Introduction

The participation of women and girls in sport has long been an issue in the field of sport sociology, with a growing body of research pointing towards the continued prevalence of gender inequality in sport media coverage. Although there has been a longstanding debate about the media representation of

female athletes in many Western countries, only a limited number of studies about this subject are available in Turkey. In this paper, we aim to examine the gender stereotypes in Turkish daily newspapers. The present study served to extend earlier research about media coverage of women's sport within different historical and cultural contexts.

Media coverage of female athletes

Of all the socialisation influences that work to shape the skills, values, norms, and behaviours of individuals, the mass media appear as one of the most prevalent and powerful (Duncan, 1990). People are affected by what the mass media decide to let them hear, see, and read (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998). The print and broadcast media, therefore, are potent in their ability to create and maintain societal perspectives (Fink, 1998).

Marian Meyers (1994) noted that the media provide ideological support for hegemonic power structures and play a crucial role in the maintenance of dominant cultures and beliefs. Because sport has been at the forefront of communication technologies, considerable attention has been paid to the relationship between sport, media, and gender in contemporary culture (Tomlinson, 2002). It is suggested that the media construct and maintain masculine ideals in sport by highlighting characteristics which are traditionally associated with men, while maintaining that women do not display the same attributes (Kane & Lenskyj, 1998). More specifically, the overwhelming media coverage of men's sport creates and reflects hegemonic masculinity, especially in everyday sport reporting (Daddario, 1994; Donaldson, 1993; Pedersen, 2002). Messner (1998) also pointed out that the images of women's athleticism constructed by the media represent major obstacles to any fundamental challenge to male dominance in organised sport. Therefore, it seems reasonable to argue that sport and media function hegemonically to reproduce a problematic gender order that affirms male dominance over females. The physical attractiveness or gender role of female athletes, for example, is often emphasised over their athletic abilities or athletic achievements. In contrast, male athletes are portrayed by the popular media in terms of physicality and muscularity, affirming an ideological superiority (Buysse & Embser-Herbert, 2004). Wensing and Bruce (2003) identified the rules that frame female athletes into culturally prescribed gender characteristics: (a) gender marking, when an event is referred to as a women's event; (b) compulsory heterosexuality, when a female athlete is represented in her heterosexual role; (c) emphasis on appropriate femininity, when the focus is on stereotyped femininity; (d) infantilisation, when a female athlete is represented with diminishing adjectives; and (e) non-sport related reports. Most of the studies about sport, media, and

gender, according to Wensing and Bruce, examined coverage of female athletes regarding these culturally prescribed gender characteristics.

Studies about media coverage of female athletes

During the 1980s and most of the 1990s, studies about women, media, and sport showed that the media persisted in covering mainly male athletes. The research on the print media coverage of female athletes had been mostly concentrated in the United States (Pedersen, 2002; Salwen & Wood, 1994; Shifflett & Revelle, 1994), Europe (Capranica et al., 2005; Harris, 1999; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Pirinen, 1997) and Australia (Burroughs et al., 1995; Lenskyj, 1998). In most studies, male-dominated sport and the types of presentation were assumed to reflect masculine hegemony (Daddario, 1994; Pederson, 2002) and, most importantly, women's sport was given less significance than male-dominated sport (Bishop, 2003; Lee, 1992; Lenskyj, 1998; Pedersen, 2002).

Because of the importance of the context of female athletes' presentation in the media, textual analysis has become an important tool in the analysis of media coverage. The basic conclusions from this type of analysis suggest that the underlying gendered messages serve to trivialise and marginalise female athletes and subordinate their accomplishments to those of male athletes. For example, the depiction of gender is denoted if the passage described the athlete's performance by referring to stereotypical female characteristics such as her beauty, passivity, or subservience to a male coach or parent (stereotypic male); or if it described the athlete's performance through comparison to a male athlete (male comparison) (Jones, Murrell, & Jackson, 1999). In another study, Duncan (1990) examined the verbal descriptors applied to men and women athletes. Her finding was that men are framed as active subjects whereas women are framed as reactive or passive objects. Furthermore, while male athletes tend to be described in terms of strength and success, female athletes' physical strengths tend to be neutralised by ambivalent language. As Jones et al. (1999: 189) argued, 'female athletes are judged and evaluated using traditional beliefs about gender whether they are competing in a traditional gender-appropriate or in a non-traditional gender-inappropriate sport.'

Jones et al. (1999) examined the media representation of American female athletes in the 1996 summer Olympics and 1998 winter Olympic Games. They found that print media coverage of female athletes in female sports focused on performance while reinforcing female stereotypes such as the beauty and grace of the gymnasts. In another study, Capranica et al. (2005) analysed the media coverage of the 2000 Summer Olympic Games in Belgium, Denmark,

France, and Italy and found no significant gender differences with respect to article size, page placement, accompanying photographs, or photograph size. They concluded that 'there was a trend to overcome gender inequities in media coverage during the Olympic Games, which may be due to the International Olympic Committee's actions to promote increased participation of women in sport activities and to publicize their achievements' (p. 212).

When female athletes receive coverage, it is frequently imbued with gender role stereotypes and replete with references to their heterosexual familial roles as wives, mothers, girlfriends, and daughters. This style of coverage is assumed to reproduce the pattern of male dominance in heterosexual relationships (Christopherson, Janning, & McConnell, 2002). In addition, media coverage of female athletic prowess and achievement is frequently combined with trivialisation of achievements and framed with culturally stereotyped commentary about female athletes' physical appearance and feminine heterosexual attractiveness (Bernstein, 2002; Eastman & Billings, 1999; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Messner, Duncan, & Cooky, 2003; Pederson, 2002).

In conclusion, many studies indicate that when women's sports are covered, the media use several techniques to subordinate female athletes. Therefore, 'the amount of media coverage is crucial for visibility of the female athlete, but a closer look is required at the type of coverage that women's sports and female athletes get from the media' (Bernstein, 2002: 420).

The social and cultural context of Turkey

Although there have been numerous studies on media coverage of sport in Western countries, only a limited number of studies about this subject have been undertaken in Turkey or within other Middle-East countries. As a case in point, Turkey should provide a particularly interesting vantage point for studying media coverage of female athletes since there has been a significant increase in the number of women participating in sport. Information of women's involvement in sport in the Turkish context is quite limited. However, one data source is information published monthly by the General Directorate of Youth and Sport (GSGM). According to the GSGM, although the number of elite female athletes (330 258) is less than elite male athletes (856 572), there has been a significant increase in women's involvement in sport since 2002 (www.gsgm.gov.tr). In recent years, there has also been an increase in the level of women's participation in sports deemed masculine (e.g., wrestling, weightlifting, kickboxing, and bodybuilding). However, although these sports have been considered as inappropriate for women — and women who engage in gender-inappropriate types of sport are often perceived as acting outside of their gender role — these types of sport (particularly wrestling and weightlift-

ing) have long been popular national sports in Turkey for men and women. Nevertheless, it can be argued that these types of sports are still not viewed as appropriate for women in Turkish society. Like other patriarchal societies, traditional attitudes about gender roles for women are transported and put into practice in Turkish society (Dilek, 1997; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982) and men and women have internalised their gender roles (Kandiyoti, 1995; Koyuncu, 1988). In this socialisation process, the parents encourage their daughters to be dependent and obedient, whereas boys are allowed to be more aggressive and independent since they are expected to cope with the outside world (Ataca, Sunar, & Kağıtçıbaşı, 1994).

Relative to the situation of women in sport, as stated by Fasting and Pfister (1997), Turkey is a very diverse country and participation in sport varies considerably throughout the country. Although the number of elite female athletes is less than elite male athletes and the highest number of elite female athletes is in volleyball, a significant number of female athletes in martial sports such as taekwondo, karate, and judo are now observed. It means that many women also prefer to participate in some sports which are traditionally accepted for men. Fasting and Pfister (1997) concluded that there are changes in at least some parts of Turkey: the younger generation is now more active in sport; children, especially girls, are encouraged to enjoy sport; and sport is considered as something positive.

In Turkey, interest in media and women's issues in the social sciences has been growing since the mid-1980s, and several studies have been carried out to investigate different aspects of women's lives, such as their education, employment, health, fertility, and political participation (Erman, 2001). The representation of women in the media has also gained a renewed interest by several scholars from different disciplines in Turkey, and many researchers have pointed to the under-representation of women in the Turkish media and the fact that women are represented by existing stereotypical norms (Gencel-Bek & Binark, 2000; Gencel-Bek, 2001; Hortacsu & Erturk, 2003; Saktanber, 1990). Although the number of studies about media coverage of female athletes in Turkey is limited, a recent study (Öktem, 2004) analysed the media coverage of Süreyya Ayhan, who is one of the most successful and famous Turkish track and field athletes. She found that the achievements of women are typically disregarded and reflected as extraordinary and unusual events. In another study, Bulgu and Koca (2006) examined the media representation of a case of sexual harassment in a national women's weightlifting team. They found that the print media presented the case of sexual harassment as a 'suspicious assertion' in order to protect the national popularity of weightlifting.

Because of the limited number of studies on media coverage of female athletes in Turkey this present study was conducted. The purpose of this study was threefold: (1) to compare the number of female and male sport articles in Turkish daily newspapers, (2) to examine the gender stereotypes in both written and visual texts related to articles concerning female athletes, and (3) to examine the differences in gender stereotypes in both written and visual texts among newspapers representing different ideologies such as social democratic, liberal economic and Islamic views. Based on the results of the previous research of the print media's coverage of female and male athletes, four hypotheses were developed for this study:

1. Male athletes will receive more coverage than female athletes.
2. The majority of written texts concerning female athletes will include gender stereotypes.
3. The majority of photographic images of female athletes will be shaped by gender stereotypes.
4. There will be significant differences in gender stereotypes concerning females in both written and visual texts in different newspapers.

Method

Sample

Three different Turkish daily newspapers published in 2004 were chosen for this study: *Hürriyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, and *Zaman* are three of the best-selling tabloid newspapers in the country. These newspapers were selected because each is a primary media outlet nationwide and represents different ideologies (Hortacsu & Erturk, 2003). The *Zaman* is a religious newspaper and has the highest circulation (over 500 000 copies per day). One of the two secular newspapers, *Cumhuriyet* (Republic) has social democratic views and a circulation of about 50 000 per day; the *Hürriyet* (Liberty) has a circulation of about 490 000 per day and supports liberal economic views.

The sample was collected over a period of two months (1 to 28 February 2004, and 1 to 31 August 2004) and consisted of 3638 sports-related articles. The sample was chosen because of the availability of articles from both Olympic and non-Olympic events. In the present study, articles were analysed from the sport and news sections of each daily newspaper.

Content analysis

A total of 3638 sport-related articles were analysed. Content analysis was used to determine the amount of coverage devoted to the male and female athletes in the newspapers. Content analysis is a method that involves the

quantifying of certain elements within both written and visual texts, and is commonly defined as an objective, systematic, and quantitative discovery of media content (Stacks & Hocking, 1998). In the present study, content analysis was conducted on both written and visual texts. Although ideas presented in the text can be influential, photographs may provide a more potent effect on media audiences (Rowe, 1999).

In the present study, media coverage refers to the amount and content of articles as reported in newspapers. Therefore, all articles related to sport in each single newspaper were initially counted, then coded into categories with respect to gender (e.g., female, male, and mixed articles that combined male and female coverage). Finally, female articles were analysed based on the 'rules' described by Wensing and Bruce (2003).

Coding instrument: A coding instrument was developed for this study. In the first part, researchers categorised articles as follows: (1) female articles for those events related only to females, and (2) male articles for those events related only to males. Articles that referred to events which related to both females and males were coded as mixed articles. The second part of the instrument consisted of items about gender stereotypes based on the rules described by Wensing and Bruce (2003) in written texts of female articles. The gender stereotypes were determined based on these five rules: (a) gender marking, when an event is referred as a women's event (i.e., inferior to the men's sport); (b) compulsory heterosexuality, when a female athlete is represented in her heterosexual role (i.e., sex symbol, mother, wife, girlfriend, daughter); (c) emphasis on appropriate femininity, when the focus is on stereotyped femininity (i.e., fragility, emotional instability, dependency, passivity); (d) infantilisation, when a female athlete is represented with diminishing adjectives (i.e., girl, baby); and (e) non-sport related reports (i.e., when the focus is on the athlete's personal life as opposed to her athletic abilities). For example, articles that contained descriptors about females' athletic performance that were considered to be linked to heterosexuality (such as describing an athlete as a wife or daughter) were coded as compulsory heterosexuality, and articles that contained descriptors that emphasised the family life of females were coded as non-sport related reports.

The third part of the instrument was based on previous research involving gender stereotypes in photographs (Cuneen & Sidwell, 1998; Hardin et al., 2005; Rintala & Birrell, 1984). The variables coded for each visual text related to (a) the relevance of task and (b) gender stereotypes. Visual texts that depicted females actively or inactively participating in their own sport were coded as relevant tasks, and visual texts that depicted females in non-sport settings were coded as non-relevant tasks. Additionally, visual texts that

depicted females with stereotypical female characteristics such as beauty, sexuality, or femininity were coded as gender stereotyped.

A pilot study was conducted before the final analysis was undertaken. Two authors worked on 22 randomly selected newspaper sport sections (10% of the sample) to test inter-coder reliability. After inter-coder reliability testing was completed and 100% consensus was reached, the remaining 220 newspapers were randomly divided and coded by the two coders.

Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis was also applied to examine the differences in the amount of gender stereotypes in both written and visual texts in the three different Turkish daily newspapers. The chosen statistic was the chi-square test; the most commonly used statistical analysis in content analysis (Riffe et al., 1998). A 0.05 level of significance was selected for chi-square analysis to test for significant differences of percentages.

Findings and discussions

The findings of the study are presented according to hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 — Male athletes will receive more coverage than female athletes.

According to tables 1 and 2, there was a difference in the amount of coverage of both female and male athletes in Olympic and non-Olympic sports. The findings of this study showed that female athletes received 27.19% of Olympic events coverage and male athletes received 36.85% of coverage in

Table 1. Frequencies of Olympic coverage devoted to female, male, and mixed in Turkish daily newspapers

	Zaman (n=161)		Hürriyet (n=195)		Cumhuriyet (n=89)		Total (N=445)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Female articles	37	22.98	62	31.79	22	24.72	121	27.19
Male articles	63	39.13	67	34.36	34	38.20	164	36.85
Mixed articles	61	37.89	66	33.85	33	37.08	160	35.96
Total sport articles	161	100	195	100	89	100	445	100

Table 2. Frequencies of non-Olympic coverage devoted to female, male, and mixed articles in Turkish daily newspapers

	Zaman (n=1093)		Hürriyet (n=1331)		Cumhuriyet (n=769)		Total (N=3193)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Female articles	27	2.47	46	3.46	26	3.38	99	3.10
Male articles	1046	95.70	1276	95.87	680	88.43	3002	94.02
Mixed articles	20	1.83	9	0.67	63	8.19	92	2.88
Total sport articles	1093	100	1331	100	769	100	3193	100

Table 3. Frequencies of total female, male, and mixed articles in Turkish daily newspapers

	Zaman (n=1254)		Hürriyet (n=1526)		Cumhuriyet (n=858)		Total (N=3638)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Female articles	64	5.10	108	7.09	48	5.60	220	6.05
Male articles	1109	88.44	1343	88	714	83.21	3166	87.02
Mixed articles	81	6.46	75	4.91	96	11.19	252	6.93
Total sport articles	1254	100	1526	100	858	100	3638	100

the newspapers (Table 1). However, in non-Olympic sports coverage, female athletes received only 3.1% while male athletes received 94% of coverage (Table 2).

The total numbers of female and male articles in the three newspapers is presented in Table 3. The findings indicated that male athletes received 87.02% of all sport coverage whereas female athletes only received 6.05%, with 6.93% covering both genders. Consistent with past research (Bishop, 2003; Lenskyj, 1998; Lee, 1992; Lumpkin & Williams, 1991; Pedersen, 2002) and the first hypothesis of this study, male athletes received more coverage than female athletes.

In addition, it was found that there was a difference in types of sport covered in the articles devoted to female and male athletes. Although the majority of articles concerning males were about football, there were many articles devoted to different types of sport, such as basketball, handball, table-tennis, wrestling, taekwondo, swimming, cycling, and golf. However, most of the articles concerning females consisted of mainly track and field (56.66%), weightlifting (13.89%), and tennis (6.6%), particularly in coverage devoted to the Olympic Games. One of the possible explanations for this result might be related to nationalistic expectations of winning championships or gaining medals in the 2004 Olympic Games from female track and field athletes, 'Süreyya Ayhan' and 'Elvan Abeylegesse', and female weightlifter, 'Nurcan Taylan'.

Hypothesis 2 — The majority of written texts concerning female athletes will include gender stereotypes.

As a result of content analysis on female articles, it was found that there were gender stereotypes in 37.3% of the articles concerning female athletes (Table 4). Our hypothesis was not supported since the majority of written texts did not include gender stereotypes. The following statements and headings are given as examples of gender stereotypes:

Since she was 10, she has been weightlifting — one of the most difficult sports for women — and is carrying the weight of tons of women. . . . (Olympic, *Zaman*, 3 August 2004)

Table 4. Frequencies of total statements and gender-stereotyped statements in written texts in each newspaper

Newspaper	Gender Statements in Written Text		Total Written Text	
	N	%	N	%
Zaman	24	37.5	64	100
Hürriyet	33	30.6	108	100
Cumhuriyet	25	52.1	48	100
Total Written Text	82	37.3	220	100

$\chi^2=7.888$; $p<0.05$

Our successful athlete who was getting married to her coach last year. . . .
(Olympic, *Zaman*, 4 August 2004)

A bride and her sister-in-law race in the courses like they are playing a family game. . . . (*Zaman*, 8 August 2004)

Although they are female rally drivers. . . . (*Zaman*, 8 August 2004).

She was fearless and courageous like a man (Olympic, *Cumhuriyet*, 18 August 2004)

Formula Race is touched by the hands of women. . . . (*Cumhuriyet*, 11 August 2004)

Tatyana's occupational accident: Her breast was uncovered. . . . (*Hürriyet*, 17 August 2004)

The target is a gold medal in sexathlon. . . . (Olympic, *Hürriyet*, 21 August 2004)

These gendered headings and statements are examples to demonstrate the application of gender rules in the written texts as a mechanism to reproduce gender stereotypes. Based on the rules described by Wensing and Bruce (2003), they implied compulsory heterosexuality (such as wife, bride, and sister-in-law), infantilisation (such as lady and girls) and non-sport related reports (such as marriage). For example, the *Zaman* for 8 August highlighted the expectations from Süreyya Ayhan for 2004 Summer Olympic Games. While the article briefly mentioned her successes and training period, the prime focus was her marriage to her coach. On the other hand, the 18 August, 2004 *Cumhuriyet* included gender stereotypes: 'She is fearless and courageous like a man.' In this statement, we argue that the female athlete is represented by emphasising inappropriate femininity and by comparison with masculine qualities. These results indicate that the present study has findings similar to previous studies (Bernstein, 2002; Bishop, 2003; Lenskyj, 1998; Jones et al., 1999; Lee, 1992; Pedersen, 2002).

Hypothesis 3 — The majority of photographic images of female athletes will be shaped by gender stereotypes.

As a result of visual text analysis, it was found that 13% had gender stereotypes (Table 5). Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported as the data revealed

Table 5. Frequencies of total statements and gender-stereotyped statements in visual texts in each newspaper

Newspaper	Gender Statements in Visual Text		Total Visual Text	
	N	%	N	%
Zaman	0	0	35	100
Hürriyet	8	11.9	67	100
Cumhuriyet	12	28.6	42	100
Total Visual Text	20	13.9	144	100

$\chi^2=13.428$; $p < 0.05$

that the majority of female athletes' photographs did not receive gender stereotypes. However, 13.9% of female athletes received photographic coverage as glamorous, sexy, and with reference to female athletes' heterosexual familial roles as wives, mothers, and daughters. For example, the *Cumhuriyet* (18 August) represented photographs of tennis player Venus Williams, showing her posing seductively for the camera in her off-court wear. In another photograph, Semra Aksu, a former Turkish track and field athlete, was pictured with her baby on the blocks in a position ready for the start (*Hürriyet*, 10 August 2004).

Another finding of this analysis was that 21.15% of total visual texts were not related to the theme of the article. In these visual texts, female athletes were represented by picturing their non-task-relevant aspects of their life.

Hypothesis 4 — There will be significant differences in gender stereotypes concerning females in both written and visual texts in different newspapers

According to chi-square analysis, there was a significant difference in gender stereotypes in written texts among three different Turkish newspapers ($\chi^2=7.888$; $p < 0.05$). The lowest number of gender stereotypes in written texts was found in the *Hürriyet* (30.6%) which is accepted as one of the most popular Turkish newspapers. The frequencies of total statement and gender stereotypes in written texts of each newspaper are shown in Table 4.

According to chi-square analysis, there was a significant difference in gender stereotypes in visual texts among three different newspapers (χ^2

=13.428; $p < 0.05$). Gender stereotypes were found only in the *Cumhuriyet* (28.6%) and the *Hürriyet* (11.9%). However, there were no gender stereotypes in visual representations of female athletes in the *Zaman*. The percentage of gender stereotypes in visual representations is shown in Table 5.

The fourth hypothesis was supported as data revealed a significant difference in gender stereotypes in both written and visual texts among three different newspapers. It should be noted that the *Zaman*, which has a religious emphasis, had the highest number of gender stereotypes in written texts but had no gender stereotypes in visual texts. This might be explained by its emphasis on written texts since it provides very little photographic coverage. Moreover, it might be expected to find the highest number of gender stereotypes in both written and visual texts in the *Hürriyet*, it being one of the most popular tabloid newspapers. However, the findings showed that the other two newspapers had the highest numbers of gender stereotypes in their coverage of female athletes.

Conclusion

This study attempted to compare the print media coverage of female and male athletes in Turkish daily newspapers and to examine gender stereotypes in both written and visual texts. Although the amount of female coverage was significantly lower than the male coverage in the three newspapers, it should be noted that most of the female articles were about the Olympic Games. The Olympic Games have been important in publicising women's sport achievements, with an increase in the number of women's events and number of Turkish female athletes in the Games. Therefore, we argue that the coverage of female athletes might be due both to Olympic Games and the strong nationalistic fervour ignited by the Olympics. Female and male Olympic athletes are central to communicating a national image and identity, representing their nations rather than themselves (Lippe, 2002; Stevenson, 2002). In their study, Capranica et al. (2005) found no significant gender differences in media coverage of Olympic athletes and they indicated that there has been an increased media attention in women's sport during Olympic Games due to the representation of national identity attributed to Olympic athletes.

Although the data revealed that there were gender stereotypes in the media coverage of female athletes, we found that the overall amount of these gender stereotypes was not significant. We attribute this finding to the selected female athletes covered in the media. Most of the articles were about female weightlifters who had the highest athletic achievements among the female athletes in Turkey and, therefore, there were great expectations for medals in Olympic Games. Female weightlifters are visibly strong and muscular — long

viewed as being unfeminine. They certainly do not conform to stereotypes of femininity. Thus, it should come as no surprise to realise that in the Turkish media, female weightlifters are mostly represented by their athletic performance. On the other hand, the findings of this study on the amount of gender stereotypes in both written and visual texts indicated that the majority of the articles had no gender stereotypes. This means that female articles focused more on describing the athletic performances rather than the athletes' personal lives. Considering that the majority of articles in the present study were related to Olympic events, this result is consistent with the result of Shields et al. (2004) who found that media coverage of women's Olympic sports/events is focused on performance rather than on personal matters.

If we examine the reasons why the media provides less coverage to female athletes, one of the reasons possibly relates to male dominance in the media institutions (Gencel-Bek & Binark, 2000). This situation has been clearly pointed out in many Western studies (Capranica & Aversa, 2002; Messner, Duncan, & Cooky, 2003). Many studies noted that underreporting of women's participation and achievement in sports has been attributed to a lack of interest with respect to the male target audience (MacNeill, 1994; Stevenson, 2002; Theberge & Cronk, 1994). Moreover, male journalists dominate sport commentaries. Therefore, the impact of the perspectives of male or female journalists and important figures in the Turkish media should be investigated to understand the representation of gender in the sports media. We also recommend that other Turkish media, such as television and magazines, be examined to determine the amount and type of coverage that all female athletes receive since the mass media — which are an essential feature of modern social life — preserve, transmit, and create important cultural information.

As a conclusion, this study highlighted the gendered nature of sports coverage within three Turkish daily newspapers. Over the past ten years, the number of sports open to women has expanded considerably and many Turkish female athletes now achieve international recognition (medals in the Olympics and international competitions). However, this analysis clearly indicated that a high proportion of the media coverage was devoted to male athletes, and some of the female athletes were represented by gender stereotypes. Therefore, we argue that male dominance within sport in Turkey is evidenced by the noticeable absence of female athletes in the Turkish media. Although Turkish female athletes have gained some ground as far as visibility in the sport environment is concerned, there is still a long way to go with regard to the consistency and quality of this coverage.

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