



RESEARCH PAPER

Reinforcement of Gender Stereotypes in Sports Discourse: A Comparative Qualitative Analysis of Pakistani and International Newspapers

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at analyzing the linguistic strategies used for projecting sportsmen and sportswomen in sports news of selected Pakistani and foreign newspapers. Sports are perceived to be male dominated where women are typically viewed as mere intruders and consequently sportspersons are represented in traditional ways by the media. By using Hall's theory of representation as its theoretical base, the present work has analyzed forty news items qualitatively; gathered from two Pakistani and two foreign newspapers for the years 2017, 2018, and 2019 respectively. The analysis has focused upon linguistic strategies employed for depicting male and female sports stars. The study concludes that media is extremely biased in its depiction of sports stars as focus has been laid on feminine attributes of sportswomen while sportsmen have been depicted in athletic ways. The study recommends sensitizing media outlets regarding the detrimental effect of this biased reporting on the public perception of sportspersons.

KEYWORDS Sports, Media, Sports Discourse, Gender Stereotypes

Introduction

The media has a significant impact on our perception of the world, and it plays an essential role in assisting us in differentiating between things that are significant and those that are not. People's beliefs are shaped by the reality they perceive in the media, which influences their thoughts and actions. Different points of view have always been promoted by the media, particularly in relation to gender ideology. The media's role in the dissemination of identities and ideologies cannot be denied. The media not only facilitates communication but also plays a vital role in the creation of social realities and identities. The way gender is portrayed in the media reveals how a society views gender, which opens a window into its societal values and ideas. Since the mainstream media often shapes public opinion indirectly, if it continues to present women in traditional and usual ways, attitudes and opinions about them will not shift, perpetuating women's marginalization in society. In both the political and professional arenas, women have achieved equality and power. The obstacles that formerly kept them from engaging in areas that were considered men's territory have been removed, giving them greater opportunities for advancement. The proportion of women doing sports has increased significantly now and they must be represented in media in a realistic and impartial manner. But sports rhetoric has been proven to be full of biased categorizations and in-group favoritism. Sports discourse's discursive tactics do not authentically convey information and instead support ideological objectives. Given the significant influence that the media has on society attitudes, the

current study aims to investigate how sportspersons are represented in Pakistani and foreign newspapers.

Literature Review

From birth, gendered discourse is there since distinct colors, games, and toys are uniquely linked to boys and girls. It is not only the biological makeup that patriarchal ideology focuses upon in ascribing superior and inferior status to each gender but there is a cultural belief that women shouldn't have control over men or themselves, and that males should have authority and influence over women. Both sexes are subject to certain expectations about how they should act and behave, which are unrelated to biological characteristics. The concept of femininity varies over time and is culturally and geographically distinct. Despite cultural differences, some characteristics of femininity are almost universal. For example, women are generally thought to be delicate, sensitive, emotional, and soft-spoken. Women and men are exposed to the appropriate masculinity and femininity ideology in almost every setting and through every institution of society, including media, home, workplace, and religion. This is typical in developed countries of the world also where womanhood is emphasized in all domains of life; where a woman is primarily a woman and her professional success has secondary status or significance. Conversely, a man's functionality and skill is always emphasized in all contexts. Sport is seen as a man's domain, the family institution propagates and validates this idea through persuasive arguments that women should not be athletic and should not have strong bodies.

Media discourse has been extensively examined to reveal the intrinsic bias in reporting patterns about gender apart from other variables. Each media text has an indicator system that draws the reader in a particular way. The media not only represent but also fabricate a reality that is attractive and commercially viable. They intentionally select what they reproduce, rather than allowing it to occur randomly or without consideration. It is neither arbitrary, unbiased, nor without consequences. While news about sportswomen is heavily impacted by their lifestyles, appearances, and home responsibilities, coverage of men's sports is very different. Different disciplinary methods are often employed with sportswomen to ensure that femininity remains prominent and subordinate, both overtly and covertly, initiated by themselves and others. The private lives and other aspects of women's traditional responsibilities are often mentioned and exalted in news coverage on women who have garnered attention for their achievements and professional pursuits (Ullah, Khan & Ibrahim, 2016). While female athletes are always female, male athletes might just be athletes without any qualifications. Their femininity is always highlighted in order to compete in sports (Robinson, 2017). As a result, one could argue that becoming a female athlete entails both exhibiting your competitive and physically capable traits and proving that you can meet the traditional beauty criteria that society imposes on women. In addition to the competitive character of their individual sports, many female athletes experience additional pressure to meet gender stereotypes. This study looks into how sportspersons are portrayed in well-known Pakistani and foreign newspapers, given the importance of newspapers as the main source of reliable information and communications. The purpose of making this comparison is to assess and examine the similarities or differences in the way sportspersons are perceived and projected in news media of diverse cultures.

Material and Methods

The study examines sports discourse of two Pakistani newspapers (*The Nation*, *Dawn*) and two foreign newspapers (*Daily Mail*, *The New York Times*) qualitatively. In order

to investigate how sportspersons are represented in these newspapers, only the major sporting events of 2017, 2018, and 2019 were included in the data collection. The study is informed by Hall's theory of representation (1997) and analyzes the linguistic choices of the selected newspapers for finding out the way sportspersons have been portrayed. Language is inherently imbued with meanings and messages, utilizing words, images, and signs. Words and symbol can never be neutral or devoid of significance. Representation is the process of using language to create meanings and representation can manifest in written, auditory, or visual formats, signifying the meanings generated and communicated through these many modes of expression. Language, in this context, encompasses all signs, including words, images, sounds, and other symbols, which collaborate to convey and articulate meanings. Meanings do not exist inherently within objects; rather, they are generated and built through a process of signification. Language employs symbolization to depict reality. This symbolization is based on mental images, which include our perceptions and ideas about things, locations, people, occasions, or concepts. Signification uses the entire system for meaning production and is influenced by social and cultural elements. Consequently, representation is intrinsically linked to our cultural norms and culture, with media serving as a vital representational instrument that constructs a subjective reality, thereby shaping a specific worldview.

Given the intricate structure of media texts, it is essential to examine how news media represent reality within their particular social context. This study is founded on Hall's representational theory, which effectively elucidates the linguistic strategies employed in identity construction.

Results and Discussion

The analysis has been carried out in two categories. First category is masculinity in sports discourse that deals with the news items on sportsmen, and second category is femininity in sports discourse that focuses upon news items about sportswomen only. A total of forty news items have been analyzed for this study and twenty news items are included in each category. The news items collected from Pakistani newspapers have been coded as P1, P2, P3 etc., and news items from international newspapers have been coded as I1, I2, I3 etc.

Masculinity in Sports Discourse

Men's roles, conduct, appearance, and other characteristics are all considered to be part of the culturally idealized concept of masculinity. When masculinity is emphasized, men are portrayed as being powerful, assertive, unemotional, violent, talented, competent, energetic, fearless, and determined. The examples of the way masculinity has been projected in the selected newspapers are given below:

Table 1
Projection of Sportsmen in Sports News

Sr No	Pakistani Newspapers	Sr No	International Newspapers
P1	"Fabulous Fahim guides Pakistan to remarkable win" Dawn, May 29, 2017.	I1	"Zverev hits the ball with easy, flowing power on both wings and wins easy points off a penetrating serve that reaches upward of 130 miles per hour. His base is growing stronger, and so is his nerve" The New York Times, August 27, 2017.
P2	"Explosive Farhan shines in AKG event... The right-hander smashed six fours and five sixes in his thunderous knock" Dawn, June 4, 2017.	I2	"His speed is still there. So, it appears, is his combative spirit, which explains why he decided to continue playing Monday's match despite considerable discomfort and an injury timeout after the first set" The New York Times, January 22, 2018.

