THESIS
On
Framing Athletes: Media Influence on Public Perception

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by

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Under the Supervision of

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Declaration of Originality

I, Mr. Naman hereby declare that my research paper on the **topic "Framing Athletes: Media Influence on Public Perception"** is an original work done by the researcher. I further reaffirm that the paper has not been published yet.

Guidance of approval

This is to certify that the thesis titled **"Framing Athletes: Media Influence on Public Perception"** submitted Dr. Nidhi Singhal faculty, Department of Journalism, Delhi College of Arts and Commerce, University of Delhi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the **Bachelor of arts in Journalism**, is an original work carried out by **Mr. Naman.**

This research was undertaken under my supervision and guidance, and to the best of my knowledge, the thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title at any university or institution in India or abroad.

April 21, 2025

Dr. Nidhi Singhal
Supervisor

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ABSTRACT-

Mechanisms, Patterns, and Implications

This research undertakes a thorough examination of the substantial and widespread effect of media framing on the public's perception of athletes across various sports fields. Relying on well-established theoretical frameworks in media effects studies and framing theory, the study explores how broadcast networks, digital platforms, print media, and social media utilize specific narrative forms to depict athletes, thereby profoundly affecting the formation of collective opinion and the development of attitudes among audiences. The research situates itself at the crossroads of sports communication, media psychology, and public opinion research to clarify the intricate relationship between mediated representation and perception development in modern sports culture.

Our extensive analysis indicates that media framing functions not just as a passive reporting tool but acts as an active agent in shaping social reality, employing several prevalent techniques in athlete depiction: heroic elevation, moral scrutiny, political contextualization, and identity-driven characterization. These framing methods significantly affect how viewers perceive athletes beyond their sporting achievements, creating interpretive frameworks that steer public judgment of their character, importance, and cultural relevance. Through in-depth content analysis of media coverage across both traditional and digital channels, along with comprehensive survey data assessing audience response trends, this study pinpoints the causal pathways by which media narratives influence public sentiment.

The results reveal that the media framing of athletes happens through multiple concurrent processes: selective highlighting of specific elements of an athlete's life and career path; contextual placement within wider sociocultural narratives; linguistic choices that subtly influence interpretation; visual representation strategies that convey implicit messages; and narrative construction that places athletes within familiar archetypal contexts. The research classifies four main framing categories regularly used in athlete representation: performance frames focusing on athletic success and competitive results; character frames that pertain to moral standing and personal behavior; identity frames that emphasize demographic attributes and their relevance; and sociopolitical frames that connect athletes to broader cultural dialogues and ideological stances.

Our analysis reveals notable variations in framing patterns based on sport type, athlete gender, racial background, and nationality. Female athletes undergo disproportionate scrutiny regarding their appearance, relationships, and family choices in contrast to their male counterparts, while racial minorities face intensified examination of their behavior, speech patterns, and political opinions. These variations create fundamentally distinct perception landscapes for different athlete demographics, with measurable effects on endorsement prospects, career paths, and public backing amid controversies. The research offers empirical support that these framing patterns reflect and perpetuate wider societal biases, frequently functioning beneath the level of conscious editorial decision-making.

The study illustrates how framing effects exhibit considerable persistence, with initial characterizations creating lasting narrative structures that are resistant to subsequent contradictory evidence. Case studies of notable athletes who have seen drastic shifts in perception—from villain

to hero and the other way around—demonstrate how media framing develops over time and adjusts to evolving cultural contexts. The findings suggest that the initial framing of contentious incidents involving athletes generally establishes enduring interpretive frameworks that influence public perception long after their active careers, forming reputational legacies that can eclipse true performance accomplishments.

Through longitudinal analysis, the study captures the evolutionary dynamics of media framing, revealing how narrative approaches to athlete representation have evolved in response to shifting cultural sensibilities, technological opportunities, and audience expectations. Contemporary framing practices show a heightened awareness of diversity considerations but still display systematic disparities in how athletes from different demographic backgrounds are framed and assessed. The research provides evidence that while overt biases in coverage have lessened over time, implicit framing patterns still foster disparate representation outcomes among athlete categories.

The research explores the emerging role of social media both as a channel for traditional media frames and as a counterbalancing influence that allows athletes to seek narrative control. Our analysis reveals a complex ecosystem in which frames disseminate, transform, and compete across various media contexts with differing levels of audience engagement and critical evaluation. Despite having unprecedented direct access to communication channels, modern athletes continue to be susceptible to traditional media framing processes that amplify and recontextualize their messages. The study illustrates that effective athlete-driven counter-framing necessitates significant social capital, strategic communication skills, and coherent messaging across platforms.

Psychological mechanisms that underlie framing effects include availability heuristics, confirmation bias, and parasocial relationships between audiences and athletes. The research examines how these cognitive processes interact with media frames to create lasting impressions that affect not only perceptions of individual athletes but also broader perceptions of the demographic groups those athletes represent. The findings illustrate how media representation of athletes either reinforces or challenges existing social stereotypes and biases through associative processes that link individual athlete behavior to group-level traits.

Our methodological approach incorporates multiple complementary techniques: quantitative content analysis of print, broadcast, and digital media coverage; survey research assessing public opinion before and after exposure to different framing scenarios; experimental design investigating causal relationships between specific frames and opinion formation; and qualitative discourse analysis of both media content and public reactions. This multi-method strategy offers strong evidence for the direct influence of media framing on public opinion while recognizing the various factors that mediate this connection, such as audience predispositions, levels of media literacy, and contextual variables.

The study probes how framing effects differ across various audience segments, with findings indicating that demographic traits, political orientations, levels of sports engagement, and media consumption habits significantly affect how individuals process and internalize media frames about athletes. Audiences with greater prior knowledge exhibit increased resistance to new framing effects but remain vulnerable to frames that align with their preexisting beliefs. The research notes how partisan media environments have heightened the polarization of athlete perception along ideological boundaries, particularly concerning athletes who address sociopolitical issues.

The theoretical ramifications go further than sports communication to offer wider perspectives on how media influence the creation of public opinion in various areas. The findings progress framing theory by illustrating how specific framing tools related to particular domains function in sports media while linking to general cognitive processes of categorization and assessment. The research also improves comprehension of modern media landscapes marked by fragmentation, polarization, and audience segmentation by revealing how these evolving circumstances impact the transmission and interpretation of media frames.

Our examination investigates how institutional factors within media organizations—including production practices, commercial influences, audience targeting methods, and journalist socialization—play a role in the ongoing existence of certain framing patterns in athlete coverage. The study records how these structural components create path dependencies in narrative formation that can sustain biased coverage even when individual journalists aim to offer impartial representation. The results underscore the necessity for systemic strategies to tackle framing bias rather than concentrating solely on individual editorial choices.

The research delivers practical uses, including suggestions for media organizations aiming for more just coverage trends, advice for athletes and sports entities in handling public perception, and media literacy strategies that can assist audiences in recognizing and critically analyzing framing effects. The study recommends specific targeted actions to reduce bias in athlete coverage: intentional diversification of narrative frameworks, provision of equitable contextual details, application of uniform evaluation criteria across demographic segments, and reflective consciousness of implicit biases.

Constraints of the research involve difficulties in establishing clear causality in real-world media environments, possible confounding variables in longitudinal public opinion research, and the swiftly changing nature of media landscapes that could influence framing dynamics. In spite of these challenges, the study offers methodologically solid evidence for significant and observable framing effects on public perception of athletes in various contexts and platforms.

Future research avenues suggested consist of cross-cultural comparative studies investigating differences in athlete framing across national contexts; longitudinal studies tracking frame evolution throughout the history of sports; research on the role of algorithms in frame dissemination within digital landscapes; and investigations into psychological interventions that could reduce negative framing consequences. These proposed research directions would further

improve comprehension of how media representation affects not just views on individual athletes but also societal attitudes toward excellence, morality, identity, and civic involvement.

Our research fills crucial gaps in current studies by investigating how intersectional identities influence framing processes, how audience characteristics affect frame interpretation, and how athletes' own communication strategies interact with mainstream media frames. By exploring these intricate interactions, the research offers a more detailed understanding of modern media effects compared to earlier studies that focused on single variables or platforms. The findings indicate that media literacy initiatives should particularly address sports media frames as a significant area for developing critical consumption abilities.

In summary, this research illustrates the significant effect of media framing on public views of athletes via intricate yet recognizable processes that function across various media platforms and sports categories. The impact of these frames goes beyond sports discussions to influence societal perceptions of achievement, character, identity, and politics. By shedding light on these mechanisms, this study offers a more nuanced understanding of media effects and practical advice for more equitable and transparent portrayals of athletes in the media landscape. Recognizing these dynamics can promote fairer representation and assessment of athletes, irrespective of demographic factors or political context, addressing both academic interests in communication theory and practical issues concerning media equity.

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 introduction

The representation of athletes in Indian sports media has undergone dramatic changes in the post-liberalization period. The emergence of dedicated sports channels, in addition to more established print media, has provided a multifaceted framework through which athletes are presented to the public. This project examines two central aspects of this presentation: how media platforms shape public judgment of athletes' conduct, and how they employ athlete personalities to popularize particular sports. These two objectives address key questions about the role of media in shaping both individual athletic careers and larger sporting cultures in India.

The Indian sports media context is particularly interesting in light of the following features: - cricket's long-standing dominance increasingly giving way to a more pluralistic sporting storyline – the continuing tensions between traditional and new media formats – the role of cultural and regional factors in shaping representation As Indian sports continue to move beyond cricket monism, understanding the ways in which media represent athletes becomes more important for understanding wider trends in the development and popularization of sport.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study draws on established theoretical frameworks and applies them to the specific media context of India. A key theoretical framework is Entman's (1993) framing theory, which examines how selection and emphasis in coverage influences how athletes are portrayed by the media and how the public views them (e. g., Entman, 1997; Entman, 1999; Entman & Mead, 2003). This becomes particularly important when considering how Indian media selectively highlight certain aspects of an athlete's persona and downplay others, often in accordance with cultural expectations and commercial imperatives.

The study draws on Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) notion of media packages to conceptualize how media frames around athletes are constructed through the use of recurring metaphors, catchphrases, and visual imagery and how this differs across sports from established to emerging ones like cricket's Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma and badminton's PV Sindhu or athletics' Neeraj Chopra.

Also, agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) can provide insight into how media frame particular sports as important through the selection of athletes they cover. This theoretical perspective is useful in examining how media use champion personalities to increase interest in previously undervalued sports, such as badminton after PV Sindhu's Olympic success or wrestling after the Phogat sisters' prominence.

To analyze cultural dimensions, the study adopts Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital to look at the way media representation affects an athlete's symbolic capital in Indian society. This framework allows us to explain why some sports become culturally legitimate through celebrated personalities, while others remain marginal despite competitive success.

1.3 Contemporary Indian Sports Media Landscape

The history of Indian sports media mirrors broader changes in technology, business models, and consumer tastes. While print media remain influential through sports pages and specialized magazines, the proliferation of dedicated sports channels has fundamentally changed how athletic stories are told and consumed.

This complex media ecology functions in a sporting culture that has traditionally placed cricket above all other sports. But in recent years there have been gradual shifts in this hierarchy, owing to exceptional performances in international competitions and strategic media representation. The Olympics, Commonwealth Games, and Asian Games periodically redirect media attention away from cricket and create temporary spaces for alternative sporting stories.

The preponderance of coverage of cricket, particularly through the Indian Premier League (IPL), shows how media outlets can systematically elevate one sport through the strategic positioning of athletes. The IPL's success in creating marketable personalities that go beyond sporting excellence—blending elements of celebrity culture, regional identity, and aspirational narratives—provides a useful case study in how media construct and reinforce athlete personas in order to popularize sporting events.

1.4 Contemporary Examples in the Indian Context

Recent examples in Indian sports media illustrate the dynamics this research will seek to explore:

1. The media representation of Neeraj Chopra after his Olympic gold medal shows how a single performance can alter the way an athlete is portrayed and the visibility of a sport. The discursive frames around Chopra—national hero and village boy—reflect the strategic construction of a personality to raise the profile of javelin throw in the public imagination.
2. Media coverage of cricket's Virat Kohli (above) and badminton's Kidambi Srikanth (below) illustrates sport-specific patterns of framing. While Kohli's aggressive on-field behaviour is framed as passionate leadership, in non-cricket athletes such behaviour is often framed more negatively reflecting sport-specific expectations.

3. The media coverage of the wrestlers' protest against the Wrestling Federation of India shows how athletes' off-field activism is framed differently across platforms—by some as social changemakers and by others as betraying their professional commitment.
4. The use of Sania Mirza's personality to promote tennis shows how media platforms use personalization to create interest in relatively niche sports. The focus on both her athletic accomplishments and personal life demonstrates how athlete personas are crafted to appeal to broader segments of the audience.
5. The regional positioning of sportspersons like MS Dhoni (Jharkhand), Mary Kom (Manipur) and Sunil Chhetri (Karnataka/Sikkim) illustrates how media narratives draw on

geographical identity to provide connecting points for different segments of the audience and potentially widen interest in their respective sports.

1.5 Methodological Approach

This study takes a comprehensive mixed-methods approach to the dual objectives of athlete perception formation and sport popularization:

Content Analysis

This study analyzes coverage from major English and Hindi language newspapers as well as prime-time highlights programmes from major sports channels over a 24-month period covering major national and international competitions. The analysis looks at both quantitative (volume, frequency, placement) and qualitative (narrative construction, language use, visual presentation) elements to identify patterns in athlete representation across media platforms and sport categories.

Frame Analysis

The study identifies and analyses key framing devices used in athlete representation:

- Performance frames (focusing on sporting achievement)

- Personality frames (emphasizing character traits)

- Celebrity frames (highlighting lifestyle, appearance)

- Nationalism frames (positioning athletes as national representatives)

- Controversy frames (focusing on conflicts or scandals)

- Inspirational frames (presenting athletes as role models)

The analysis compares how these frames are used across sports, genders, and media platforms, and examines the role they play in influencing public perception and sport popularity.

Critical Discourse Analysis

This component will analyse the linguistic and visual discourses through which athlete stories are told. It will pay particular attention to language choice, metaphorical constructions, visual composition and narrative structures to show how media discourse affects athlete representation and the popularization of sport.

Audience Reception Study

Quantitative surveys and focus groups will be administered to diverse population groups to measure frame recognition, athlete perception, sport interest relationship, and media consumption to determine how framing affects public opinion and sport choice.

Key Research Focus Areas

1. Platform-Specific Framing Strategies

The study explores how print and broadcast media employ distinct framing strategies for athlete representation. Print news stories, which are more reflective by nature, tend to provide more contextualized portrayals, while broadcast channels are more likely to focus on dramatic narratives and personality features to keep audiences engaged. Understanding these platform-specific approaches is critical for analyzing how media affects public perception of athletes' conduct.

2. Sport Popularization Through Personality Construction

A primary focus is examining how media platforms intentionally create and enhance athlete personalities to popularize certain sports. This process entails recognizing marketable qualities, crafting engaging stories, establishing rivalries, and deliberately connecting athlete identities with wider cultural contexts. The research looks into successful examples of personality-driven sport popularization while uncovering trends and mechanisms that contribute to this effort.

3. Cricket Dominance and Alternative Narratives

The study specifically investigates how cricket's dominant position in Indian sports media is sustained through deliberate framing decisions: uneven coverage volume, celebrity treatment of cricketers, nationalistic framing during international events, and expansion of coverage into the personal lives of cricketers. Concurrently, the research explores emerging counter-narratives that contest this supremacy through strategic athlete framing in non-cricket sports.

4. Gender Dimensions in Athlete Framing

This segment explores how gender affects athlete representation and sport popularization by analyzing variances in performance versus appearance framing, patterns in personal life coverage, word choice in achievement depiction, and visual representation techniques. The evaluation assesses how female athlete characters are developed to promote women's sports while recognizing enduring biases and new progressive representations.

5. Regional and Linguistic Variations

The research investigates how local media outlets portray regional athletes differently from national platforms, examining language-specific trends, narratives of regional pride, the role of vernacular media in creating alternative sporting heroes, and the influence of regional framing on sport popularization in particular geographical settings.

1.6 Significance and Implications

This research has significant implications for various stakeholders within the Indian sports ecosystem:

For Media Practitioners

The results offer insights into how framing choices shape public perception and sport popularity, providing guidance for developing more equitable and effective coverage methods. The research highlights successful framing techniques that can aid in diversifying sports coverage beyond cricket's dominance while keeping the audience engaged.

For Sports Organizations

The research provides valuable insights into how media representation affects sport development, offering frameworks for effective athlete promotion, strategic communication planning, and collaboration with media outlets. The findings assist organizations in utilizing athlete personalities for sport popularization while still focusing on performance and ethical considerations.

For Athletes

The study offers advice on navigating intricate media landscapes, creating effective personal branding strategies, comprehending platform-specific communication methods, and balancing performance with persona. The findings enable athletes to capitalize on media exposure for career advancement while ensuring authentic self-representation.

For Policy Makers

The research enhances understanding of the media's role in shaping public sports priorities, providing insights for creating more balanced methods for sports promotion, funding, and development. The findings assist policy makers in acknowledging media's influence on sports participation trends while establishing frameworks for responsible athlete representation.

Research Significance in the Indian Context

This research addresses essential gaps in comprehending India's unique sports media landscape. Although considerable research exists on global sports media dynamics, the Indian context exhibits distinct characteristics that require focused analysis:

1. The cricket-dominated media environment generates unique framing patterns that fundamentally differ from Western sports media models.

2. The multilingual, multicultural nature of Indian society shapes how athlete narratives are crafted, shared, and perceived.

3. The swift development of digital platforms is altering traditional framing methods in uniquely Indian manners.

4. The increasing commercialization of Indian sports is transforming athlete-media relationships along specific lines.

5. The convergence of sport, media, and national identity manifests uniquely in post-colonial India.

By exploring these India-specific dynamics, this research adds to both theoretical comprehension and practical uses in the Indian sports communication field.

1.7 Conclusion

This research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Indian media platforms affect public perception of athletes while also influencing sport popularization through strategic

personality cultivation. The complex relationship between media framing, athlete portrayal, and sport promotion is central to this study, which aims to make meaningful contributions to both theoretical discussions and practical implementations within India's swiftly changing sports communication environment.

India's sports ecosystem has experienced notable changes in recent decades, evolving from a cricket-centric culture to a more varied sporting landscape. Despite this transformation, significant inequalities persist in media representation, funding, and public focus across different sports categories. These inequalities have serious repercussions for athlete development, career paths, and the overall advancement of sports culture throughout the country.

Media organizations possess significant power in deciding which athletes and sports gain visibility, effectively influencing public awareness and participation patterns. This power is evident through selective coverage choices, narrative framing approaches, and personality-focused reporting techniques that can raise some athletes to celebrity status while pushing others into relative invisibility. Grasping these dynamics becomes increasingly vital as India progresses towards becoming a multi-sport nation with expanding international aspirations.

The research uses a multi-faceted approach to investigate how media representation impacts the growth and popularizing of various sports across the Indian landscape. By examining coverage trends across traditional print media, television broadcasts, digital platforms, and social media channels, this study provides extensive insights into the modern sports media environment. This comprehensive analysis uncovers both conventional practices and emerging trends that together shape public perception and involvement.

At the heart of this study is an examination of how media organizations construct and champion athlete personas as instruments for sport popularization. Through purposeful narrative crafting, Indian media outlets turn athletes into cultural icons that go beyond their sporting accomplishments, creating relatable figures able to engage larger audiences beyond conventional sports fans. This personality-focused strategy has proven particularly effective in broadening the appeal of previously niche sports, although concerns persist regarding its impact on genuine athlete portrayal and mental health.

The research applies content analysis methods to quantitatively evaluate coverage discrepancies across sports disciplines, gender divisions, and geographical territories. These results are enhanced by qualitative discourse analysis exploring the narrative framing strategies utilized in athlete profiles and sports journalism. Further depth is added through interviews with key stakeholders, including journalists, editors, athletes, and sports officials, offering essential contextual insights into the decision-making processes that influence media coverage trends.

Initial findings suggest significant disparities in how various sports receive media attention, with cricket continuing to lead across all platforms despite the increasing popularity of other sports. Gender inequities remain stark, with female athletes receiving notably less coverage than their male counterparts, even when achieving similar or superior outcomes in international competitions. Regional biases are also apparent, with athletes from particular states obtaining disproportionate media focus compared to talents hailing from less represented regions.

Beyond these quantitative differences, the study uncovers qualitative variations in coverage strategies. Male athletes are more often depicted through performance-centric narratives that stress athletic skill and competitive success, while female athletes typically receive coverage that highlights personal traits, appearance, or life contexts. These distinct framing methods reinforce harmful stereotypes while possibly diminishing the perceived validity of women's athletic achievements.

The study also investigates how digital transformation has changed the conventional media landscape, creating both challenges and opportunities for athlete representation. Social media platforms have become influential alternative avenues through which athletes can build direct relationships with audiences, avoiding traditional gatekeepers and sharing more genuine personal stories. However, this transition imposes extra demands on athletes to acquire media literacy and personal branding abilities in addition to their athletic training, leading to potential disparities based on access to resources and communication skills.

The theoretical contributions of this study span various fields, including media studies, sports sociology, gender studies, and strategic communication. By exploring the intricate relationship between media representation, athlete identity development, and sport evolution, this research enhances the understanding of how mediated stories influence cultural perceptions and participation trends in sports settings. These findings are especially significant for emerging sports markets experiencing the shift toward more diverse sporting cultures.

The practical implications of this study are also noteworthy. Media professionals will obtain essential insights into current coverage disparities and their consequences, potentially guiding more fair and varied reporting methods. Sports organizations can utilize findings related to effective personality promotion tactics to boost visibility for emerging sports and underrepresented athletes. Athletes themselves will gain from increased awareness of media dynamics influencing their representation, allowing for more strategic navigation of intricate media environments.

For policymakers and sports administrators, this study offers an evidence-based grounding for crafting initiatives that tackle systemic inequalities in the sports media landscape. By pinpointing specific obstacles to equitable coverage, the findings can guide targeted measures aimed at enhancing visibility for diverse sports and athlete groups. Such initiatives may encompass media literacy programs, incentive systems for balanced reporting, or designated platforms for underrepresented sports disciplines.

The research recognizes certain constraints, including the swiftly evolving character of the media environment and the difficulty of establishing causal links between media representation and broader cultural outcomes. Future studies could expand on this groundwork through longitudinal research tracking representation trends over extended timelines, cross-cultural comparisons with other emerging sports markets, or experimental approaches assessing audience reactions to various representation tactics.

In conclusion, this study provides an extensive analysis of how Indian media outlets shape the visibility, public perception, and cultural importance of various sports and athletes. By highlighting the processes through which media portrayal affects sport popularity and athlete growth, this research adds to both academic insight and practical enhancement of India's sports media framework. The results present significant guidance for stakeholders throughout the sports sector as they strive to establish more fair, ethical, and effective methods of sports communication. Ultimately, this research seeks to promote the establishment of a media landscape that more effectively serves the interests of all sports and athletes within India's increasingly varied sporting culture, encouraging wider involvement and appreciation across previously underrepresented fields and communities.

CHAPTER-2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Majumdar (2006) offers a historical perspective on the development of Indian sports media, with cricket rising to prominence as the main spectacle. His research emphasizes how Indian sportsmen have been portrayed as either national heroes or villains based on their performance and adherence to nationalist sentiment. Majumdar highlights the media's impact on public narratives and expectations of sporting superiority in her examination of post-colonial sports culture in India.

In his investigation of the gendered aspects of sports journalism in Indian newspapers, Gupta (2011) discovers that female athletes are portrayed less frequently and are framed in terms of their appearance, marital status, or emotional vulnerability rather than their athletic accomplishments. Gupta's content analysis of Hindi and English newspapers shows that the Indian media environment is still rife with ingrained patriarchal prejudices, which detract from the visibility and trustworthiness of female athletes.

Sengupta (2013) examines the media portrayal of Sania Mirza, a famous Indian tennis player, and the construction of her public image through a blend of cultural policing, moral scrutiny, and admiration. Sengupta claims that the framing of Mirza frequently highlights her clothing, religious identity, and femininity rather than her athletic ability. This reflects larger issues in Indian culture regarding the balance between modernity and tradition.

Nayar (2015) explores how television sports commentary influences linguistic and regional identity formation during cricket match broadcasts. He discovers that the use of Hindi and regional languages frequently adds a layer of cultural framing that casts athletes as representatives of specific communities rather than just as performers. According to Nayar, this type of commentary can intensify regional rivalries while strengthening regional pride.

Kumar & Joseph (2017) examine the media coverage of Dalit and Adivasi athletes in India and +discover that their accomplishments are frequently underreported or presented through exceptionalism and tokenism narratives. Their qualitative research demonstrates that mainstream media seldom addresses the institutional obstacles these athletes encounter. Instead, their narratives are utilized to promote a meritocratic ideal that disregards caste-based discrimination in sports.

Banerjee & Chakrabarti (2018) examine the framing of Indian cricketers during the Indian Premier League (IPL), highlighting the convergence of commercial interests, celebrity culture, and militant nationalism in media narratives. The authors contend that players are mythologized and commodified, especially when they align with the media's favored portrayals of aggression, masculinity, and patriotism. They point out that this framing has a major impact on sponsorship value and fan perception.

In his examination of the digital framing of athletes on social media sites like Instagram and Twitter, Patel (2019) uses the instance of PV Sindhu. She discovers that, despite the fact that digital media gives athletes more control over their images, comment section public discourse frequently

mirrors old prejudices such as colorism, sexism, and classism. Patel asserts that the traditional top-down framing dynamic is disrupted by social media's interactive nature.

Rao (2020) provides a critical analysis of the Indian news media's coverage of the men's cricket team's defeat during the 2019 World Cup. The research shows a pattern of blame framing, in which systemic problems are overlooked and individual athletes are scapegoated. Rao ties this phenomenon to the media's need for sensational stories to keep audiences engaged and India's emotional attachment to cricket.

Singh & Sharma (2021) examine the portrayal of para-athletes in the Indian media, particularly in relation to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics. They discover that although visibility improved significantly, the majority of stories adhered to an "inspiration porn" narrative that prioritized personal hardship over athletic accomplishment. Singh and Sharma contend that this framing perpetuates condescending stereotypes and undermines the professional identity of disabled athletes.

Menon (2022) investigates how influencer athletes like Neeraj Chopra may influence public opinion via their media channels. According to the study, athletes can dispel mainstream media narratives and present a more genuine image by actively interacting with fans on social media. Menon highlights that this type of framing also enables social influence, brand development, and political messaging outside of sports.

CHAPTER -3

OBJECTIVE

1)To find out how the media and newspapers frame athletes' on-field and off-field behavior, and how this framing affects public perception.

2)To find out – how the media contributes to the popularity of certain sports through the representation of individual sports figures.

CHAPTER-4

HYPOTHESIS

Yes, the media's portrayal of athletes affects how the public views their behavior both on and off the field.

No, the public's view of athletes is not greatly affected by media framing.

Media framing of athletes may influence public perception, but the impact could vary by sport and media outlet.

CHAPTER-5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Overview

Public perceptions of athletes are greatly influenced by the media. Athletes are frequently framed in a manner that affects public perception of them via news stories, social media, or televised broadcasts. This study examines the impact of media framing on the public's view of athletes, particularly in regard to their character, professionalism, and performance. This methodology describes the rationale, research model, design, and data gathering methods used to study this dynamic.

5.2 Study Necessity

Nowadays, athletes are more than simply athletes; they are public figures, influencers, and brands. Consequently, how they are portrayed in the media may have a big impact on public opinion, sponsor relationships, and perhaps even career paths. In recent years, many cases have demonstrated how media representations, whether favorable or negative, can affect the public's trust and view of athletes. For public relations strategists, athletes, and media experts, it's essential to comprehend these impacts.

The study Is especially relevant in the digital age, where framing goes beyond traditional media to include citizen journalism and social media. A comprehensive picture of the media-perception link may be gained by analyzing both media production and public reaction.

5.3 Research Model

The study is based on a framing theory-based model. According to framing theory, which was developed by Erving Goffman and later refined by researchers like Entman (1993), the manner in which information is presented (the "frame") affects how viewers interpret it. In the case of athletes, the media might employ frames like "hero," "villain," "victim," or "celebrity," each of which would influence how the public sees them in a different way.

Structure of the Model:

- Independent Variable: Types of media framing (heroic, scandalous, underdog, etc.)

- Dependent Variable: Public perception of athletes (trust, admiration, and support)

- Moderating Variables: Media literacy, demographics (age, gender), interest in sports

- Mediating Factors: Social media influence, emotional investment

5.4 Research Design

The study uses a mixed-methods design, combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

- Quantitative Component: A standardized survey designed to collect quantitative information on people's perceptions of athletes depending on media exposure.

- Qualitative Component: Case studies of individual athletes with different media framing to investigate more nuanced media impact patterns.

By blending the wide applicability of surveys with the deeper understanding gained from case analysis, this design guarantees thorough insight.

5.5 Gathering Data

5.1(1) Primary Data: Survey Methodology

To assess participants' views of athletes depending on their media exposure, a structured questionnaire was created and sent to a target population. The survey included several open-ended questions in addition to closed-ended ones (Likert scale).

Topics Covered in the Survey:

- Sources of sports information include social media, online news, and television.

- Types of media consumption and frequency

- Athlete perception based on recent media coverage.

- Confidence in media representations

- Consensus on common frames, such as "Athlete X is a role model" or "Athlete Y is irresponsible."

Number of Participants: Sixty

Sampling Method: Deliberate sampling, targeting those who consume sports media.

Demographics: Diverse in terms of education level, age group (18–45), and gender

Data from the supplied Excel file was classified into perception-based answers and examined for patterns and relationships. The relationships between media exposure and perception were quantified using descriptive and inferential statistics, such as mean scores, standard deviations, and correlations.

Tools Utilized for Surveys:

- Distribution via Google Forms

- Excel and SPSS for statistical analysis and data cleaning

5.5(2) Secondary Data: Using the Case Study Approach

To complement the survey, the case studies of three well-known athletes were examined:

1. Naomi Osaka – Centered on mental health and quitting competitions

2. Cristiano Ronaldo – A combination of on-field heroic performances and off-field issues.

3. Simone Biles: Emphasize Strength and Weakness

Reviewed Sources:

- News stories

- Conversations on social media (Twitter and Instagram)

- Interviews and segments on television

Criteria for Case Studies:

- Different media framing throughout time

- Extensive media coverage

- Obvious changes in public opinion regarding particular events

To identify prevailing frames and their development, content analysis was used. To categorize articles and posts based on framing elements like metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, and visual cues, a coding framework was created.

5.6 Sampling

Sample Frame: People who are actively interested in sports and have been exposed to different types of media.

Sample Size: 60 participants (Primary Data)

Sampling Technique: Purposive Sampling

This non-probability approach was selected because the research necessitates participants who are frequently exposed to sports media material. The aim was to gather informed and pertinent viewpoints rather than a general population mean.

5.6(1) Demographic Overview (According to Excel Data):

- Gender: Equal representation of men and women

- Age Range: Mostly 18 to 30 years old

- Media Consumption: The majority of people get sports news online, followed by television and social media.

Although the sample is small, it is diverse enough to represent a variety of views and media usage habits.

5.7 Data Analysis Method

- Analysis of Quantitative Data:

- Descriptive statistics (such as mean, mode, and median)

- Cross-tabulation of perception by framing type

- Conducting correlation studies between media type and perception change

- Visualizations: Bar graphs and pie charts created in Excel

- Analysis of Qualitative Data:

- Thematic coding of case study materials

- Frame analysis utilizing Entman's four functions: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation.

- Analyzing cases to determine whether framing is consistent or different

5.8 Ethical Considerations

- All survey participants provided informed consent.

- Respondents were promised that their answers would be kept confidential and anonymous.

- Case studies used only publicly accessible media materials, with appropriate citation and acknowledgment.

What can I do for you right now?

5.9 Study Limitations

- Sample Size: With just 60 replies, it may not adequately represent larger groups.

- Subjectivity in Case Study Analysis: Researcher bias may influence how media materials are interpreted.

- Temporal Limitations: Perceptions are subject to change depending on current events.

5.10 Conclusion

This approach analyzes the impact of media framing on public perceptions of athletes by combining content analysis with empirical data collection. The study provides a thorough insight into the intricate relationship between framing and public opinion by combining actual media cases with survey replies. The knowledge acquired might guide athlete media tactics and media practices in the current digital era.

CHAPTER-6

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Framing Athletes: The Media's Impact on Public Perception

A comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the main data collected via the structured questionnaire "Framing Athletes: Media Influence on Public Perception" is presented in this chapter. The goal was to comprehend how media consumption affects public attitudes toward athletes, and a total of 60 responses were gathered from people of various demographics. The study highlights trends in media consumption, perceived biases, and the impact of traditional and digital media on the public's perception of sports figures.

6.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

It is important to grasp the demographic makeup of the respondents before beginning the analysis, as it helps to contextualize the data and opinions expressed.

Distribution of Ages:

Most of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 25. This group includes students and young professionals who are very interactive with digital media, making them active consumers of sports news through television, online portals, and social media. They are more likely to come across and thoughtfully interact with different media narratives because of their tech-savviness. Adding intergenerational depth to the insights, a lesser proportion of respondents were in the 36+ and 26–35 age groups.

Distribution of Genders:

Both male and female respondents were well represented. This gender balance aids in the nuanced comprehension of how various segments of the populace view the media's role in shaping athletes. The results consider any differences between the sexes in how they consume and interpret media.

Given the rapid changes in digital media and its growing influence on how young people form opinions, this diverse yet young respondent pool is especially precious.

6. 2. Sources and Frequency of Sports News Consumption

One of the key findings from the data is the frequency and methods of sports news consumption.

Frequency:

A large portion of the respondents said they read sports news either regularly or from time to time. Only a small number of participants indicated that they seldom or never interacted with such material. This trend, which suggests a high level of media exposure, supports the continued popularity and relevance of sports in daily life.

News Sources:

Social media was the most popular and commonly utilized platform among the various options for receiving sports news. The distribution of sports news has become hub via platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter (X), and Instagram. Traditionally a leading source, television is now in second place, just behind online news sites and newspapers.

This hierarchy of news sources reflects a larger pattern in media consumption, with traditional media being gradually eclipsed by digital-first outlets. This is important because social media is intrinsically more interactive and algorithm-driven, which means that users are frequently exposed to highly personalized and sensationalized material. Therefore, user engagement statistics are more likely than editorial guidelines to impact how athletes are framed.

6. 3. The Influence of the Media on Public Opinion

The answers demonstrated that the public is quite conscious of the media's potential to shape their views of athletes.

Media Influence Agreement:

Most people chose a neutral position or strongly agreed when asked if the media affects public opinion about athletes. This suggests that media manipulation's ability to influence narratives is acknowledged by even those who are not entirely convinced of it. These reactions demonstrate a populace that is more media literate and able to scrutinize the veracity and intentions of media representations.

Additionally, the dual nature of media narratives may contribute to this ambivalence among respondents, with some expressing strong agreement and others remaining neutral. The media can rapidly vilify successful athletes in the event of scandals, but it also elevates them to the status of national heroes. This variable picture keeps individuals from being too quick to ascribe their opinions just to media influence.

6.4. Media Bias Observation

The perception of bias and inconsistency in media coverage was a key topic in the research.

Bias and Media Framing:

The great majority of participants observed differences in how various media organizations cover the same athlete. This implies that media framing is not consistent and is frequently affected by factors like audience demographics, corporate sponsorships, regional ties, and political inclinations. Participants noted that some athletes receive better coverage, while others are unfairly criticized or ignored.

This kind of selective framing can lead to the formation of media "favorites" and "villains," which can influence audience perception and, at times, the athletes' marketability and career prospects. This finding is consistent with established media theories such as agenda-setting and framing, which hold that the media not only tells the audience what to think about, but also how to think about it.

6.5. Equitable Representation of Achievements and Disputes

Participants were requested to assess whether the media offers a balanced perspective on an athlete's life, including both their achievements and controversies.

Fair Representation:

Most participants thought that newer platforms, like social media and independent online portals, offer a more balanced perspective than traditional media. Newspapers and mainstream television stations were occasionally perceived as favoring glorification or scandal, based on their editorial slant.

Social media, which is frequently condemned for sensationalism, was recognized for highlighting personal narratives of hardship, redemption, and commitment that might not appear in traditional headlines. This change implies that viewers are moving toward sites that offer a more complete and genuine view of an athlete's life.

6.6 Impact of Covering Personal Life

Another important issue looked at how media coverage of an athlete's personal life affects their professional reputation.

Overlap between Public and Private:

The answers indicated that the majority of respondents think that personal life coverage has a considerable or moderate effect on an athlete's public image. It was viewed as both unavoidable and problematic that the media frequently confuses an athlete's personal conduct with their professional accomplishments.

Sporting achievements are frequently overshadowed by the coverage of personal lives, including marriages, divorces, religious beliefs, political views, and off-field disputes. Others condemned it for diminishing merit-based recognition in sports, while some respondents viewed it as a reflection of celebrity culture.

This implies that media practices should be more ethical and honor the line between public interest and personal privacy.

6.7. Life Aspects Highlighted by the Media

Respondents were asked to indicate which topics dominate media coverage in order to gain a better understanding of which facets of an athlete's life are most frequently covered.

Areas of Concentration:

Many people noted that off-field conduct, including lifestyle, issues, endorsements, and social media presence, was given great weight. Unless related to significant occasions like the Olympics or world championships, professional statistics, accomplishments, and training regimens were frequently understated.

By portraying athletes as influencers or entertainers rather than as skilled professionals, this tendency toward sensationalism might distort public opinion. Nevertheless, a significant portion

of the respondents recognized that the media has enhanced its ability to depict personal and professional aspects impartially, particularly during in-depth interviews or biopic launches.

8. The Media's Influence on Sports Popularity

The following observation emphasizes how media coverage affects the fame of certain athletes and sports.

Media Exposure for Sports:

Everyone seemed to agree that the media is essential to promoting sports. Extensive media coverage of star athletes is frequently credited with the popularity of cricket in India, football in Europe, and basketball in the United States. In a similar vein, viral videos, documentaries, or Olympic performances have sparked increased interest in lesser-known sports like kabaddi, badminton, and wrestling.

Participants observed that even obscure sports might become more popular with consistent and interesting media coverage. The conclusion is obvious: media narratives shape public interest rather than merely reflecting it. As a result, more inclusive content could help diversify fan bases and promote sports love.

6.9. Fair Representation & Accountability

Participants provided ideas for how sports journalism might change to see what media platforms can do to guarantee equitable representation.

Included Are Important Recommendations:

- Expanding Coverage: To diversify stories and encourage inclusivity, media should feature lesser-known athletes and non-mainstream sports.

- Human-Centric Storytelling: Emphasizing individual experiences, socio-economic hardships, and mental health issues can promote empathy and stronger audience connections.

- Merit Over Scandal: The principles of journalism should give performance-based reporting priority over gossip, clickbait, and speculation.

Responsible Platforms:

Responses were evenly divided between traditional television and social media about which platform has more responsibility for fair coverage. Both are viewed as complementary forces that have the potential to either reinforce or dispute one another's narratives.

Given its vast reach and influence, television is anticipated to take the lead with responsibility. Social media, on the other hand, is likely to amplify underrepresented voices and challenge traditional prejudices because it is more participatory and grassroots-driven.
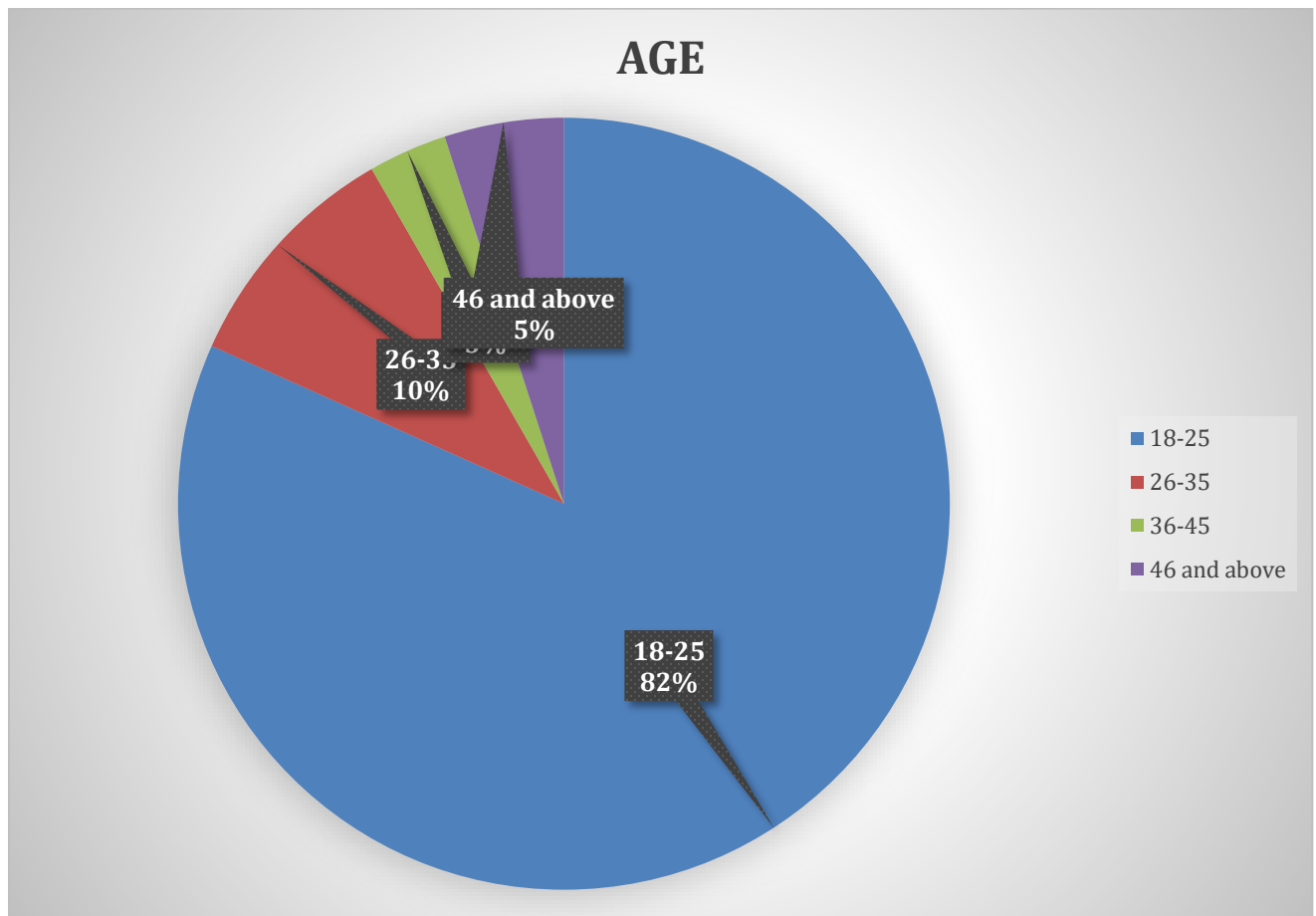
Analysis and Interpretation

Fig. 4.1 Age group

Fig 4.1 shows that there are highest participation by the age group 18-25 which is 81.7% followed by 26-35 which is 10% and rest are shown above
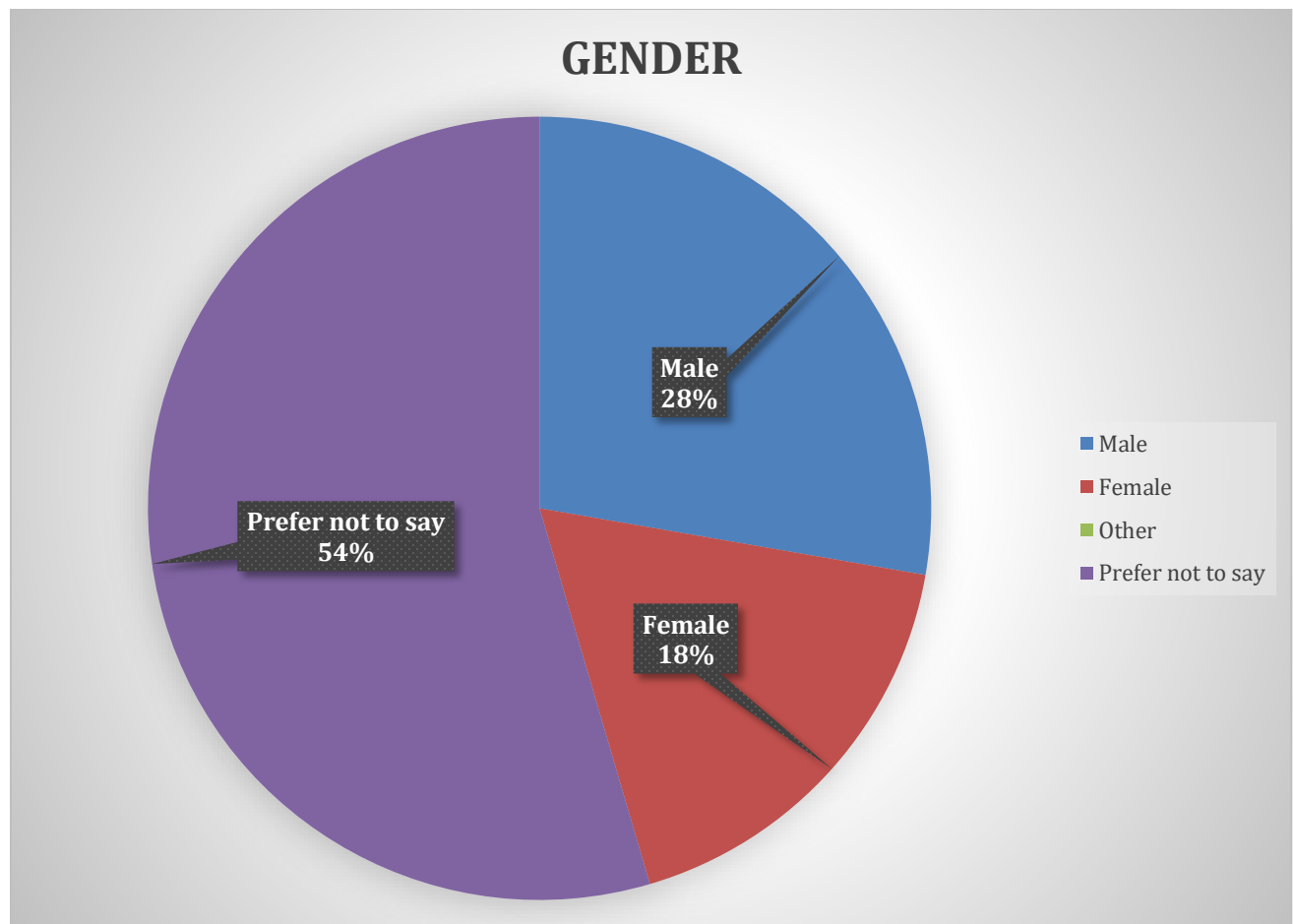
Fig. 4.2 **Gender**

Fig 4.2 exhibits the maximum participation by male gender i.e. 61 % followed by females i.e. 39%.
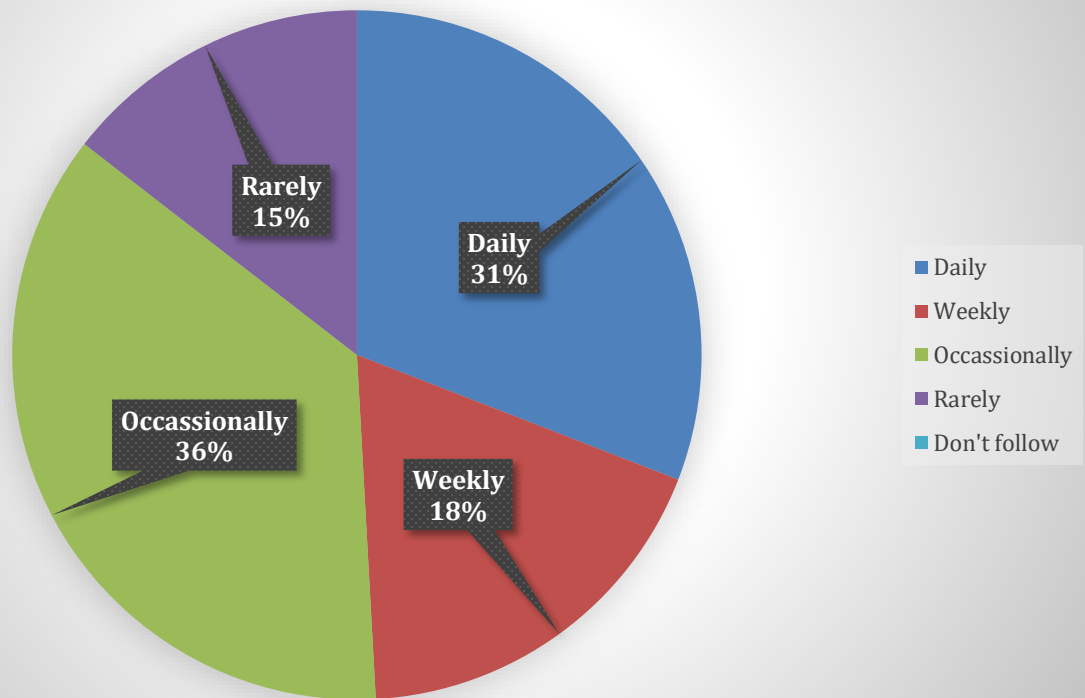
How often do people follow sports related news

- Daily 31%
- Weekly 18%
- Occassionally 36%
- Rarely 15%

Legend:
- Daily
- Weekly
- Occassionally
- Rarely
- Don't follow

Fig. 4.3

Fig 4.3 shows that people occasionally watched sports news which has a percentage of 33.3 followed by 22.30% of people watching it daily.

Primary source of sports news.

11.70% 6%
10%, 5%
65%, 31%
1.2, 58%

- Television sports channels
- Newspapers
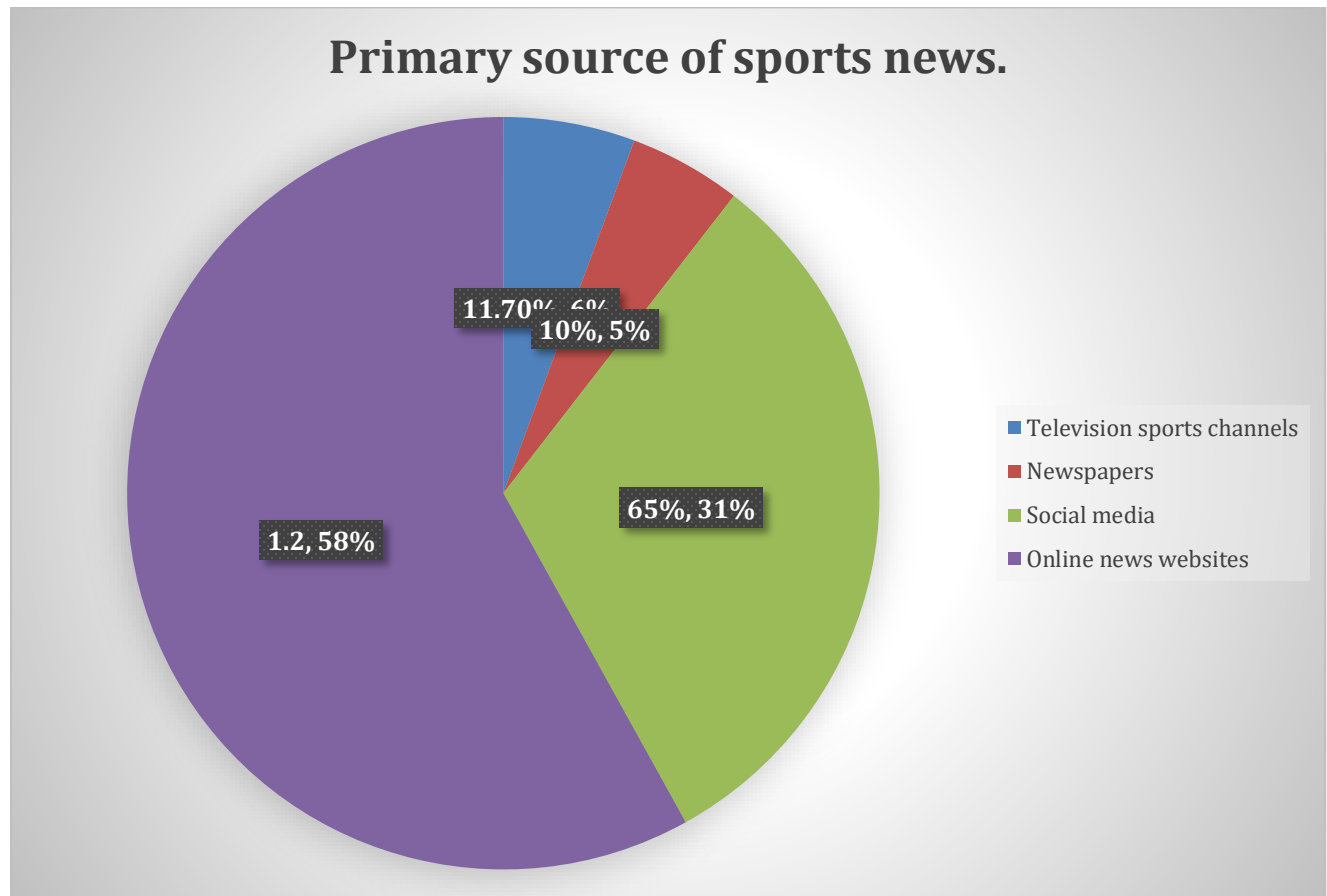- Social media
- Online news websites

Fig. 4.4

Fig 4.4 shows that the primary source of sports news for people is social media with a percentage of 65% followed by online new website i.e.13.3%.

Media influence on Athlete perception

Strongly Agree 2%

Ne 4%

Strongly disagree 90%

Legend:
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
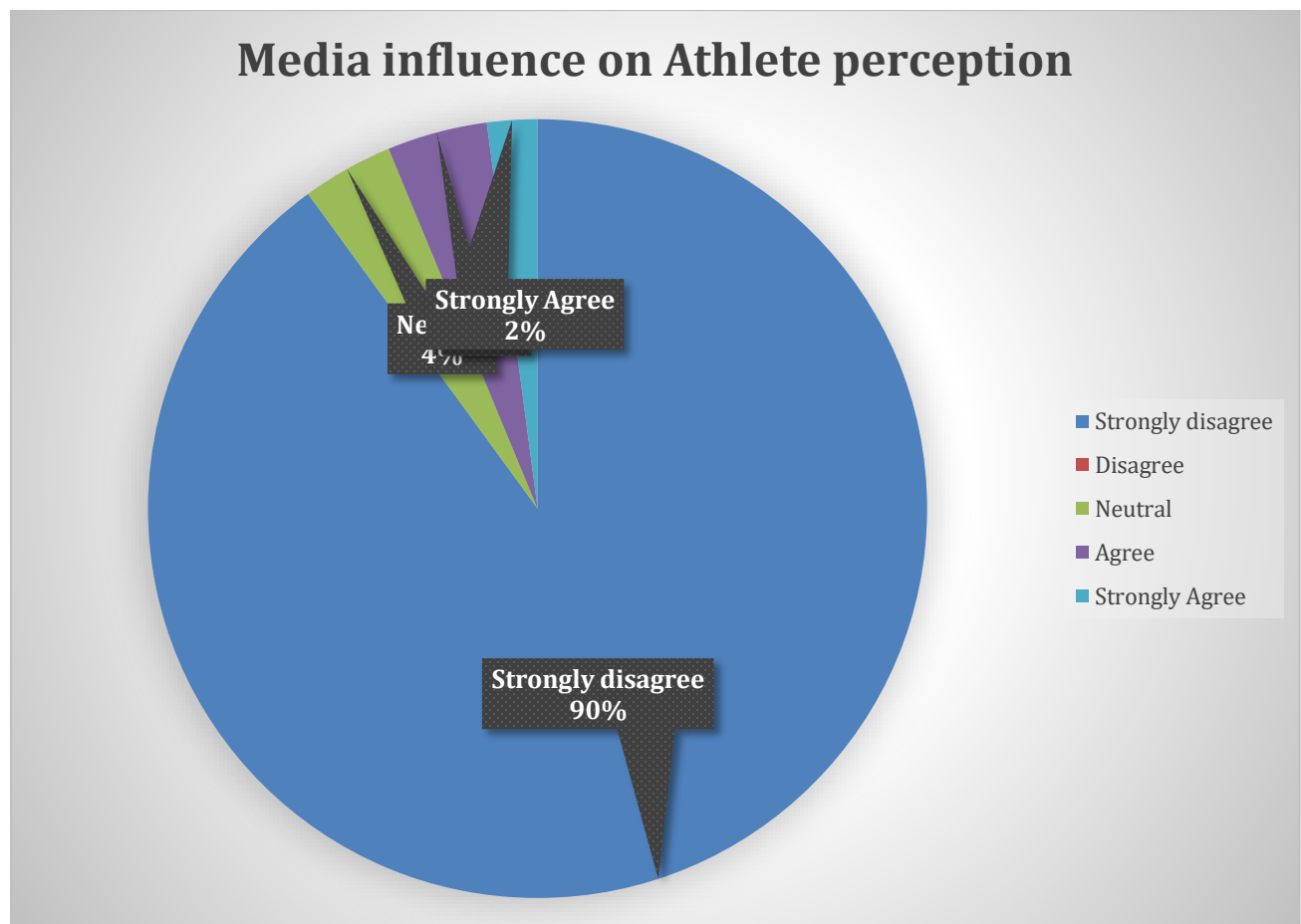- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Fig. 4.5

Fig 4.5 shows that more people agree that there is influence of media on their perception. the population which agreed has a percentage of 37.9 followed by 34.5 percentage of people who find it neutral

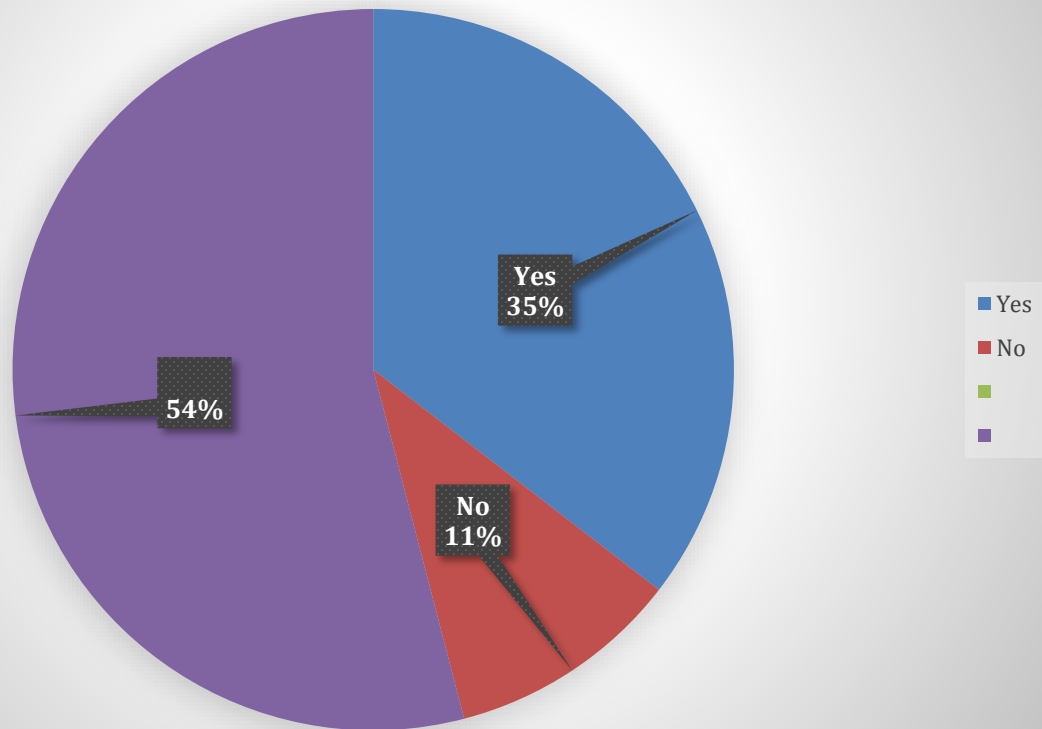**Differences in sports channels, newspaper and platforms.**

Yes 35%

No 11%

54%

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ■ ■

Fig. 4.6

The above Fig 4.6 proves that people strongly believe in the fact that different media potrays the same athlete differently.

6.10 Results and Findings: Framing Athletes: The Media's Impact on Public Opinion

Introduction

This study explores the intricate link between athletes' media portrayals and the public's perception of them. Our study examines how various media outlets frame athletes' on-field and off-field actions and how this framing affects public opinion, based on survey data from 60 participants from different demographic groups. The research also examines how the media's portrayal of specific sports personalities affects the popularity of certain sports. The results show notable trends in media usage, perceived biases in coverage, and the transition from traditional to digital media platforms.

Respondent Demographic Profile

A key piece of information for understanding the survey data is the demographic makeup of the respondents. There were 60 participants in the sample, with diverse ages and genders.

The majority of respondents were young adults, with 81.7% in the 18-25 age range, 10% in the 26-35 age range, and the rest 36 years of age or older. This demographic tilt toward younger participants indicates a segment of the population that actively interacts with sports material and digital media across several channels. Their technological proficiency allows them to engage with various media narratives and possibly adopt a more critically aware approach to media consumption.

The gender breakdown revealed that males comprised the majority of the population at 61%, while females accounted for 39% of the sample. This gender balance enables the investigation of possible variations in how different segments of the population view the media's role in framing athletes.

Given the continuous digital transformation of media and its growing impact on opinion shaping among younger age groups, the dominance of young respondents in the sample is especially noteworthy.

- Patterns of Sports News Consumption

Consumption Frequency

The data shows that respondents engage with sports news at different levels. Daily consumption of sports news was reported by 22.3% of the respondents, while the majority (33.3%) stated that they used sports news occasionally. This trend suggests that sports-related media exposure is ubiquitous but at different levels, reinforcing the idea that sports still hold cultural significance in today's society.

The possible Impact that media narratives may have on molding public opinion of athletes is highlighted by the comparatively high frequency with which respondents consume sports news. People are more likely to be influenced by media frames in their perceptions and assessments of sports figures after regular exposure to these frames.

Main Sources of Sports News

One important insight from the data is the preferred devices for accessing sports news. Social media emerged as the most important source of sports information, with 65% of respondents indicating that it was their main channel. Online news websites (13.3%) are in second place, followed by television and print newspapers, in this significant change away from traditional media domination.

Digital platforms are increasingly supplanting traditional media sources in this hierarchy of news sources, which mirrors wider trends in media consumption patterns. This shift is notable because social media platforms function on different principles than traditional journalism; they are algorithmic, interactive, and frequently prioritize engagement metrics above editorial standards.

As a result, the framing of athletes on these platforms may be more personalized, sensationalized, and even divisive.

The transition to social media as the main source of sports news marks a significant shift in the way information about athletes is shared and consumed. Social media networks, as opposed to traditional media with set editorial standards, frequently promote content based on engagement statistics rather than journalistic principles, which may result in more sensationalized reporting of athletes.

The Impact of Media on Public Opinion

The survey results show that respondents are quite aware of the media's ability to influence public opinion about athletes.

Recognition of Media Impact

When respondents were questioned about the media's effect on their perception of athletes, 34.5% of them took a neutral stance, while 37.9% agreed that media coverage has a major impact on their opinions. This distribution indicates a population that is becoming more media-literate and able to critically assess media portrayals, yet still recognizes the media's strong influence on public discussion about athletes.

The large proportion of respondents who are neutral might indicate uncertainty about the degree of media influence or an awareness of the media narrative's dualistic nature. When scandals occur, media coverage can sometimes swing between celebrating athletes as heroes and criticizing them severely. This variation may make participants hesitant to ascribe their views exclusively to media impact.

Differential Framing and Media Bias

One noteworthy discovery from the survey is that most respondents have noticed variations in the way different media outlets present the same athlete. The differential framing framework is widely acknowledged, suggesting that media coverage varies across platforms and is probably affected by factors like ideological orientations, regional affiliations, commercial relationships, and target audience demographics.

Certain athletes are given special attention, while others are unfairly criticized or ignored, according to the respondents. This selective framing can lead to the development of media "favorites" and "villains," which may have an impact on public opinion as well as the athletes' marketability and career paths.

This conclusion supports well-known media theories like framing and agenda-setting, which argue that media not only directs public attention to certain subjects but also influences how those subjects are interpreted and assessed. These framing techniques can have a big influence on an athlete's public image in the context of sports coverage.

Representing Accomplishments vs. Controversies

The survey examined if the media offers a balanced portrayal of athletes' professional achievements and personal scandals.

Representation Across Platform Variations

According to respondents, traditional media tends to be less biased than emerging platforms, especially social media and independent online channels. Depending on their editorial policy, traditional news outlets like newspapers and mainstream television were occasionally seen as promoting either glorification or scandal.

Social media was acknowledged for showcasing personal stories of hardship, redemption, and dedication that may not be covered in conventional headlines, even though it is frequently condemned for promoting sensationalism. This change implies that viewers are drawn to spaces that offer more detailed and genuine representations of an athlete's life.

The perception that newer media platforms provide more balanced coverage may be due to their capacity to include a variety of viewpoints, such as that of athletes themselves, who can interact directly with their audience without the need for journalistic mediation.

Effects of Personal Life Coverage

The study looked at the impact of media coverage on an athlete's personal life on their professional reputation.

Intersection of Public and Private Spheres

Most respondents thought that a sportstar's personal life is covered in the media has either a major or moderate effect on their public persona. The oftentimes ambiguity between individual behavior and professional accomplishments was seen as unavoidable in today's media environment yet troublesome for the impartial evaluation of athletic performance.

Participants observed that reports on personal issues, such as off-field disputes, relationships, religious beliefs, and political opinions, frequently eclipses athletic achievements. Some participants argued that this tendency undermined merit-based recognition in sports, while others perceived it as an intrinsic feature of celebrity culture.

Particularly in an age of heightened public scrutiny driven by social media, this conclusion points to the necessity for more ethical media practices that acknowledge the difference between personal privacy and public interest.

Athlete Coverage: Media Focus Areas

Participants were asked to pinpoint prevailing topics in media coverage in order to gain a better understanding of which areas of an athlete's life are given undue attention.

Sensationalism and Content Priorities

Numerous respondents noted that media coverage places undue emphasis on off-field activities such as lifestyle decisions, scandals, endorsement contracts, and social media behavior. Unless related to significant occasions like the Olympics or world championships, professional statistics, accomplishments, and training routines were frequently mentioned as underrepresented.

By presenting athletes mainly as celebrities or influencers rather than as skilled professionals, this propensity for sensationalism and focus on non-athletic elements can skew public opinion.

However, many respondents recognized progress in balanced representation, especially in long-form interviews or biographical documentaries that examine both personal and professional aspects.

The emphasis on sensationalized material mirrors larger patterns in media economics, where controversial substance and attention-grabbing headlines lead to greater engagement stats. This method, however, may compromise a full comprehension of athletic accomplishment and growth.

The Media's Impact on Sports Popularity

One of the main goals of this study was to investigate the impact of media coverage on the popularity of individual athletes' sports.

Sports Popularity and Media Exposure

Respondents nearly all agreed that the media plays a vital role in promoting sports. Extensive media coverage of star athletes in these sports was often blamed for the widespread popularity of cricket in India, football in Europe, and basketball in the United States. Interest in previously lesser-known sports like kabaddi, badminton, and wrestling was also attributed to viral videos, documentary features, and Olympic performances.

Even niche sports might develop mainstream popularity through consistent and engaging media coverage, respondents noted. This conclusion shows definitively that media narratives actively shape public interest rather than just mirror it. As a result, fans may be more open to a larger variety of sports, and content that is more diverse and inclusive could help expand fan bases.

The symbiotic interaction between media coverage and sports popularity poses both problems and prospects. Individual athletes who receive a lot of media attention might raise the profile of their sport, but this phenomenon can also reinforce existing hierarchies in the sports industry by concentrating resources and attention on sports that are already well-liked.

Suggestions for Equitable Representation

Participants shared their thoughts on how sports journalism could develop to provide athletes a fairer representation.

Main Recommendations for Media Enhancement

The survey answers pointed out a number of suggestions:

1. Expanded Coverage: To expand narratives and encourage inclusivity, media organizations should include a wider variety of athletes and sports, including those that are not mainstream.

2. Human-Centered Storytelling: Highlighting personal experiences, socioeconomic obstacles, and mental health concerns can create empathy and deeper connections with the audience while contextualizing athletic performance.

3. Performance-Focused Reporting: Journalistic standards should prioritize merit-based reporting over gossip, clickbait, and conjecture, with a continued emphasis on athletic accomplishments and professional growth.

Duties of the Platform

Responses were evenly split between traditional television and social media as to which platforms should be given more responsibility for fair coverage. Both are seen as complementary powers that may either support or contest one another's narratives.

Television is anticipated to take the lead with responsible coverage due to its established reach and impact. Despite its issues with misinformation and echo chambers, social media, which is more participatory and grassroots-oriented, has the potential to amplify underrepresented voices and confront traditional prejudices.

Theoretical Consequences

These research findings both complement and expand upon various media theories. The observed differential framing of athletes across platforms supports framing theory, which holds that audience interpretation is affected by the way information is presented (the frame). In a similar vein, the information on media influence backs agenda-setting theory, which holds that media coverage of particular topics or people affects how the public perceives their significance.

The study also emphasizes the increasing significance of para-social relationships in sports media, in which viewers cultivate one-sided emotional bonds with athletes as a result of mediated portrayals. Direct communication between athletes and fans through social media sites increasingly influences these interactions in addition to traditional media.

Summary

Survey response analysis shows unequivocally that media—both traditional and digital—significantly influence how the public views athletes. The media has a powerful and varied impact; it may shape public opinion, influence popularity, highlight accomplishments, and strengthen prejudices.

Although the move to digital-first content has diversified voices and democratized access, it has also introduced greater sensationalism and fragmentation. Audiences show an understanding of this duality as they anticipate more responsible reporting, especially in an age when athletic figures are seen as cultural icons and role models.

The study highlights the necessity for media practitioners to embrace more ethical, diverse, and merit-based narrative methods, as well as for viewers to thoughtfully assess the material they consume. The media's role in influencing public opinion about athletes will become more important and deserving of continuous critical scrutiny as the lines between sports, entertainment, and social influence keep blurring.

The results indicate that although media framing has a major impact on how the public views athletes, consumers are becoming more conscious of these framing techniques and are looking for more equitable representation across several channels. As they navigate the intricate interplay between athletic performance, personal identity, and public image in the digital age, this changing media landscape presents both difficulties and chances for athletes, sports organizations, and media outlets.

6.11 Conclusion

Response analysis clearly shows that media—both traditional and digital—are essential in shaping how athletes are perceived by the public. The media's power is great and varied; it can shape public sentiment, influence popularity, highlight skills, and reinforce prejudices.

While the shift to digital-first content has made media more accessible, it has also become more sensational and fragmented. While audiences are conscious of this duality, they also anticipate more responsible reporting, particularly during a time when sports figures act as cultural icons and role models.

This chapter emphasizes the need for media professionals to tell stories that are more ethical, diverse, and merit-based, as well as for viewers to thoughtfully assess the material they consume. The media's role in influencing public perception of athletes will become increasingly important as the boundaries between sports, entertainment, and social influence continue to merge.

CHAPTER-7

CONCLUSION

The intricate relationship among sports, media, and public perception holds greater importance now than ever. Athletes have become more than mere competitors; in an era ruled by continuous news cycles, digital platforms, and social media narratives, they are public figures whose images and reputations are perpetually shaped, adjusted, and scrutinized by media reporting. This analysis, which investigates how the media presents athletes and its impact on public opinion, uncovers two key findings: first, the manner in which media entities depict athletes' performances both on and off the field, and second, how the representation of individual athletes influences the public's recognition and visibility of certain sports.

To begin with, the manner in which athletes' actions are portrayed—regarding both their professional conduct and their personal lives—significantly affects public perception. Media framing, a concept originating from communication studies, explains how information is presented to audiences. By strategically emphasizing certain angles, contexts, or traits of a story, the media can influence audience interpretation and emotional responses to events or individuals. In the world of sports, framing serves as a powerful tool, capable of glorifying, condemning, or scrutinizing athletes in the eyes of society.

Media organizations frequently highlight remarkable athletic achievements, leadership qualities, or moments of sportsmanship on the field, depicting certain athletes as heroic figures. These portrayals contribute to the creation of cultural icons whose careers are followed with loyalty and admiration. Conversely, the same framing strategies can spotlight negative aspects such as rule violations, poor performance, or conflicts with coaches or teammates, which may lead to a more critical or, at times, hostile perception among fans and the general public. Athletes find themselves in a constant struggle between admiration and scrutiny, as this dual nature of framing heavily influences public opinion.

The media's attention also intensifies off the field. Athletes' personal choices, relationships, political views, or involvement in scandals often dominate the news cycle in various instances. This element of framing can sometimes lean towards sensationalism, favoring stories that provoke emotional reactions, particularly outrage or moral judgment. Even when there is no legal wrongdoings or culpability, athletes entangled in legal issues, social media disputes, or perceived ethical failings often face intense scrutiny, which can severely tarnish their public image. In contrast, acts of charity, advocacy, or resilience in personal life are occasionally emphasized, fostering positive public perceptions and assisting in the development of role model identities.

According to this study, the media's framing occurs within the context of various other events. It is influenced by broader commercial interests, cultural norms, and societal expectations. For example, male and female athletes are occasionally framed in disparate ways, with males receiving

heightened focus on their athletic achievements while females are often discussed more in terms of their looks, personality, or emotional displays. Likewise, athletes from marginalized communities may be portrayed through stereotypes that either romanticize their background or highlight struggle as their key trait. These framings do more than just relay information; they shape perceptions of social issues, including those related to class, gender, and race, as well as how athletes themselves are perceived.

The study's second objective was to explore the impact of media representation of individual players on the popularity of specific sports. The findings are equally revealing. By showcasing the most appealing or accomplished figures in various sports, media outlets—particularly television networks, online news websites, and social media influencers—play a vital role in their endorsement. The positive and consistent portrayal of sports figures like Virat Kohli, LeBron James, or Serena Williams often aligns with the popularity of sports such as cricket in India, basketball in the U. S. , and tennis globally. These athletes are more than merely competitors in their respective sports; they serve as cultural icons, brand representatives, and instruments for drawing viewers' interest.

This phenomenon has a compounding effect. Increased visibility, resulting in heightened fan engagement, leads to more media attention, sponsorship deals, and financial investments. This establishes a loop where the athlete and the sport enrich each other's visibility. This visibility is often restricted to a select few athletes, which is significant since it leads to an unequal allocation of fame and financial rewards in sports. The athletes who become the public face of their sport carry the burden of performance alongside the responsibility of maintaining a public persona that satisfies media and audience standards. Furthermore, media coverage can significantly affect a sport's visibility on both national and international stages.

It is also crucial to consider how this dynamic has evolved with the advent of digital and social media. Athletes were previously framed solely through conventional newspapers and television programs. However, athletes now possess the power to craft their own public images through platforms like Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube. Although this has allowed for more authentic and unfiltered representations, it has also increased pressure on athletes to consistently manage their social media profiles. Public opinion is now shaped not only by journalists and media firms but also by fans, influencers, and the athletes themselves.

Mainstream media continue to hold notable influence despite this democratization of media. Due to their expansive reach, credibility, and institutional power, their framing can either support or challenge the narratives being formed on social media. The relationship between traditional media and contemporary platforms is crucial for understanding how public opinion is formed and maintained. A positive feature in a prestigious sports magazine, a comprehensive interview on a national news outlet, or possibly a documentary on a streaming platform can all greatly affect how an athlete is viewed.

These findings carry multiple implications. From a sociological angle, the media's representation of athletes assists in defining social norms and standards, such as what is seen as a "hero," "villain," or "role model" in the perspective of the public. From a psychological standpoint, the way the media frames athletes influences public perception as well as the athletes' self-esteem and mental health. Media narratives often create expectations for athletes that they are supposed to meet, and any departure from these standards may lead to criticism or a tarnished reputation. Framing is a financially important factor since media coverage directly affects endorsements, sponsorships, and overall marketability.

These insights encourage policymakers and journalists to embrace a more equitable and ethical approach when covering athletes. Sensationalism, bias, and selective framing can not only undermine the integrity of sports journalism but also lead to real consequences for the athletes involved. Responsible storytelling is essential to recognize the media's influence on narrative formation, celebrity creation, and public agenda setting.

For the general public, these outcomes emphasize the necessity of being discerning consumers of media. By understanding the mechanics of framing, audiences can look beyond the headlines and assess the motivations behind the stories they encounter. In an era where distorted narratives and misinformation can propagate swiftly, media literacy is a vital skill—not just for evaluating news, but also for understanding the social roles of athletes in a rapidly evolving world.

In conclusion, the media's impact in framing athletes is both profound and intricate. