

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Media Coverage of Female Track Athletes in Botswana: A Content Analysis of Two Newspapers from 2015-2019

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ABSTRACT

Women continue to make strides in sport participation and sport audiences but not in media coverage. Previous studies show that women's sport is significantly under-reported and trivialized in media and relevant investigations of this issue in African countries are very limited. The purpose of the study is to measure the newspaper coverage of eight elite female track athletes in the most popular newspapers, *Daily News* and *Mmegi* in Botswana, focusing on three research questions, (1) How often had the targeted female athletes been covered in print media?, (2) How frequently did the print media cover female track athletes compared to male athletes in Botswana?, and (3) How were female track athletes represented in the identified newspapers? Content analysis was used to analyze 363 articles and 463 images for investigation. The results of this study are consistent with previous research on the media's under-representation of women in sports, in both text and image quantity. This study found that there were no sexualized images of female track athletes, and there were insignificant gendered connotations. Overall, discrepancies and inequalities exist within the *Daily News* and *Mmegi* newspapers reporting. There is, however, a need for further research in media coverage of women's sport in Botswana, in general.

Keywords: Women's Sport, Media Coverage, Gender, Botswana, Female Athletes

INTRODUCTION

Sport feminists have worked hard, especially over the last decade, to ensure that more sports are accessible to women than ever before. They have fought for, and sometimes won, greater access and better facilities for women in sports, improved funding and rewards, equal rights with men under the law, top quality coaching on par with men, and an equivalent voice with men in decision making (Hargreaves, 1994). Consequently, the London 2012 Olympics Games were hailed as the "Women's Olympics" of the modern games by former International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Jacques Rogge as nearly 45% of participants were women (Donnelly, 2013). Three milestones were achieved in London: (a) the Games had a higher percentage of women athletes than any previous Summer Olympics; (b) there were women competitors in every sport; and (c) there were no longer any countries preventing women from participating in the Olympics. Similarly, Australia made history when it announced that the 2018 Commonwealth Games were to be the first multi-sport event to achieve gender equality by having an equal number of events for both female and male athletes. An equal number of medals were awarded to both men and women (Sportal, 2014). Tokyo 2020 Games, on the one hand, are marked to be the first gender-balanced Olympic Games in the history of the sport, with 48.8 per cent of women's participation planned for at the games (Lavietes, 2020). He also confirms that the IOC has decided that there should be at least one female and one male athlete in each of the 206 teams, including in the IOC Refugee Olympic Team participating at the Games. Additionally, the IOC changed the rules to allow National Olympic

Committees to nominate a female and a male athlete to jointly bear their flag during the Opening Ceremony (Lavietes, 2020).

Despite the prolific advancement of women sports movement globally, Botswana women's sport lags behind. Partly, this has been influenced by the cultural norms of the country (Tselaesele and Marumo, 2017). Botswana is a patriarchal society with some activities and structures making it easy to reinforce cultural traditions. This, according to Mafela (2007, p. 20), was influenced by pre-colonial Tswana society, which was based on strictly defined gender roles and division of labour. In Tswana traditional society, men regulated women's social and legal conduct, and women were subjected to male control in many areas of their productive and reproductive lives (Mafela, 2007). As a result of this cultural background, the unequal power relations between men and women still exists. Gender equality is not a priority in Botswana, constituting only 0.6% of all topics covered in the country (Mpfu, 2010 p. 51). Politics is given the most media coverage at 20%, followed by economics at 17% and sport at 14%. Women in Botswana speak more about HIV/AIDS (55%), sex and sexuality (43%), education (43%), health (37%), labour (36%), and gender violence (32%). Their voices are not heard at all in the mining and housing industries, and are barely heard in sport (3%), politics (13%) and economics (17%) (Mpfu, 2010, p. 53).

This is mirrored in sport and influenced the participation of women in sport. According to Tselaesele (2017, p. 10), the proportion of female players among all players/athletes at association level ranged between 2 – 39.1% across the national sport associations on average. Of these girls and women constituted about 27.4 % of the players/athletes. In Botswana, unbalanced gender distribution in elite athletes exist, and men are more favoured than women. Moreover, men have dominated the leadership of sport, at both clubs and national sports associations. At club level, Tselaesele and Marumo (2017, p. 10) identified that female participation in leadership and managerial positions ranged between 0 - 66.7%, with an average of 21.5%. However, at association level, there was a much lower involvement of women in leadership and managerial positions, ranging between 0 – 36.4 % of office bearers across associations, with an average of 19.5% (Tselaesele and Marumo, 2017). This, therefore, indicates that there are still very few women who are in management positions, and leadership by women is minimal.

Given the celebration of some of the critical gender equality landmarks achieved globally and the challenges women in sport face in some areas of sport, it is an excellent time to analyze media coverage. This study aims to find out the condition of sportswomen's coverage by media and its challenges in Botswana. It is necessary to focus on media, because it has become an essential part of sport and has impacted on the delivery of content of sport to consumers. It is a way to disseminate and share information and to grow sports fanbase and consumers in the world. It has become an essential component for right owners, events managers, athletes, officials, hosts and everyone in the sports industry. However, just as sport is an important aspect that needs to be focused on by the media, the media is critical in shaping the image of the sport. The media shape people's perceptions, ideas, how they think and their belief. It also affects our emotions and relationships (Nereshnee, 2010). Media help create role models, heroes and celebrities in the communities. It is subsequently communicating the importance of sport in our lives. However, the relationship between sport and media benefits some groups and excludes others. Women still receive low coverage in media in general, and across all levels, female athletes and women's sport continue to be disregarded and ignored by the media (Bruce, 2015). Researchers, media and athletes have highlighted several inequities that exist not just in quantity of coverage, but also content and style (Peterson, 2003).

It is against this background that current study analyzes textual and image coverage of eight Botswana track female athletes in two popular newspapers, *Mmegi Newspaper* and *Daily News*, in Botswana for the period 2015-2019. This research will contribute to existing studies on the subject, as well as providing preliminary findings on media coverage of women's sport in Botswana. It discovers how often female

track athletes are covered in the identified newspapers, looking at images and articles over five years in Botswana. Also, the research investigates content more closely, to assess whether there is a stereotypical depiction in the coverage of female track athletes. Eight elite female track athletes who competed at international events are identified as sample for the study as athletics is the primary sport code in Botswana in terms of delivery of results and access to competitions. The research assumes that international competitions might create media visibility, which is why female track athletes are the most popular women in sport in Botswana. Therefore, research of the eight female track athletes will provide a clear definition of the position of media coverage of women in sport in Botswana. The work also examines the difference between coverage received by female track athletes as compared to male athletes.

This is the first study on media coverage of women in sport in Botswana, and no research has been done on Botswana female track athletes in general. Therefore, the study will provide preliminary findings and understanding of best practices to ensure equal media coverage for women and men in sport in Botswana. The intended purpose of the study is to gain a more in-depth understanding of the perspectives and experiences of women in sport and that of sports reporters in order to inform best practices. The research was biased towards traditional print newspapers, as, at the time of research, this was dominant media covering sport in Botswana. However, future research may analyze digital media, which is becoming a common trend in Botswana. There is also a need for a comprehensive gender analysis in order to achieve gender mainstreaming in Botswana sport.

The study also explores the influence of the print media in portraying women in sport during the five years of the International Working Group of Women and Sport (IWG) hosting and if its impact changed the landscape of media coverage for women in sport. The IWG was hosted in Botswana from October 2014 - October 2018. The author, therefore, assumes that October 2014 was an administrative fulcrum, and little would have been achieved. The year 2019 is included as the impact of IWG would be more visible beyond its term of hosting outcomes. The research considers the number of images and articles in the *Mmegi* and *Daily News* as they are the oldest in circulation in Botswana and are also the most popular newspapers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Perspectives

Duncan and Messner (1998, p. 170) claim that sport in the twentieth century has given men an arena in which to create and reinforce an ideology of male supremacy; making athleticism virtually synonymous with masculinity and excludes women. This position is challenged by liberal feminism which calls for equal access by both men and women. Several of the previous content analyses of sports media have been conducted from the liberal feminist point of view, that focuses on equal amount and type of coverage for both women and men. The liberal feminist' emphasis on equality of coverage for women is balanced by a variety of critical, poststructuralist, and feminist positions interrogating the role of media in the social construction of femininities, masculinities, and sexualities (Bruce, 2015). Researchers following liberal feminism argue that women equally deserve what male athletes get in media coverage and visibility (Bruce et al., 2010). This theoretical framework calls for interventions either by government or sports organizations, once the inequalities have been highlighted.

Women, Sport and Gender

Sport, as an institution, is profoundly affected by the existing structure of power and inequalities. The structures of organized sport reflect and reinforce established patterns of gender inequality, as well as those of class, race and ethnicity (Hall, 1996). According to Oglesby (1978), the historic unquestioned presumptions of the absolute physical inferiority of girls and women relative to boys and men has been used as a method of restricting female participation in many sports. In addition, Hall (1996, p. 98) argues that conflict between gender and culture exists only in the realm of the feminine because cultural practices,

like sport and leisure, are defined by masculine standards and displacing women out of the sport. This is supported by dominant ideology as explained by Shehu and Moruisi (2010, pp. 9-10), defines "men in opposition to women and therefore declares certain domains such as the home as female and others such as sport and public spaces as male. This naturalization of sport as a male territory for nurturing hegemonic masculine qualities tends to exclude from the sport arena other bodies that are marked, gendered, sexed, or classed as female or feminine (Shehu and Moruisi, 2010).

Shodhganga (2008), emphasizes that "sport is traditionally associated with masculinity. In many societies, it is considered inappropriate for women to engage in sports, and women who do may be perceived as masculine. Conversely, men who do not engage in sports or who are not talented in sports may be labelled as unmanly. Forms of gender marking tell us more than the fact that women are out of place; they also tell us about the conditions of women's acceptance. For instance, they use the word 'ladies' to designate female clubs or ladies' football, or competitions referring to women events as ladies' singles, or ladies' classic (Hamil et al., 2013). Men's sport is just sport: football, cycling, baseball, cricket, basketball, golf, thus constructing the male event as the norm, while only the women's events are gender marked. Women's presence in these sports is routinely marked: women's football, the FIFA Women's World Cup (Hamil et al., 2013).

Media Coverage in Women's Sport

Several previous studies showed that the coverage of sportsmen and women in media is inequitable (Bruce, 2015). In everyday coverage, sportswomen reflect 10% of print media coverage and below 5% in broadcast media (Bruce et al., 2010). A recent survey of 80 newspapers in 22 countries found that sportswomen were the focus of only 9% of articles (Toft, 2011). Researchers also found out that there are instances of blatant sexism where women are objectified and judged on their beauty, femininity and perceived sexuality in Botswana (Mafela, 2007). Because of the discrepancies in coverage of women and men in sport, scholars have concluded that the media may have set an agenda that reinforced stereotypical portrayals of athletes (Billings et al., 2008), which if not addressed may distort pictures of women's lives in the society.

Ward (2016, p. 9), have noted several gendered differences in the language used to describe male and female athletes and their achievements. She summarized this difference as showing that coverage of female athletes emphasized 'aesthetics over athletics. She argues that the coverage of sportswomen focused disproportionately on their appearance, clothes and personal lives, including their marital and maternal status. In contrast, men were described using adjectives like 'fastest', 'strong', 'big', 'real' and 'great'. Women were also more likely to be referred to by infantilizing (girls) or traditionalist (ladies) terms than men. When focusing specifically on performance, the language used to describe men emphasized superiority and even used militaristic language (mastermind, beat, win, dominate, battle), while the language used to describe women's performance was more aspirational (compete, participate, strive) (Ward, 2016).

Birrel and McDonald, (2000, pp. 3-13) argues that media coverage of women symbolically reinforces dominant ideological beliefs in the superiority of men and makes the dominant gender order in sport appear as natural and fair. Trivialization of women athletes of this sort is done through exclusion, limited and selected coverage and minimization through gendered commentary of women sports (Elueze and Jones, 1998, p. 2). Sport provides opportunities for men to assert their dominance at a time when male hegemony is continuously being challenged and opposed in everyday life (Bruce, 2015). This inequality within sport and dominance of men, will continue to exist until the media re-examines its representation of female athletes.

METHODOLOGY

The study uses a qualitative content analysis of selected print media platforms. *Daily Newspaper and Mmegi Newspaper* were selected to analyze the print media coverage of eight elite female track athletes. Both newspapers have had a long tradition of circulation in the country, exceeding the average ten thousand (10,000) circulation copies in a population of 2.2 million people. *Mmegi* was established in 1984, in Gaborone. It is privately owned with a circulation of around fifteen thousand (15,000). It uses both Setswana and English for content, and it is published under the Dikgang Publishing Company. It reports on business, politics, cultures, arts, entertainment and sport (<http://www.mmegi.bw>). Dikgang Tsa Gompieno or *Daily News* is the Botswana Government publication established in 1964, with a circulation of around 80,000, and written in both English and Setswana. It is published under the Botswana Press Agency and reports on news, education, cultural, entertainment and sport. It circulates every day except on weekends and holidays, and it is free (<http://www.dailynews.gov.bw>).

Botswana has sixteen (16) newspaper media houses producing printed newspapers. Twelve (12) of the sixteen (16) newspapers cover general news from health, entertainment, culture arts, social, business and sport, while four (4) of the sixteen (16) newspapers each cover specific topics as; farming, education, advertising, and business (Rooney, 2012). All newspapers, except the *Daily News*, which is owned by the Botswana Government and publish daily, are privately-owned and publish weekly, including Mmegi (Fombad, 2011, p. 20).

The study focuses its analysis on newspapers, as confirmed by Fox (1999, p. 22), that newspaper is one of the most efficient forms of mass communication ever created, vast numbers of people read and trust newspapers." It is for this reason that this study focused on *Daily News* and *Mmegi* Newspapers explicitly as they give an accurate account of sporting events. However, the two newspapers do not cover athletics nor athletes only, but their sports section cover all sporting codes and sport activities that happen locally and international. They also cover sport policies, facilities and other sport-related matters. The author analyses print media texts and images using a qualitative research method. Qualitative method is used for analyzing language and representation of the sentences used when describing female athletes as compared to male athletes. It is also used for measuring the amount of coverage of female athletes and compared that with male athletes. The researcher italicizes individual choices of words and phrases to show the stereotyping and masculinity or femininity characteristics in text.

Methods

The research used content analysis as proposed by Deacon, Pickering, Golding and Murdoch (1999), by analyzing the number of articles in the two newspapers between 2015-2019, and images of both male and female track athletes. Content analysis aims to understand what the media produces by systematically quantifying media content, using pre-determined categories, and analyzing the results statistically (Deacon et al., 1999). Data collection was undertaken between 5th January to 2nd February 2020, and all the articles and images were counted. The coverage was divided into six categories 1. Male images; 2. Female images; 3. Mixed images for both males and females; 4. Articles about male athletes; 5. Articles about female athletes; 6. Mixed articles are covering both males and females. Neutral coverage was omitted and referred to as coverage which had no reference to male or female track athletes but included topics such as facilities, policies, schedules competition. It was, however, included in image coverage as athletes' images were generally used in every story even without specific reference to them. Excel data software was used for coding of data as well as for the descriptive statistics for discourse analysis. Excel is generally considered a number cruncher; however, its structure and data management and display features can be utilized for qualitative analysis (Daniel and Leanne, 2008), which is the case with this study.

Content analysis was also used to study a broad range of 'texts' from newspapers and discussions in social research to the narrative and form of editorial content of newspapers. According to Macnamara (2005, p.

133), content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e., text). Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of certain such words, themes, or concepts. Three hundred sixty-three articles (363) and four hundred and sixty-three (463) images from the two leading Botswana newspapers *Mmegi* and *Daily News*, with public prominence and respectability, were examined, covering sports from January 2015 through to December 2019. *Daily news* printed 239 issues per year between 2015-2019, whereas *Mmegi* printed 50 issues per year in 2015, 2018 and 2019. 2016 and 2017, *Mmegi* Newspaper was circulating daily and printed around 239 issues in 2016 and in 2017.

If the image was not of a track athlete, it was not included in the sample. Each image was labelled male or female. These images were analyzed and divided into two image focuses active/in action (A) or pose/non-sport-(P). If the athlete was active in the image, it was labelled either active or in-action. This was when the athlete was captured during competition or training. Furthermore, if the athlete was posing either in sports attire or any other athletic or just clothes, the athlete is said to be deliberately positioned and ready for a photo to be taken. Any specific language used to describe hairstyle, appearance; certain poses were recorded because they are demonstrative of how media photographers portray female athletes.

RESULTS

As women have increasingly entered mainstream sports in the past decade, one would assume that they would attract an increased amount of media coverage. The results of this study did not find this assumption to be correct.

Media Coverage Differences Between Male and Female Athletics

Only articles and photos of track athletes available in the two newspapers during the specified period were included in the sample, unless the other articles, carried athletes' images. Based on this, the results of the study indicate less coverage of female track athletes in both *Mmegi* and *Daily News* in both text and image coverages. The results show a pattern similar to previous studies, where women lag behind men in media coverage. This is reflected in the 15.1% for articles covering female track athletes and 64.5% of male track athletes (Table 1). The overall results shown in Table 1 significantly place track male athletes above female track athletes in images and articles covered by *Daily News* and *Mmegi* Newspapers from 2015-2019.

Table 1. Total Gender Distribution in the Total Number of Articles and Images 2015-2019

Gender	Number of articles (%)	Number of images (%)
Female	55 (15.1)	103 (22.2)
Male	234 (64.5)	310 (67.0)
Mixed	74 (20.4)	50 (10.8)
Total	363 (100)	463 (100)

The data in Table 2 focuses only on images and excludes associated articles. Image analysis was split into three categories, image coverage for male and for female athletes per year from 2015 to 2019 (Table 2), as well as mixed images, Of the 463 images in the two newspapers over the five years, images of eight females track athlete of n=103, represent 22.2% compared to male images of n=310 at 67.0 % (Table 1). The mixed images of both females and males represent 10.8%. It therefore shows disparity between male and females. It is somewhat surprising, considering the stereotypical understanding of obsession with women's' bodies and beauty, one would assume a difference between men and women but not such a large

margin. In terms of year by year analysis, there is a fluctuation of numbers in the *Daily News* (Table 2), and one could argue that no external factor would have influenced increase or decrease of images of women. In *Mmegi*, the image coverage was enjoyed more by male athletes, with 84.4% in 2015, 100% in 2016 and 81.1% in 2017, as compared to 15.6% in 2015, 0% in 2016, and 10.8% in 2017 for women. There is, however, a steady increase of women coverage from 2017-2019 (Table 2). One would expect that 2018 would be a year of more media focused on women as it was the year that Botswana hosted the IWG World Conference. *Daily News* showed an alarming decline from 25.0% in 2017 to 17.0% in 2018. It is assumed the IWG influenced *Mmegi*, as between 2017 to 2019, the it numbers of images increased from 10.8% in 2017. It then shot to a reasonable 28.6% in 2018 and went up further to 37.5% in 2019 (Table 2).

Female track athletes receive 15.1 % of the total articles between 2015-2019 in both newspapers and 22.2% of images (see Table 1). This may indicate greater coverage of female athletes in images compared to articles or texts.

Content Analysis of Images

Table 2. Image Coverage of Track Female Athletes and Male Track Athletes in Two Botswana Newspapers per Year from 2015-2019

Newspaper	Year	Male Images	Female Images	Mixed Images	Total Images
		<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Daily news	2015	27 (61.4)	12 (27.3)	5 (11.3)	44 (100)
	2016	31 (58.5)	14 (26.4)	8 (15.1)	53(100)
	2017	62 (62.6)	25 (25.3)	12 (12.1)	99(100)
	2018	67 (71.3)	16 (17.0)	11 (11.7)	94(100)
	2019	43 (56.6)	22 (28.9)	11 (14.5)	76(100)
Total Daily news		230 (62.8)	89 (24.3)	47 (12.8)	366(100)
Mmegi	2015	27 (84.4)	5 (15.6)	0 (0.0)	32(100)
	2016	13 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	13(100)
	2017	30 (81.1)	4 (10.8)	3 (8.1)	37(100)
	2018	5 (71.4)	2 (28.6)	0 (0.0)	7(100)
	2019	5 (62.5)	3 (37.5)	0 (0.0)	8(100)
Total Mmegi		80 (82.5)	14 (14.4)	3 (3.1)	97(100)
Total both		310 (67.0)	103 (22.2)	50 (10.8)	463(100)

- Image coverage from both *Mmegi* and *Daily News*

The pictorial representation of track athletes both in the *Daily News* and *Mmegi* have similarity in the way athletes are captured. Most of the pictures were of athletes in sport settings, even when posing. Both male

(62.3%) and female (61.2%) were captured in sport actions, as if in competition (Figure 1). Female track athletes are slightly captured, posing (aware and waiting for the photographer to capture) with 38.8% as opposed to 37.7% of male athletes, but overall, the image focus in both newspapers were remarkably similar. However, there was a significant difference in mixed images between action images versus posed image. Images of pose were significantly higher 66% and 34% images in action for both athletes (Figure 1). The research found no images of athletes, either male and female posing for advertisements or represented outside of sports interviews. The research also found no image of female track athletes objectified or sexualized in poses.

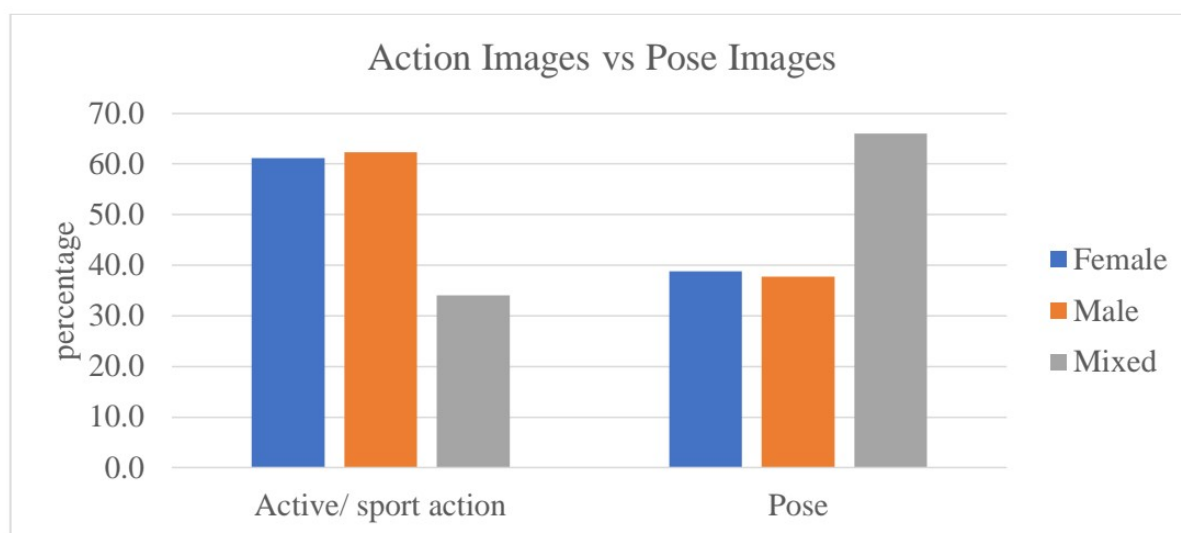


Figure 1. Images Focus of Track Athletes in Daily News and Mmegi Newspapers from 2015-2019

Content Analysis of Media Articles

The data in Table 1 demonstrates that track male-only articles account for 64.5 % of the track stories in the two newspapers analyzed. Female track - only articles takes up 15.2 %, and mixed articles accounts for the remaining 20.4%. The research, therefore, reveals that track male athletes enjoy a significant media coverage compared to female track athletes. Both Daily News and Mmegi Newspaper devote the same number of articles to female track athletes, with Daily News having covered only 15.2% of the female track athletes between 2015-2019 and Mmegi covered 15.1%. However, male track coverage is much higher (72.1%) in Mmegi (Table 4) as opposed to Daily News, with 62.1% (Table 3). In the mixed category, Daily News compensates track Female coverage by scoring 22.7%, and Mmegi is lower at 12.8%

Table 3. Articles in Daily News from 2015-2019

Year	Male Article n (%)	Female Article n (%)	Mixed Article n (%)	Total per Year n (%)
2015	30 (69.7)	7 (16.3)	6 (14.0)	43 (100)
2016	23 (63.9)	6 (16.7)	7 (19.4)	36 (100)
2017	46 (60.6)	9 (11.8)	21 (27.6)	76 (100)
2018	38 (55.9)	8 (11.7)	22 (32.4)	68 (100)
2019	35 (64.8)	12 (22.2)	7 (13.0)	54 (100)
Total	172 (62.1)	42 (15.2)	63 (22.7)	277 (100)

Table 4. Articles in Mmegi Newspaper from 2015-2019

Year	Male Article	Female Article	Mixed Article	Total per Year
	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>
2015	26 (81.3)	4 (12.5)	2 (6.3)	32 (100)
2016	10 (76.9)	0 (0)	3 (23.1)	13 (100)
2017	20 (80.0)	4 (16.0)	1 (4.00)	25 (100)
2018	4 (50.0)	2 (25.0)	2 (25.0)	8 (100)
2019	2 (25)	3 (37.5)	3 (37.5)	8 (100)
Total	62 (72.1)	13 (15.1)	11 (12.8)	86 (100)

Representation and Portrayal of Female Track Athletes

Wensing and Bruce (2003) attempted to list gendered connotations used by media to promote femininity of athletes and preserve sport as a male domain. According to Wensing and Bruce (2003), first, the media use gender marking by identifying an event as a female event, to marginalize women's sport. Second, women's sport is trivialized by infantilizing women athletes by using terms like girls, emphasizing non-sport-related aspects such as appearance, family and personal life. Third, sportswomen are framed by compulsory heterosexuality. They are portrayed as mother, wives and girlfriends of men to ensure that women's sport is not a serious threat to men's sport. Lastly, sportswomen are sexualized by focusing on traditional feminine physical and emotional characteristics.

The findings of this study, however, indicates that female track athletes equally enjoy portrayal of their sport performance as their male track counterparts, which emphasizes what they do as athletes and how they perform as opposed to how they look. No article was found which referred to the looks, personal life, and family life of female track athletes. Both *Mmegi* and *Daily Newspaper* had, in four different articles each, mentioned the home village of some of the athletes but for both female track athletes and male track athletes. Gender marking was found in all the articles analyzed. The researcher assumed that it was essential as athletics events are gender marked naturally. The research did not find any gender marking, which was used to marginalize track female athletes. There was, however, compensatory rhetoric which gave female track athletes limited coverage and framed their achievements as inferior. It was, however, done in a soft tone and trivialized their athletic prowess, strength, and speed. The use of the word *lightning* about the speed of the male track athletes as compared to *comfortably* referring to female track athletes appeared in at least four articles in the Daily News only. Some examples are shown below where the language used for male track athletes differed in tone to the one used for female track athletes.

Daily News (Thursday, 8 June 2017)

..." Now it remains to be seen if Amos who has since relocated to the USA will send a clear message to his track nemesis at the Stadio Olimpico As for Jele, she will be making her debut at the league, and equally, she will be facing stiff competition from the likes of Jamaicans..." (Sibanda,2017)

Daily News (Friday, 30 August 2019)

"Leungo Scotch and Galefele Moroko have hoisted the country's flag high at the ongoing All Africa Games in Morocco by winning gold medals in 400m. The track and Field analyst said Moroko was negotiating the last curve and held on to win comfortably...He said Leungo was lightning fast in the last 40mins to win the second gold medal." (Sibanda, 2019)

Daily News (Thursday, 12 April 2018), carried a mixed story of both 400m relays (male and female). Analysts interviewed said,

“The men’s team are the tournament’s favourite for gold medal...the ladies stood a chance to finish at the podium even though the chances are slim” (Sibanda, 2018).

He went on to say,

“I am saying this without knowledge of teams and who will participate in the relays as we are still waiting for the entries.” (Sibanda, 2018)

The *Daily News* consistently used descriptive words when referring to athletes, while *Mmegi* uses their full names. The descriptive words used by the *Daily News*, therefore, become a soft tone for female track athletes and masculine for male track athletes. Female track athletes are referred to as “upcoming and promising” whereas male athletes are referred to as the “nation’s pride” or a “Botswana sprint sensation”, where the female athlete is older than the male athlete. However, both *Mmegi* and *Daily News* consistently used surnames in the body of all athlete’s stories, regardless of gender. The same goes in titles for the stories; all 363 articles of both *Mmegi* and *Daily News* used athletes’ surnames for female track athlete stories as well as male track athlete stories.

DISCUSSION

The newspaper articles and images analyzed are from *Daily News* and *Mmegi* newspapers mainly because of its popularity, respectability and circulation and high reputation of their sports sections. The results of this study are therefore deemed a fair representation of the women and sport situation in Botswana where media is concerned. It reinforces the underlying ideology that sport is male dominated. The results were examined according to the research questions and found as follows;

- 1) Female track athletes receive low media coverage; with 15.1% of articles, 22.2% of images from 363 articles and 463 images analyzed.
- 2) The quantitative analysis of the two newspapers proved that male athletes are significantly over-represented in both articles and images, with female track athlete accounting for only 15.1 of articles and 22.2 % of images while male track athletes are at 64.5% and 67.0% of articles and images respectively.
- 3) There is no sexualized image portrayal of female track athletes, but there are gendered connotations in reporting.

The results confirm gender analysis study by Tselaesele and Marumo (2017) that Botswana sport is male-dominated and there are very few women in leadership positions at club and national sport association level, coaches, referees, technical advisors, decision-makers and role models in the various sports codes across the country. He attributed this to lack of a national policy/strategy to guide how to integrate gender issues in sports programmes, projects, processes, procedures and regulations at all levels. The BNSC act of 2014 and BNOC Constitution (BNOC, 2011) has gender inclusion provisions, but they are not supported by a laid-out advocacy plan of how to implement the clauses and cascade to National Sport associations. He also asserts that not much action is taking place to address the situation of women in sport as WASBO which operate under the auspices of BNSC, have inadequate human, physical and financial resources to execute the advocacy programmes they promote (Tselaesele and Marumo, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The research aimed at understanding media coverage of women in sport within the cultural context of Botswana, as well as gendered ideology. The newspapers analyzed were published between 2015-2019 and had targeted eight female track athletes who competed at international competitions. Qualitative research method was used to analyze the coverage of the said female track athletes. It is generally known

that there is less media coverage of women in sport compared to men, especially in the print media (Bruce, 2015). The findings reveal a significant statistical difference between women and men media coverage in terms of the quantity of articles and images. The results of the study are consistent with other studies around the world, documenting the under-representation of women in sport in the media.

Based on the results, female track athletes received less newspaper coverage than male athletes. The average amount of coverage for females was 15.1% and 64.5% for males on image coverage. On articles, women account for less coverage as well, at 22.2% compared to male coverage at 67%. While previous research had indicated that female athletes are often depicted in non-sports settings than in sports action, this study does not reflect that. The analysis indicates similarities than gender disparities regarding image focus, with female athletes accounting for 61.2% and male athletes at 62.3%. When supporting the findings with textual representation, they support prior research which demonstrates that athletes who compete at international events and who are expected to win medals receive media attention. The successful athlete will receive more attention regardless of gender (Wensing and Bruce, 2003). In the case of Botswana; male track athletes received more coverage in terms of articles and photos, and it is assumed it is mainly because of their performance - more than 80% of targeted articles in *Mmegi* and *Daily News* analyzed competition and results.

Further studies are needed to analyze individual athletes to determine if performance reflects influence in receiving more media coverage. Previous studies show that female athletes are more often depicted in non-sports setting than in sport action. This study does not support these findings. Instead, the analysis indicates that there are more similarities between female athletes and male athletes in image focus where both male and female athletes are captured in action. The lack of gender balance in media reporting found in this study should pose challenges for sports leadership to review policies for gender mainstreaming in all aspects of sport and media houses to train journalists on gender responsive reporting. It also gives WASBO which serves under the Botswana National Sport Commission as an advocacy organ on issues of women and sport, a foundation for re-arranging their priorities and initiatives.

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Authors Contribution

The author designed the research, collected the data and analyzed data through compiling information from the newspapers she collected as well as wrote the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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