P3	"It was by highly wonderful performance shown by Asim as the entire crowd was right behind the local lad but Asiam kept his cool and played his natural game without taking any pressure" The Nation, January 28, 2018.	I3	"And then Salah danced past Sergio Ramos, a player whose grace and guile encapsulate his team...His departure changed the course of the game fundamentally. Liverpool's self-belief drained, almost visibly; Real Madrid, emboldened by the absence of the one player who truly seemed to inspire fear, seized control" The New York Times, May 28, 2018.
P4	"Wawrinka pierces Murray's armour to reach French Open final" Dawn, June 10, 2017.	I4	"Messi's reticence, in public, has always added to that impression. His image has flourished as that of the strong, silent type, not given to the rise and fall of emotion, immune to pressure or expectation. He rarely looks flustered; he never loses his cool" The New York Times, June 26, 2018.
P5	"Sajjad bulldozes Lee Chun Wai to annex Asian 6-Reds snooker title" Dawn, July 3, 2017.	I5	"Like Phelps, his physique and technique are perfectly adapted to this environment: No one moves on terre battue like Nadal, and no one's topspin forehand kicks like Nadal's, not even Thiem's, which is quite a versatile weapon on its own" The New York Times, June 10, 2018.
P6	"Deadly spell by spinner Faraz... slow left-armed Faraz Ahmad Khan grabbed a six-wicket haul as Pakistan CC thrashed Nazimabad Gymkhana by 10 wickets" Dawn, August 2, 2017.	I6	"Shapovalov showed no sign of nerves in their first ever meeting, the left-hander playing the more aggressive tennis by utilising his huge forehand on roundhouse swings and frequently attacking the net" Daily Mail, August 10, 2017.
P7	"Opener Nadeem Javed, an experienced first-class campaigner, then bludgeoned nine boundaries and six sixes in a buccaneering 30-ball 78" Dawn, August 2, 2017.	I7	"Inevitably, it was the talismanic Jovetic who scored his seventh goal of the campaign out of the blue, heading home superbly a pinpoint Marusic cross to send a packed Podgorica stadium into raptures" Daily Mail, September 4, 2017.
P8	"Zverev rips Nishikori to set up Anderson final" Dawn, August 7, 2017.	I8	"An aggressive Rublev then moved in for the kill, breaking Goffin twice in the third to clinch a spot in the quarter-finals" Daily Mail, September 4, 2017.
P9	"Waseem Khatri of Pakistan was in beastly form at the WESPAC Scrabble Championship, which started in Nairobi" Dawn, November 10, 2017.	I9	"del Potro never gave in or gave up, eventually working his way all the way back on the strength of powerful serves and thunderous forehands to edge Thiem 1-6, 2-6, 6-1, 7-6 (1), 6-4 over more than 3½ hours and set up a quarterfinal showdown against Roger Federer" Daily Mail, September 4, 2017.
P10	"Hasan Ali and Mohammad Amir in tandem are terrorizing batting line-ups with their pace" The Nation, July 16, 2018.	I10	"There is something wonderfully unorthodox about Phil Foden. The way he moves, the way he manipulates his body position. And even the way he plays simple passes. Each is so precise, very deliberate. Foden almost hyperextends his left leg on release with great purpose. His technique in that moment of impact, stabbing possession, bears resemblance to Bernhard Langer putting with his unusually long club" Daily Mail, March 7, 2018.

One important way to exert superiority of male players is giving credit of a team's victory to individual players by exaggerating their contribution. The example P1 regarding the Pakistani cricket player Fahim Ashraf makes it clear whose good performance lead Pakistan to victory against Bangladesh. The reporter is praising Fahim for his superb performance and he gives the entire credit to Fahim as according to him Fahim's 64 runs from 30 balls have changed the landscape of the match. He calls him "*fabulous*" because he has guided Pakistan to victory otherwise the situation was very depressing. Losing this match was equivalent to death according to the reporter and Fahim becomes the savior who plays a pivotal role in registering Pakistan's victory. The example P2 is an overt manifestation of 'manliness' and 'masculinity' that is commonly associated with male

players. As stated in literature review, the male players are presented as aggressive, courageous, violent, and revengeful by the media and the above text justifies the statement. Farhan is member of Pakistan's national cricket squad and reporter is informing about his performance in AKG T20 Ramazan Cup. The adjective that precedes Farhan's name is "*explosive*" which means something that can shatter violently. Here this adjective creates specific impression in reader's mind regarding Farhan as a cricketer, it implies that he is a brilliant batsman who is unpredictable and can surprise the people by displaying unique batting skills. Moreover, the following sentence further adds to the meanings as he '*smashed*' eleven boundaries instead of hitting boundaries. He has been presented as a violent and fearless player who is full of energy and strength on the pitch. His boundaries have been labeled as '*thunderous knock*', which is to amplify the impact of these boundaries. The boundaries sounded like thunder for the opponents. Farhan is depicted as '*shining*' which means he occupies the central stage and is the focus of attention because of his impressive batting. The same metaphorical description of male players performance continues in example P3 which is about Pakistani squash player Asim who won a title in Malaysia. According to the reporter it was a truly amazing performance by Asim who kept a close watch at his opponent. The entire crowd was supporting him but he kept up his nerves and stayed calm. He stayed focused upon his game and had managed the pressure impressively and finally he stood victorious. Just like players in previous examples discussed in this section, the reporter has emphasized the sporting spirit of Asim who did not allow anything to come in his way of grabbing victory.

There is a common inclination to compare and link male sportsmen with warriors and soldiers. The example P4 is about Swiss player Stan Wawrinka who has defeated British player Andy Murray thereby qualifying for French Open's final in 2017. The reporter has presented both players as warriors. Armor is worn by soldiers in the battle field to protect themselves from attack. Now associating it with tennis players is to portray them as strong fighters who are engaged in a tough battle, and in this battle Wawrinka becomes victorious as he "*pierces Murray's armor*". It implies that Wawrinka is the most forceful fighter who has even pierced Murray's armor. Now instead of simply reporting about the victory of Wawrinka, the writer has made the headline catchy by employing specific rhetoric associated with military. The excessive usage of strength descriptors and adjectives specified typically for men can be seen in the example P5 which is about triumph of Pakistani snooker star Mohammad Sajjad who has defeated Lee Chun Wai of Hong Kong by 7-0 in Asians 6 Red Snooker Championship. The writer has reported the victory in a captivating manner as the verb "*bulldozes*" embodies a lot of connotations. The word implies massiveness, strength, power, force, aggression and violence, the attributes that are commonly associated with manhood. Sajjad has defeated his opponent but he has been reported as bombarding his opponent with scores. He is portrayed as a violent and aggressive player with no mercy for his opponent, who gave no chance to his opponent to recover or settle.

Focusing upon strength and sporting skills of male players has been a dominant trend in news reporting. Pakistani spinner Faraz in example P6 has been depicted as casting a "*deadly spell*" on the people by his forceful balling as he has "*grabbed*" six wickets in the match. The selected text highlights the sporting excellence of Faraz who has left the public mesmerized by displaying excellent balling skills. We are also given minute details of his balling practice as he is depicted as a "*spinner and slow left-armer*". He could have been described as "*taken*" the wickets but the verb "*grabbed*" portrays him as a rough and tough player who seizes the wickets and whose team has "*thrashed*" the opponents. In a similar manner, the example P10 presents Pakistani cricketers Hasan Ali and Muhammad Amir as '*terrorizing*' the batsmen by their dangerous bowling. They are shown as shaking the batting icons with their splendid bowling action. The next example P7 portrays another

player Nadeem Javed in a similar fashion as '*an experienced first-class campaigner*' which means he is a highly ranked seasoned player. Such opening statements enhance the player's perceived worth and status in the reader's mind. The impression or perception created in introductory phrases is enhanced by describing the way the boundaries were made by Nadeem Javed. Instead of "hitting" the boundaries he has "*bludgeoned nine boundaries and six sixes in a buccaneering 30-ball 78*". Now the word "*bludgeoned*" portrays him as a massive striker who has aggressively hit nine boundaries. Furthermore, he has scored 78 runs from 30 balls which is "*buccaneering*" innings played by him. He has been portrayed as a risk-taker and an adventurous player who has used the majority of the balls to score as many goals as he can without worrying.

The text in example P8 is another instance of emphasizing dominance and superiority of male players by making use of strength descriptors for them. As can be seen the German tennis player Zverev has been depicted as having "*ripped*" his opponent Nishikori in a match. The verb "*rips*" implies forceful manner used by Zverev to defeat Nishikori, it means the opponent was badly defeated by Zverev in a very tough match. Zverev has been shown as a fearless player who made his opponent surrender to him by his impressive game. This single verb "*rips*" makes Zverev to be perceived as a courageous player whose outstanding play forced his opponent to give up. In this way the readers have been made to realize that Zverev is a highly capable player who knocked out his opponent in a thrilling match. The example P9 has encoded all masculine attributes by employing the word '*beastly*' for Pakistani scrabble player Waseem Khatri '*who was in his beastly form*' at the matches being played. The word *beastly* implies power, dominance, control, aggression, mercilessness, and the attributes men are expected to nurture. He has been shown as an idol of strength and power that has defeated renowned players. In I1 and I2 tennis players Zverev and Djokovic have been appreciated for displaying strength and vigor in the matches despite being injured. Zverev's speed of hitting the ball is '*130 miles per hour*' according to the text and he does it with ease and making use of flowing power. Likewise Djokovic has been shown as super strong who retained his '*combative spirit*' despite being injured and has tolerated a lot of discomfort. His speed remains constant and his fighting spirit is manifested in his match. In I6 another tennis player Shapovalov has been applauded for being confident in his first match with top ranked player Nadal. Being confident, bold and aggressive is traditionally associated with men and male players are mostly represented in these typical ways. According to the text Shapovalov displayed no sign of nervousness and continued hitting the ball aggressively. In I8 another tennis player Rublev has been depicted as aggressive and '*moving in for the kill*' which intensifies the aggression and anger with which he has played the match and has defeated his opponent. In I7 the captain of football team of Montenegro that has defeated Romania has been appreciated for playing superbly and he has been called as '*talismatic*' that has stunned everybody and has sent '*a packed stadium into raptures*'. Moreover his style of scoring the goal and surprising the audience is '*inevitable*' according to the text. The text has specifically focused on his unique style of scoring goals and has presented him to be a player with unusual talent. The example I3 presents the football star Salah as matchless as his exit from the team due to an injury badly affected the performance of his team. His exit significantly altered the game's trajectory as '*his grace and guile*' is irreplaceable. He was a source of inspiration for his team and his departure '*drained the self-belief*' of his team mates and the opponents took control of the match as the person who '*inspires fear and seizes control*' has left. This is how the text has presented Salah as the star player without whom his team could not survive and has lost the match and his absence has triggered the confidence of opponents.

Male sport persons are seen as calm, emotionally resilient, and resolute. This is seen in example I4, where football player Messi has received praise for staying strong

throughout difficult situations. According to the text his reputation has grown as 'strong, silent type' who is a quiet individual, and is not prone to emotional ups and downs. He remains unaffected by pressure and expectations and never loses his composure and hardly ever appears upset. He is silent and powerful at the same time and never appears agitated. The example I9 also endorses the sporting style of tennis player del Potro who has been acclaimed for his persistence and strong serves and for his 'thunderous forehand' that kept making strong serves for more than three hours and defeated Thiem. In I5 Nadal has also been presented as epitome of perfection whose 'physique and technique' are ideal. The way he moves across the court and 'his topspin forehand kicks are matchless'. He has been compared with Thiem who is a versatile player but Nadal according to the example stands above all. The last instance I10 quoted in this section about Manchester city's football star Phil Foden provides minute details of his techniques. According to the text Phil Foden has a charmingly unconventional quality. His movements and the way he adjusts his posture, especially the way he executes basic passes, each is incredibly thoughtful and accurate. The way he extends his leg has been compared with another renowned player Langer who used to position his body in the same manner.

The examination of every example covered here demonstrates how the selected Pakistani and foreign newspapers reinforce the conventional view of masculinity by portraying male athletes as powerful, competitive, domineering, ideal, flawless, and skilled. Sportsmen are always appreciated for their achievements and even if they fail, their defeats are not highlighted. The study has found no differences in the way male athletes are treated in the selected newspapers, demonstrating that patriarchal ideology that deems men as role models and epitomes of perfection is prevalent in all countries regardless of cultural differences. The dominance of this ideology has huge implications for the public fame and prestige that male players enjoy everywhere; and the professional opportunities offered to them for their growth.

Femininity in Sports Discourse

Femininity entails the norms, behaviors and appearance associated with women across different cultures. Typical characteristics include sensitivity, submissiveness, dependence, gentleness etc. The specialized lexicon used for sportswomen in the selected newspapers reflects the common perception that sportswomen are less capable, reliant, obedient, physically weak, and sensitive. The examples are given below:

Table 2
Projection of Sportswomen in Sports News

Sr No	Pakistani Newspapers	Sr No	International Newspapers
P11	"Venus Williams wept at Wimbledon over the "devastation" of a fatal road accident for which she is facing legal action...Williams said in a news conference before breaking down and leaving to compose herself" The Nation, July 4, 2017.	I11	"After shaking Pliskova's hand, Lucic-Baroni stumbled in her team's direction again and then dropped to her knees, buried her head in her hands and began to cry" The New York Times, January 24, 2017.
P12	"Mattek-Sands broke down in tears as she relived the sickening injury" The Nation, July 9, 2017.	I12	"In her post-match news conference, Kerber looked as if she had shed quite a few tears after the defeat" The New York Times, March 30, 2017.
P13	"Lucic-Baroni, who screeched with joy and jumped up and down to celebrate the win" The Nation, January 24, 2017.	I13	"Fashion-conscious Williams' biggest struggle on the court may have been with her jewelry after her hoop earring fell off at one point and later got tangled with her necklace" Daily Mail, August 15, 2017

P14	"The Faisalabad-born Perveen completed her double, first by any athlete in the meet so far, when she clinched 400 metres gold under one minute" Dawn, April 8, 2017.	114	"She was more exuberant in the early years: quick to make a joke, whether it worked or not; quick to pull a prank; quick to pose for a selfie with her former fiancé, the golfer Rory McIlroy, and post it on social media" The New York Times' January 26, 2018.
P15	"Karachi-based Tushna, wife of leading driver Ronnie Patel, displayed her brilliant skills and control over the vehicle to lead the field" Dawn, February 18, 2018.	115	"Easy for Nadal and Djokovic, scare for Serena...The Spaniard blasted past German qualifier Yannick Hanfmann...Novak Djokovic also kicked off his tournament in style with an easy 6-4 6-2 6-2 win...It was not as straightforward for Serena Williams, however, as the veteran American dropped the first set against Russia's Vitalia Diatchenko before roaring to a 2-6 6-1 6-0 victory" Daily Mail, May 27, 2019.
P16	"Her body-hugging black cat suit" Dawn, May 30, 2018.	116	"Some of her outfits are a bit out there, with plenty of neon, and usually a bit tight" Daily Mail, June 22, 2017.
P17	"The tall and tattooed Czech star" The Nation, January 16, 2017.	117	"She were walking into a bash. She wore a black crop top that fell to her waist and tights that were shimmery and chic" The New York Times, January 18, 2019.
P18	"Serena made a winning return to Grand Slam tennis which was as memorable as her body-hugging black catsuit" Dawn, May 30, 2018.	118	"Maria Sharapova walked up to the dais as if she were walking into a bash. She wore a black crop top that fell to her waist and tights that were shimmery and chic" The New York Times, January 18, 2019.
P19	"Shabnam, who is married to former international player Bilal Yaseen and mother of two children" Dawn, January 12, 2018.	119	"At the Olympics, Motherhood Skis Away With a Gold and a Bronze...Motherhood presents a challenge for any woman trying to juggle work and family" The New Times, February 24, 2018
P20	"The mother of three from a poor family" Dawn, November 9, 2017.	120	"Victoria Azarenka continued her return to the tour after becoming a mother with an impressive 6-3 6-3 win over Elena Vesnina" Daily Mail, July 5, 2017.

It has been observed that sportswomen are depicted in traditional ways as being emotionally weak and excessively expressive that could not hold their feelings either of happiness or of sorrow. It is evident in the examples P11, P12, P13, P14, I11, I12, I13, and I14 where female athletes are depicted as crying over their defeats. They are shown as teary or sobbing on the field as in P11 Venus Williams sobbed over the "devastation" of a deadly car accident for which she is being sued. In example I11 tennis player Lucic Baroni has been depicted as crying after her loss to Pliskova. Example P12 also refers to female athlete crying due to pain of an injury which shows that women are very weak and cannot tolerate pain for long. In example I12 it has been suggested that Kerber might have been crying due to her defeat as her eyes were wet in her post match press conference. Similarly the example P13 also refers to Braoni screeching with joy at her impressive performance. She is depicted as jumping and screeching making an intense display of her feelings in the tennis court.

Female athletes are often depicted in comparison to male athletes where male players' performance is evaluated more positively than female athletes as in example I15 where tennis icon Serena Williams has been depicted as having to exert a lot to win a match while male players have done the same with relative ease. A more predominant pattern found in the gathered data is downplaying the performance of female players by focusing on their appearance. In this way the attention is directed toward their aesthetic beauty rather than athletic ability. The examples P16, I16, P17, I17, P18, I18 all illustrate the notion that female players' body and glamour is more important than their sports performance. It entails sexual objectification where body is seen with a sexual lens and not as an instrument

to engage in sports. The example P16 refers to black cat suit of Serena Williams that had been the center of discussion by media for many days. The dress was *body-hugging* which implies that intricacies of her body are clearly visible in this dress which is very tight. Likewise the example I16 also refers to Maria Shrapova's dresses which according to the text '*are bit tight*', hinting at the seductive appeal of her dress. Additionally, it has been noted that women athletes' bodies undergo fragmentation as media focuses on specific dimensions of their body and appearance. This fragmentation is found in examples P17 and I17 tennis player has been depicted as 'tall' and 'tattooed' and not as a skillful athlete. Similarly in example I17 gives minute details of the costume worn by tennis player as shimmery, stylish, and hanging down her neck. These examples highlight the feminine beauty of sportswomen by drawing attention to their attire which gives the impression as if they are fashion icons and models and not distinct sportswomen.

The media tries to erase the athletic identity of sportswomen by depicting them in domestic setting as emphasizing their traditional roles of mothers and wives. The practice of introducing renowned sportswomen primarily as mothers or wives diminishes their athletic stature and reduces them to ordinary women doing everyday duties. It is manifested in examples P15, P19, I19, P20, and I20 where table tennis player Shabnum has been introduced as a wife and a mother first, and then mention is made to her sports achievement in P19. Similarly, auto racer Tushna has also been depicted as a wife of a famous auto racer in P15 which throws her achievement in the background and highlights her relationship with a famous auto racer. Likewise, gold and bronze medal winning by female skiers has been revealed by presenting them primarily as mothers and the focus is laid upon the challenges of motherhood for female athletes. A renowned Indian boxer Mary Kom is introduced as a mother of two and also that she comes from a lower social class. This projection of hers serves to reduce her athletic stature and identity and bring her private life to the forefront.

Conclusion

From all of the examples examined in this study, it is clear that the reporters have used particular language items to present the male athletes as all round and perfect athletes, emphasizing their physical prowess and resilience. The idea of masculinity is inextricably tied to violence and aggression, and the data examined here clearly demonstrates the gender-specific behaviors and characteristics expected of men. The examination of each example in this study demonstrates how selectively and biasedly sports stars are portrayed in the newspapers analyzed for this study. While covering men's sports, emphasis is laid upon the sportsmanship and masculine qualities that project them as competitive, rough, destructive, strong, dominant, determined and passionate. On the contrary, sportswomen are shown in traditional light as emphasis is laid upon their looks, appearance, domestic duties, and nurturing roles and on other conventional feminine attributes. Stereotypes negatively impact gender equality and the public perception of women, particularly affecting sportswomen who have surmounted numerous challenges to achieve professional status. It is noteworthy that not just Pakistani media but also advanced nations are depicting sportswomen in a similar manner. The media is regarded as the most powerful and influential medium in this context, as it possesses the ability to persuade and shape public opinion. It is therefore essential to employ the media for enhancing the position of sportswomen and elucidating their contribution to sports world. Female athletes should not be subjected to stereotypically feminine ideals by society. They serve a special purpose as athletes, and society shouldn't treat them the same way as other women are treated.

Recommendations

The present work has analyzed only the news items gathered during a specific time period, and also from limited newspapers, therefore further studied could be conducted by expanding the scope of data to study the subject more comprehensively. Furthermore, apart from linguistic data, other data containing images of sportspersons in the newspapers can be analyzed to validate or challenge the claims made in this work. In addition to gender dynamics involved in sports discourse, other variables such as race, ethnicity and transgender projection in media can be examined to decipher the journalistic practices.

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