

Gender Unevenness in the Sports Pages of Newspapers: A Case Study Based on Indian Womens Cricket Team

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Abstract

Sport is something which includes physical activity through casual or trained participation which intent to improve physical ability and skills while providing enjoyment to participant and spectator. There is an Inflation in the number of women's participation than previous decades. But gender discrimination still exists with other issues such as politics and racism in sports. Men sports have received far more coverage when compared to women's sports in various kinds of media. However, there is inadequate studies on the difference of media coverage between men's and women's sports in print media. Thus, the purpose of this study is to scrutinize the media coverage of women's sport especially cricket in sports pages of 2 national daily and 1 regional daily newspaper's namely The Hindu, The New Indian Express and Mathrubhumi. Agenda setting theory is incorporated with the study. The methodology used for the study was quantitative content analysis followed by a qualitative analysis for the interpretation of gender imbalance happening in newspaper

Key Words: Gender, sports, newspapers, women's, cricket, unevenness, discrimination, racism, media.

1. Introduction

Sports always play an important role in mental and physical growth. But, sports are usually meant as an instrument of entertainment for men's. Parents expect their girls to be passive and dependent and their boys to be active. They believe that sports are meant for men to develop characters associated with masculinity. As a result, girls are naturally not encouraged to participate in sports. This in turn effect their opportunities to participate. Modern scientific findings claim that sports have the ability to help minds to cope with future conflicts in surprising circumstances and even play a crucial role in developing one's social skill.

The statistic of women in sport organizations including college athletes, professional sport and international sport is incomparably less than their male counterpart. Although the coverage of female sports has staggeringly elevated over the past decades, the mainstream still lies on the coverage of men's sports. People are hound with gender stereotype from birth itself. The expectation of society about femininity is "lady like" and not of lifting weights, sweating, grunting, aggressive and participating in sports and physical activities. If women's try to cross this boundary erected by society, their gender identity, sexual orientation, values and social roles are often questioned. Pessimistic stigmas are often tied to athletic women and are consequently used as a mechanism to control and limit women's participation in sports.

After the Civil War in late 1800's, women's' were finally given an opportunity to compete in organized sports. Games such as Golf, Archery and Croquet gained much acceptance among women's because they did not involve any physical constrain/activity. Towards the end of 16 century, the invention of bicycle revolutionized women and their participation in physical activities. With the arrival of these revolutionary changes traditional gender stereotype of women's started to revamp. After World War II women's competitive sports began to spring. In 1960's, the women's movement shaped new attitudes and demanded equal opportunity, funding and facility for women's in sports. This in turn helped to break off the stereotype of male oriented sports and gave girls and women the courage and revere to participate in wide range of sports and physical activities.

2. Gender and Sports

It's believed that gender is all about the socially existing unequal constraints such as feminity and masculinity. This distinction in many cases restricts women from being a part of many sports activities that needed more physical labour. Even though, women's too are physically capable to overcome all the obstacles in front of them to fly high, society is not yet ready to accept the fact that every family needs a sports woman. The most significant and controversial issue in women sport is the pay gap. Irrespective of their fields, women athletes

are paid much lesser than their male counter parts. But the effort taken by participants whether it's a male or a female to survive in this field is equal. The women's right and feminist movements of the century played an active role in eliminating the disparities that existed in this field. The arrival of 20th century marked female participation and popularity in sports due to the changes in modern society that aim at gender consistency. Even though women participation added on when compared to last decades, a large disparity still exists.

3. Literature Review

There have been a plenty of studies done in India and abroad on gender unbalance in the sports pages of our newspapers and all other media. The researchers came up with different perspectives on the changing media scenario.

The major features of newspaper like proximity and honesty are achieved many times better in the new media (Meera & Sreena, 2017).

According to Birrell and Cole gender is considered to be a challenging barrier that is restricting girls to participate since it is considered only to be a male arena. Males are supposed to engage in sports when compared to women participants. This in turn is affecting the options available to a girl. It's doubtful whether sports can cross all these barriers in an effective way (Birrell & et. Al,1994).Sports act as a ground which teaches what it means to be a man because throughout these years' sports is always identified with masculinity and men. On the other hand, women's are considered as mere trespassers on the male territory or arena and their access to this world is restricted or blocked entirely. Sports is traditionally considered to be a male preserve and there lies an inherent belief in wider population that lesbians are "manly" in nature, whereas on women's the pressure is identified with "heterosexy" (Griffin,1988)).

Nussbaum states that this situation of women in sports is creating a dilemma for feminists. They believed that gender is a social constrain that is restricting people's choice and play a crucial role in shaping their preferences (Nassbuam,1995). Sports is always identified with masculinity. Girls and femininity is always stands contrast to this masculine domain. This in turn result in legacy of bias against female athletes. But the traditional stereotype of femininity is evolving and breaking off. There is a long way that women's need to go and it's their discretion to decide between sports and femininity (Wilde,2016).

The statistical report about women in sports from Kerala claims to hold high status when compared to their counterparts in other states of India. This makes it very clear that the condition of women is much better in Kerala when compared to other parts of the country. The participation status of women's in Kerala is very much higher when compared all other states of the country. Even

though many of our lady lions win laurels in sports, they are yet the victims of gender discrimination practices that still exist in Kerala. This portrays the ambivalent status of sporting women's in Kerala (Ashitha,2012).

Ajibua, Oladitan, Oyerinde, and Bewaji jointly concluded that the trend on unbalanced reporting about female athletes should be discouraged. In rural parts of Africa, it's very evident that children's wearing T shirts with their favorite sports star. These star's act as a role model for our younger generation. The increased visibility of male athletes can result in more endorsement of money from sponsors (Ajibua & et. Al,2013).Gender discrimination practices still exist in favor of male athletes in the coverage of sports news and pictures in the Bengali and English daily newspapers published in West Bengal (Sil &et. Al, 2015).The conclusion was that there existed a patchy coverage of women sports in the local medias of UK. The coverage of women football is negligible when compared to that of their counter parts in the local dailies. The percentage of local coverage is much lower when compared to that of national media (Adams & et. Al,2013).

Andrea Gál Gáldi stated and concluded many things such as the underrepresentation of sportswomen in sports media seems to be true. The older newspaper readers have more negative opinion about the representation of sportswomen in sports media when compared to men proved to be true (Gáldi,2007). The reflexivity of women in sports depends mainly on power relations that exist around them and also on inter individual interactions, at the same time on the positions(outlook/attitude) and dispositions (mind set) of theses sports women (Mennesson,2012).

Suzanne Franks and Deirdre O'Neill found that the number of female sports journalists in UK very less. From all the findings they concluded that its mere 2% of sports stories are written by women journalist. There is no significant improvement in this situation of women journalists (Franks &et. Al,2014).Centre for Gender Equality in Iceland concludes from SMS comparative study that there exists a clear distinction between how men and women in sports are portrayed through media. The reported news on women in sports are fewer when compared to that of men in sports. Leading men's in sports are idolized in such manner that reduces the visibility of women in sports. Even they are portrayed as a social celebrity (Centre for gender equality in Iceland,2006).

The number of photographs of female athletes is much less when compared to that of male athletes. When comparing the news, reported women sports news are less to that of male sports news (Jang,2017). Edward M. Kianstates that both male and female reporters have gender related experience prior to entering professional sports writing. There is no virtual evidence to support the notion behind this attitudinal difference towards women sports between female and male sports writers (Kian, 2017) Cynthia M Frisby states that usually men's are praised for their achievements in the field of sports whereas women's are

praised mainly on their physical attractiveness. Women's are objectified in a way based on their color and not on their ability and achievements (Len – Rios & et. Al,2016)

All these studies found that many still believes that sports is meant to be only for men and women's are not to be a part of this field. Even these researchers found that media coverage is considerably less and different for female athletes and women's 'sports than to male athletes and men's sports. Even few researchers examined the media content produced by considering the attitude of editors and reporters towards gender. The general conclusion of the majority of these research papers was that there is a large imbalance in the coverage of male and female sports both in terms of the amount of space allocated for those news and to the way they are being portrayed.

There has been no study yet on the gender imbalance in sports page with special reference to cricket. This study aimed as analyzing why Indian Women's Cricket is not getting much attention when compared to that of Indian Men's Cricket team, even though cricket requires equal dedication whether it's a male or a female player. Newspapers are negligent in reporting follow up's of Indian Women's Cricket team even after into Semifinals of World Cup that happened in 2017.

In a study by Harikrishnan, Sreena and Babu (2017) it is found that the stereotype depiction of femininity is an echo of the social status of feminine self.

4. Scope and Significance of the Study

Newspapers are an important part of the communication system. Women sports coverage in media has intrinsic significance that can positively stand for human right fulfilment. Limited visibility of women in sport/cricket in the regional and national newspaper reduces the possibilities of more women participating in sports and also result in the less number of role models for our younger generation to look at. To use media to present women in non-traditional positions to promote awareness and to change the attitude that the society inherit as women's are not meant to be in the field of sports/cricket. This study is trying to analyze the coverage of Indian Women's cricket when compared to that of Indian Men's cricket team.

5. Objectives

The main objectives of this study includes

- To study, the exclusion of women sports in the newspaper sports page, especially cricket.
- To understand the existence of violation of human rights in the coverage of women sports.

- To find whether the language used in reporting promote women's participation in sports.

6. Research Question

- Why print media is exempting news's of Indian women's cricket teams when compared to that of Indian men's cricket team?
- Why women's achievements in sports are not highlighted?
- Does the language used by those reporters highlight the achievements of women's in sports?

7. Hypotheses

The main hypotheses put forward under this study includes: -

- Less coverage is given to women sports.
- The language used in reporting is not highlighting the hard work behind women's in cricket.
- The fashion and glamour of women sport personalities get more importance than their talents and achievements in this field.

8. Methodology

Theoretical Framework

This study incorporates Agenda setting theory. The theory states that media plays an important role in influencing its audience to decide in which subject they are interested (Bharti.S,2004). It enacts a role in which they enforce the readers to think on what and not. These media priorities issues and this in turn affect the reader to priorities an issue which the media already emphasized. All these newspapers are based on an agenda that they are reporting more news's on Indian men's cricket team and gives more focus on glamour of women athlete's. Thus, in general their agenda is mainly focusing on giving more attention to men sports rather than women sports achievements. Thus, they are setting an agenda which affect the reader in many ways

Research Design

Two national daily's namely The Hindu, The New Indian Express and one regional daily namely Mathrubhumi were examined for a period of 3 months to determine how much coverage was sworn to women's sports in each of these newspapers and in aggregate and how that coverage is compared to that of men's sports. The Hindu and The New Indian Express were selected for the analysis since they are two national dailies with high number of circulation in the country. One regional newspaper namely Mathrubhumi, is selected for the study on the basis of the same reason that it too is high in the number of circulation and readership. The sample size chosen for the study from each newspaper for three months was 90. When in aggregate for 3 newspapers for 3 months, the sample size is 270 newspapers.

The key measurement for analyzing these newspapers were:

- The number of stories
- The page placement of stories
- The number of photographs
- The number of stories accompanied by photographs

The stories and photographs were divided into two categories for the purpose of comparison, Indian men’s cricket team news& Indian women’s cricket team news only. Then, these categories are in turn divided into news’s, news’s with photograph of both men and women’s Indian cricket team.

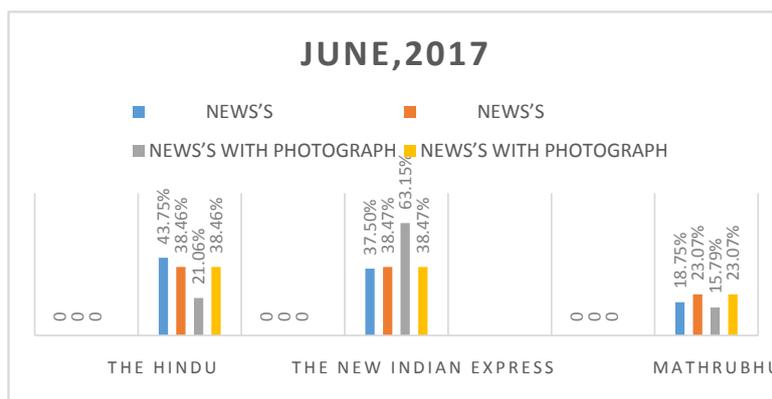
The Data collection is based on a quantitative method in which each newspaper of three months was highly scrutinized and analyzed. Then, the data was recorded. Thus, the methodology used for the study was quantitative content analysis followed by a qualitative interpretation of gender imbalance happening in newspaper.

9. Findings

After analyzing 3 months’ newspaper of The Hindu, The Indian Express and Mathrubhumi it is very evident that the number of news reports on women’s Indian cricket team even during Women’s World Cup of 2017 is much less than the number of news that were reported on men’s Indian cricket team.

During the time of Women’s World Cup 2017, every newspaper’s gave follow ups on Indian Men’s Cricket team and their activities. Even, in the month in which Women’s World Cup happened (July, 2017), the number of news reported about men’s cricket team activities was 65 in all the three newspapers took for study(aggregate). But the number of Indian women’s cricket team was only 55, which is comparatively less than the number of news’s on Indian Men’s cricket team.

Comparing number of news’s of men and women to number of news with photograph of both in the month of June,2017

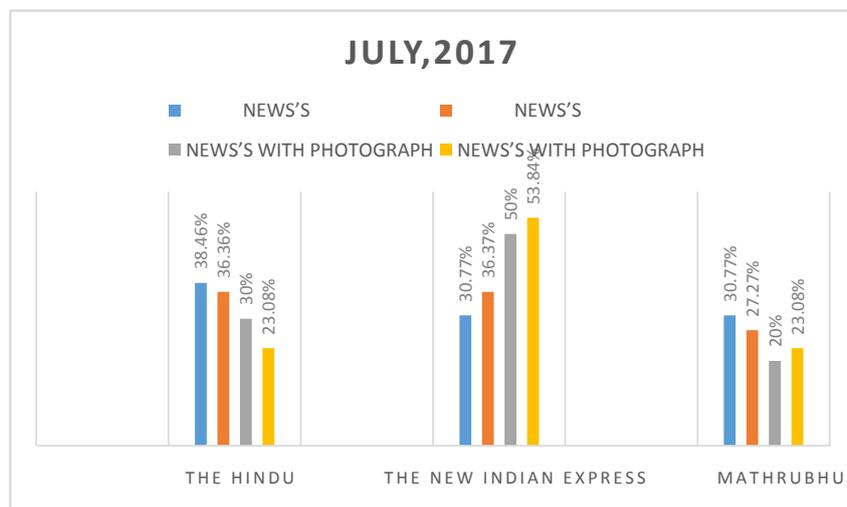


Graph 1

Graph 1 shows comparison between numbers of news's and number of news's with photograph of Indian men's cricket team and Indian women's cricket team of the month June, 2017. It's very evident that since being the month immediately before the World cup number of news's about women's cricket team is far less when compared to that of men's cricket news's. In the month of June, 2017 Hindu published around 43% of men's news's while they published only 38% of women crickets' news'. In The New Indian Express there is a slight change of one percentage. They published around 38% of women cricket team's news's while only 37% of men's cricket news's. Even with Mathrubhumi, things are far better in the month of June, 2017. They reported 23% of news's on women's cricket team while only 18% of men's cricket news's in the month of June.

While looking into the percentage of news's accompanied by one or more photographs of the athlete's Hindu published around 38% of Indian women's cricket teams news's accompanied by photographs, while they only gave 21% of men's cricket news's in the month of June, 2017. In The New Indian Express, they gave 63% of photographs accompanied by news's about men's cricket team, while only 38% of women's cricket teams news's which is only the half of men's news in the month of June,2017 . In the month of June,2017 Mathrubhumi reported 23% of women's cricket news's while only 15% of men's cricket news's.

Comparing number of news's of men and women to number of news with photograph of both in the month of July,2017



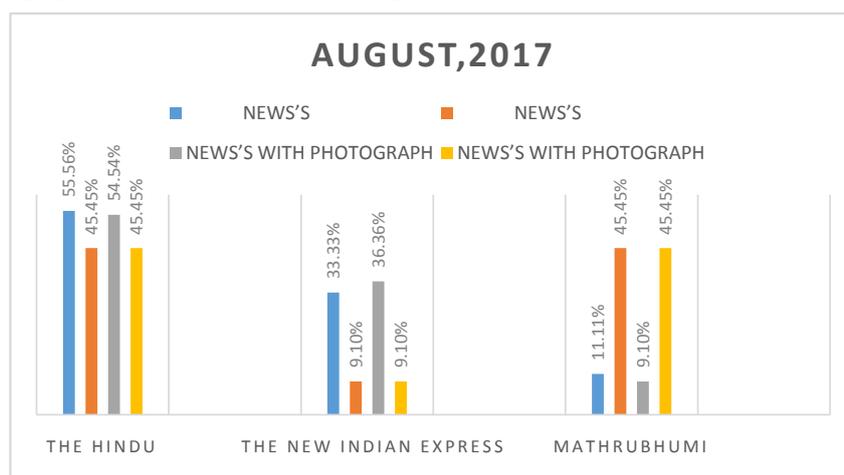
Graph 2

Graph 2 visualizes the number of news's and news's accompanied by photographs of both Indian men and women's cricket team in the month of July, 2017. It was the month of Women's World Cup for which these ladies in blue

prepared themselves for four long years. The Hindu published 38% of news's on men's cricket team while only 36% of women's cricket teams news's. However, things was different with the case of The New Indian Express. They reported 36% of women's cricket news's while only 30% of men's cricket news's. While Mathrubhumi published 30% of men's cricket news's and 27% of women's cricket news's in the month of Women's World Cup.

While looking into the percentage of photographs that accompanied news's of both Indian men's and women's cricket team. The Hindu gave 30% of news's accompanied with photographs of Indian Men's cricket team and only 23% of women's cricket team news's. In The New Indian Express, 53% were women's news's accompanied by photographs whereas only 50% of news's of men's cricket team. While Mathrubhumi too showed slight change in which 23% of news's of women's cricket team was accompanied by photograph and only 20% of men's news's in July,2017.

Comparing number of news's of men and women to number of news with photograph of both in the month of August,2017



Graph 3

Graph 3 deals with August, 2017 the month immediately after Women's World Cup its very evident how things changed so drastically. Negligible number news's on Indian Women's cricket team is very striking. In The Hindu, they reported 55% men's cricket team news, while only 45% of women's cricket news's. However, the New Indian Express showed unbelievable change by reporting 33% of women's cricket news's and only 9% of men's cricket news's. Mathrubhumi too gave an importance of Women's cricket team by reporting 45 of news's on them and only 11% was dedicated to men's cricket team news's.

The percentage of news's accompanied by photographs Mathrubhumi did well. They reported 45% of news's accompanied by photographs about women's

cricket team while only 9% of men's cricket news's. The Hindu on the other hand, published 54% of men's cricket news's while only 45% on women's cricket team. While The New Indian Express, gave only 9% of news's accompanied by photographs on women's cricket team and gave 36% of news's on men's cricket.

It's very well evident that even in the month of WWC, the percentage of news's to that accompanied by photographs are comparatively less than that of Indian Men's Cricket team. This situation needs to change and equal importance must be given to both the team despite being considering the fact that number of internationals women's play are less. The level of preparation dedication is equal for both. So, equal number of news's must be there and follow ups must be included.

While looking into the language used, page placement and size of column allocated to news's on women cricket team is less than one third of that of men's. In the month of June, 2017, The Hindu published a news several news. The news titled as "India takes on Pakistan, Mithali calls for improved fielding performance" published in 2, July, 2017 was focusing on the improvements the captain has suggested for a better game. Rather than pointing out the merits possessed by them despite being only into few international games. The major focus rest on limitations and lack of knowledge that they are having about playing a good game before their audience. The news was placed in the right top corner and they published three column news with a photograph of Mithali Raj.

Then, a news titled as "South African women hammer India" published on 9, July, 2017 describes well on how the game with South Africa was played and how they collapsed to 56 for six. They gave 2 column news and the news was placed in the left-middle side of the sports page with a photograph of Punam Raut. They didn't describe any particular blue lady who all scored well in the game. Rather stated that it was a good play by them.

However, in the successive days news titled as "Mithali's celebration take a backseat" published on 14, July, 2017 describes that individual performance doesn't count if the team doesn't do well. This five columned news was placed in the left middle of the page with an image of Mithali Raj. Then, "Brand Mithali hitting new highs" published on 12, July, 2017 described about the popularity heights that Mithali reached. The news is entirely about Mithali's popularity after this World Cup. The two columned new was placed in the right top corner of the page with an image of Mithali. Later day's news titled as "Harmanpreet goes berserk" described about how preet played to maintain the image of the team. The four columned news was placed in the left -middle side of the sports page of The Hindu. Images 1, 2 and 3 are few news clips from The Hindu newspaper which appeared during the time of World Cup in 2017.

In The New Indian Express, the stories are not too different. They too reported various news regarding Indian Womens cricket team either highlighting the way they played the game or about the negatives that they need to rectify. In the news titled as “Mithali cautiously optimistic of India’s chances” published on 22, June,2017 describes how they are expecting the World cup. They started the game with a freshness and hoped to play some good games. The five columned news was placed in the left- middle of the page with an image of Mithali Raj. “Ekta “high-five” demolishes pak” published on 3,July,2017 described how Ekta Bisht played that resulted in the success of that day’s game. They gave just importance to score board rather than the efforts behind creating such a score board for our nation. This one columned news was placed in the right –middle side of the page with an image of Ekta Bisht.

In successive days news, titled as “Kaur’s tale: from bowler to six machine” published on 22, July,2017 reported about how a bowler transformed to six machine. The five columned news was placed on the middle of the page with an image of Harmanpreet. “Panic button switched off India’s world cup dream” published on 24, July,2017 described how they created fans and how entertaining was the season created by these blue ladies. The three columned news was placed in the left- top side of the page with an image. Then, “Women’s ODI was much more entertaining than men’s version” described about how entertaining was the ladies in blue rather than highlighting the hard work behind such a game. The seven columned news was placed in the middle-top of the page with an image of Mithali Raj.

“Cup in sight, India seek to Lord over England” published on 23,July,2017 mainly focused on describing the highlights of semifinal and how well blue ladies played in ground. The four columned news was placed right top of the page. “Semi solid: Ex-players back stronger India to go all the way” published on 17,July,2017 mainly dwelt on history of the plays they undergone and the main differences they have acquired right now. The three columned news with an image of Mithali was placed right down corner of the page. Images 4,5 and 6 are few news clips from The New Indian Express newspaper which appeared during the time of World Cup in 2017.

While considering the reports in regional daily newspapers, comparatively they publish less number of news about women’s sports than national daily newspapers. In Mathrubhumi, the news titled as “Pakistan was beaten down by ladies” published in 3,July,2017 mainly focused on how Pakistan played the game. The three columned news was placed on the right top of the page with a photograph of Ekta. Then, “ Again Women’s” published in 6 July,2017 dwelt on the score board of the ladies in blue rather than focusing on the hard work behind their success. The two columned news is placed on the right down of the page with an image of Poonam.

“India will play against Australia” published in 12 July,2017 discussed about the semifinal game which is fast approaching. The two columned news was

placed in the middle of the page with a photograph of Mithali Raj. "India in Semifinal" published in 16 July, 2017 focused on how they won the game with New Zealand. The two columned news was just placed in the right middle of the page with an image of Mithali Raj. "India aims at final" published in 20 July, 2017 dwelt mainly on the history of their past games. The three columned news was placed just in the left top of the page with a photograph of Mithali Raj. Images 7, 8 and 9 are few news clips from Mathrubhumi newspaper which appeared during the time of World Cup in 2017.

Whether it's national or regional daily, the news mainly dwelt on score boards rather than highlighting the hard works despite being a women athletes these ladies in blue undergo. These news either focus on the way they succeeded beating their opponent or how they turned into machines. These newspapers are not even giving follow up's about what these ladies are doing while it's off season. But, these newspapers will peep into the life happenings of those men in blue. No news's will be there about these women cricketers after a season is over.

In 2012, Louise North conducted a study to analyze a pre-Olympic month of media coverage on sports mainly women sport and general sport. There exist few sports which were played by women's at elite level. Even in these cases too sports dominated by men are getting more attention.

On the other hand, study done by Donna Louise McGuigan to analyze gender disparities in British football and British athletics found that football is considered to be men sport. He also stated that problematic gender activities are still existing in the fields of football and athletics.

Another factor that should be highlighted about women sport is that in major news's the glamour part of women's in sports are highlighted rather than promoting the capabilities and achievements of these ladies. It's the case with those women in general in all the fields of sports. In the news's of sports such as tennis, badminton and all, photographs which objectify women's glamour is used. Rather than portraying their records. Men news gain more attention than women even though both contribute the same factors such as hard work, pain and time.

This condition of negligence towards women sports personalities must change and equal news's must be reported from both. By, neglecting women sports achievements mainly in cricket, these newspapers are violating human rights fulfillment in which women's too needed equal space. By doing so these newspapers are reducing the number of role models to look upon by our future girls who are capable to uplift the pride of our nation through winning all the games they are into.

10. Conclusion

The results and data analysis concludes that despite being popular English national daily's The Hindu and The New Indian Express gives more importance and space to highlight the activities and achievements of Indian Men's Cricket team when compared to that of Indian Women's cricket team. The negligence observed in reporting Indian Women's cricket team is a major drawback as it shows there exists a violation of human rights in the coverage of women sports mainly cricket. These women's are too working hard in order to succeed like how men's do. However, they are used in sports ads just as a glamorous object rather than highlighting their talents and achievements. This in turn is degrading the status of women athletes in our country.

The study conducted by Georgia State University in 2007 found that there exist four frames that resulted in not highlighting the talent and athleticism of athlete's. These frames are mental weakness, male reference, motherhood, sisterhood and celebrity. These factors does not allow the readers to learn more about these women athletes and this negligence doesn't allow them to be viewed as a legitimate athlete.

India comprises around 65.2crore women's in population. However, the number of women athletes from our country is much less when compared to their counterparts. This is mainly due to various factors such as improper awareness, lack of knowledge along with less number of women sports reports in our newspapers'. Every woman in our country is not equipped with latest technologies even though our government claims our country as "digital India". Thus, the only possible mediums for them to depend is traditional media such as newspaper and radio, to make them aware that our country too has and needs role models in sports field.

Thus, it is very essential to overhaul the reports of women sports achievements. Hence, it is very urgent to revise the content of our newspapers with regard to women's sports and a fair proportion of news space should be allotted to our ladies in blue. Since, they too are trying to create success history for our country.

11. Limitations

- The study followed only quantitative analysis and can only give a limited image on the coverage of women's sports news's.
- The study was limited to two National daily newspapers' namely The Hindu and The New Indian Express published from Kochi, and the other is one regional daily namely Mathrubhumi. Only the edition of Kochi of these three newspapers was considered for the study.
- Daily supplements, Sunday supplements and special supplements were excluded from the study. Also, the main edition pages which were fully devoted to business, entertainment, and regional were also excluded

from the study. Editorial pages too were excluded for the purpose of the study.

- General news's of women sports were excluded. Only those which were emphasizing of Indian Women's cricket team was given attention.
- Cartoon stripes, puzzles, quizzes were excluded from the content analysis.

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