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## **GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SPORTS COMMENTARY AND THEIR IMPACT ON PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF ATHLETES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This systematic review explores gender differences in sports commentary and their influence on public perceptions. Sports commentary is crucial in shaping audience perceptions of athletes, teams, and events. However, gender biases in commentary can affect stereotypes and reinforce inequality. This review aims to identify patterns of gender bias in sports commentary, assess its impact on female athletes' careers and public perception, and explore how commentary influences public opinions by reinforcing stereotypes and societal norms. A comprehensive search strategy was employed to identify relevant studies from databases such as PubMed Central, Cochrane Library, and Google Scholar. Studies with diverse research designs (quantitative or qualitative) that focused on gender differences in sports commentary and their impact on public perceptions were included. The review findings suggest that gender biases are prevalent in sports commentary, with male commentators often receiving more recognition for their expertise. In contrast, female commentators face scrutiny regarding their knowledge and credibility. The language commentators reshape can reinforce gender norms, with male athletes praised for strength and aggression while female athletes are associated with grace and elegance. Biased commentary can undermine female athletes' achievements, affect their career opportunities, and discourage young girls from pursuing sports. The review highlights the need for informed rules and standards that promote balanced and respectful sports commentary in media and

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sports organizations. Addressing gender bias in sports commentary is crucial for promoting gender equality and creating a more inclusive environment for all athletes.

**Keywords: Gender differences, Sports Commentary, Public perceptions, Gender bias, Gender stereotypes, Gender equality**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Sports commentary holds a vital position in shaping public perceptions of various sports and athletes. It offers analysis and often a narrative that can affect how viewers perceive the game and its players. Nonetheless, the field of sports commentary has traditionally been male-dominated, reflecting broader societal gender biases. This essay investigates the gender disparities in sports commentary and their repercussions on public perceptions. It will explore historical context, analyze contemporary trends, and examine the consequences of these differences on audiences and athletes. The world of sports has long been viewed as male-dominated, but women's sports have gained increased visibility and recognition, challenging conventional gender norms and biases. Nevertheless, one area where these biases persist is in sports commentary, which plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and narratives surrounding athletes and their performances. This review aims to investigate the prevalence of gender disparities in sports commentary and how it influences public perceptions of male and female athletes. Analyzing various studies and research findings aims to shed light on

the ways in which commentators' language and framing can reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes, ultimately impacting how audiences perceive and value athletes based on their gender.

## **Historical Context**

- **Early Beginnings**

Sports commentary can be traced back to the early 20th century when radio emerged as a prevalent medium for broadcasting live sports events. At that time, sports were largely viewed as a male-dominated sphere in terms of participation and spectatorship. As a result, sports commentary was an exclusively male domain, perpetuating conventional gender roles and stereotypes. Female voices were virtually non-existent, not only because of societal norms but also due to the dearth of opportunities for women in sports journalism.

- **The Television Era**

The introduction of television in the mid-20th century significantly impacted sports by bringing them into the homes of millions, greatly expanding the influence of sports commentary. Despite technological advancements, gender dynamics remained largely unchanged, with male commentators continuing to dominate the airwaves. Their

commentary frequently reflected a male-centric perspective on sports, thereby reinforcing gender stereotypes. In the 1970s and 1980s, women began to make headway into the field of sports journalism, but their representation was limited, and they often faced resistance.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The findings from a systematic review of gender disparities in sports commentary have significant implications for shaping public perceptions. This systematic review underscores the pivotal role that sports commentary and gender differences play in shaping public perceptions of sports. Despite progress towards equality, gender disparities persist in the world of sports. The media's persistent focus on patriarchal values that have traditionally been linked to sports has contributed to the perpetuation of these disparities.

### **OBJECTIVE AND REVIEW QUESTION**

The review aims to derive the gender differences in sports commentary and its influence on public perceptions.

1. To identify the Gender Bias in Sports Commentary
2. Assess whether gender-biased sports commentary can harm female athletes' careers, self-esteem, and public perception.
3. To find informed rules and standards that promote balanced and courteous

sports criticism in both the media and sports organizations.

### **REVIEW QUESTION**

How does the sports commentary affect the public's perception of gender differences?

### **Methodology**

This review used a thorough search technique to find papers that met the inclusion criteria. Keywords related to gender differences in sports commentary and public perceptions were searched in databases such as PubMed Central, Cochrane Library, and Google Scholar.

Inclusion criteria were set to include studies that focused specifically on gender differences in sports commentary and their impact on public perceptions. Studies with diverse research designs (quantitative or qualitative) were considered for inclusion to provide a holistic understanding of the topic.

### **STUDY SELECTION**

Based on the requirements and criteria for the systematic review, 14 journal articles have been chosen for inclusion in the review. The articles' specifications for containing the full text have been followed.

### **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

The quality of the selected articles ensures that they continue to meet the journal's eligibility requirements. Randomized controlled trials, cohort studies, and meta-analyses are prioritized while selecting the research. Eligibility requirements are connected to the article's results on how the

public views sports commentators based on gender.

### INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Journal articles are evaluated for inclusion based on factors such as their publication year, language, content, and context. From 2019 to 2023, articles published during these years are prioritized for consideration. One of the key factors in selecting articles for inclusion in the journals is the quality of the English language. The inclusion criteria are associated with the publication types of peer-reviewed journals. Sports commentary has a significant influence on the public's

perception of athletes, teams, and events. Therefore, a systematic review of gender differences in sports commentary and its impact on public perceptions is essential to address this issue. Inclusion in this review was contingent upon meeting the predetermined criteria. The criteria for journal articles included in the review were that gender-biased sports commentary influences how people think about sports and promotes gender equality. Articles published prior to 2019 are excluded based on predetermined criteria. Additionally, articles that are not accessible in full are not included in the review.

Table 1: Keywords related to the search strategy

	PubMed Central	Cochrane library	Google Scholar
Keywords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender differences in sports commentary</li> <li>Sports commentary influence</li> <li>Gender Differences and its influence on public perceptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>public perceptions of sports commentary</li> <li>sports commentary influences public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender differences in sports commentary</li> <li>Sports commentary influence</li> </ul>

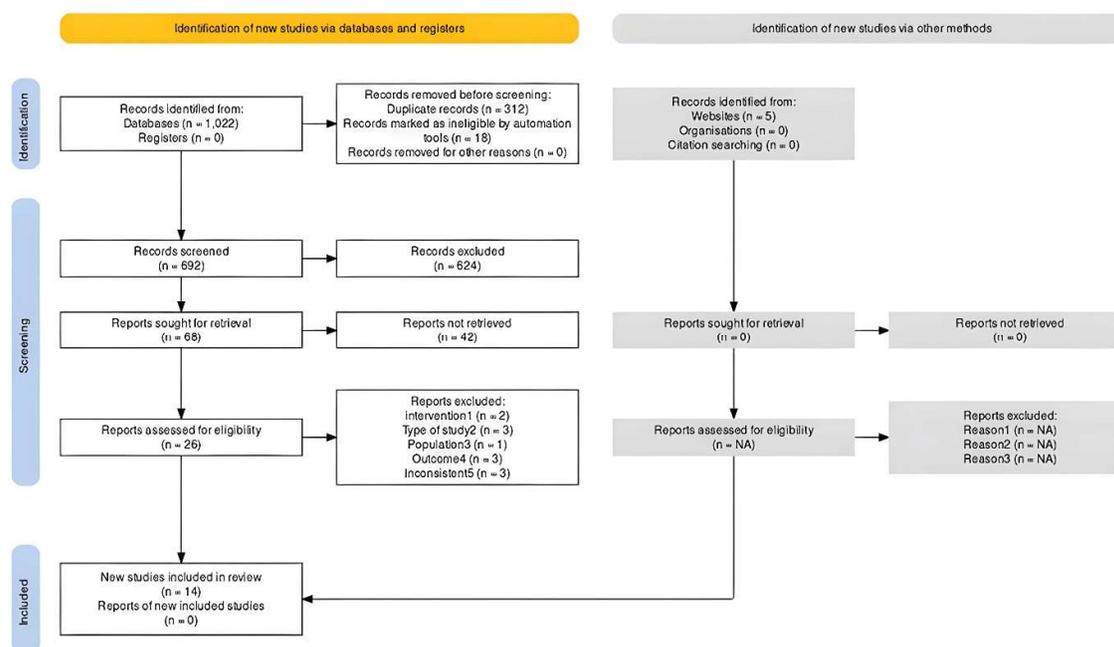


Figure 1: PRISMA 2020 flowchart [1]

## QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The four studies included in the systematic review provided insights into various aspects of gender differences in sports commentary and public perceptions [2-5]. The sample sizes varied from small-scale surveys to large-scale assessments involving multiple countries.

The key findings from these studies highlight several significant dimensions related to gender differences in sports commentary. For instance, Carvalho *et al.* (2021) explored entrepreneurial perceptions among students regarding business professional careers in Latvia but did not directly address sports commentary or public perceptions [2]. Sadri *et al.* (2021) investigated the NFL commentary of two gender-distinct announcer teams and found substantial discrepancies in-game calls that perpetuate gender norms. Joe Buck and Troy Aikman had more comments and linked success to athleticism, while Andrea Kremer and Hannah Storm had fewer comments but less emphasis on athleticism. The findings indicate that male sportscasters may perpetuate macho attitudes and gender norms in the male-dominated sector [6].

Chase (2019) investigates the issue of gender and World Cup commentary and finds that football is commonly perceived as a male-dominated sport, with a limited focus on women's history and statistics. The study highlights the need for social transformation

to achieve gender equality in sports coverage. Addressing disparities in media representation can help support female athletes [7].

The study employs football as a case study to examine racial bias in sports commentary. The results confirm the investigation of commentator sentiment and name patterns. Baseline NLP models have limitations in overcoming statistical and linguistic confounds present in the dataset. Future research goals include studying temporal bias and improving mention identification [8].

This essay assesses five hypotheses related to gender bias in sports commentary. The findings are mixed, but the study suggests that the commentator's gender background may influence Sports Commentary.

The study suggests that sports media often perpetuates a male-dominated atmosphere that misrepresents athletic practice and favors "gender-appropriate" sports, with the exception of football, where women's participation has increased. The media underrepresents Spanish women who compete on a global scale and remains hidden in online sports news [9]. The research established that brief streamer commentary does not impact an individual's affective and cognitive state aggression. Long-term environmental factors and personal traits were not found to moderate this effect. State aggression displayed a

positive correlation with trait aggression, affective empathy, and exposure to violence, while compassion exhibited a negative correlation [10].

A cross-cultural study on sports commentary indicated that sports emotions are commonly perceived as intense feelings such as anger or joy. Valence, arousal, and intensity scores were used to determine whether neutral emotions or strong emotions were experienced [11]. This research examined the rhetorical structure of the concluding sports news segments on three Ghanaian television networks. Sportscasters typically devote significant time at the end of their newscasts to announcing upcoming events. However, the three stations' concluding moves were inconsistent, indicating that sports news presenters lacked a consistent style. The five motions' communication objectives influenced word selection [12-17]. In summary, the study implies that female leaders in Romania's Central Public Administration can enhance their leadership behaviors and display more communal traits to become better leaders in the future [4].

## FINDINGS

Despite variations across the included studies' focus areas, some common themes emerged regarding gender differences in sports commentary:

**Language Use:** It has been observed that commentators tend to use different language

styles when describing male and female athletes. Females are often referred to in terms of their appearance or personal lives, while males are more frequently described based on their skills and achievements [5].

**Tone:** Commentators sometimes adopt a patronizing or condescending tone when discussing female athletes, focusing on subjective attributes rather than athletic abilities [4]. On the other hand, a more respectful and professional tone is generally used for male athletes.

**Stereotypes:** Gender stereotypes can influence how commentators describe and assess performances. Female athletes may be portrayed as less competent or skilled compared to their male counterparts, perpetuating biases that undermine women's achievements in sports [2].

**Representation:** The underrepresentation of female commentators in sports media further contributes to gender differences in coverage. Male voices dominate the commentary landscape, which can result in a biased portrayal of events and reinforce existing power imbalances between genders [3].

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Despite the noteworthy contributions made by the studies included in this review, certain limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample sizes across the studies varied greatly, which could impede the

generalizability of the findings. Additionally, some studies concentrated on specific geographical locations or sports disciplines, which may restrict the scope of the conclusions.

To address these limitations, future research should aim to recruit larger sample sizes that encompass diverse cultural contexts and sports domains. Furthermore, employing qualitative methods such as conducting interviews with athletes could provide more in-depth insights into their experiences regarding sports commentary biases. Additionally, quantitative research approaches, such as surveys or statistical analyses of sports commentary data, could offer further support and validation for the findings obtained through qualitative methods. Moreover, incorporating mixed-methods research designs that combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic and enhance the validity of the findings. By integrating multiple data sources and perspectives, mixed-methods research designs have the potential to address the limitations of traditional qualitative or quantitative studies and strengthen the overall research outcomes.

### **Gender differences in sports commentary**

The observed gender differences in sports commentary have significant implications for public perceptions of athletes based on

gender. Biased language use, condescending tones, perpetuation of stereotypes, and limited representation can shape how the audience perceives male and female athletes. These differences contribute to unequal treatment and opportunities for male versus female athletes within and beyond the sporting arena. Negative portrayals of female athletes may reduce fan support, sponsorship opportunities, media coverage, endorsement deals, etc.

### **Influence on Public Perceptions**

The impact of gender differences in sports commentary extends beyond individual athlete experiences; it affects broader societal attitudes toward women's participation in sports. Biased commentary may reinforce existing social norms discouraging girls from engaging fully in physical activities or pursuing athletics-related careers.

Moreover, biased perceptions resulting from such commentary can influence athlete performance evaluations. If female athletes are constantly underrepresented or undervalued, their self-confidence and motivation can ultimately affect their performance outcomes.

### **Implications for Sports Psychology**

The findings of this systematic review have significant implications for sports psychology theory and practice. Understanding the influence of gender differences in sports commentary on public

perceptions allows researchers and practitioners to develop interventions to reduce bias and promote equality.

Sports psychologists can work with broadcasters, media organizations, and sporting bodies to raise awareness about the importance of fair and equitable commentary practices. This may involve providing training programs to commentators to avoid biased language use, promote gender equality, and challenge stereotypes in their coverage.

### CONCLUSION

The landscape of sports commentary is slowly but steadily evolving, with increasing recognition of the need for gender diversity and inclusion. Female sports commentators like Doris Burke and Jessica Mendoza have made significant strides in challenging stereotypes and paving the way for future generations. However, the journey towards true gender equality in sports commentary is far from complete. Addressing the persistent gender biases and stereotypes in sports commentary requires concerted efforts from media organizations, commentators, and audiences alike. By promoting and supporting female commentators, challenging traditional gender norms, and educating the public, we can create a more inclusive and dynamic sports media landscape. Ultimately, gender diversity in sports commentary enriches the viewing experience and plays a crucial role

in shaping a more equitable and inclusive society. This structured and comprehensive review explores the multifaceted issue of gender differences in sports commentary, highlighting the progress and challenges that remain. It underscores the importance of continued efforts toward achieving gender equality in sports media, which ultimately benefits industry and society.

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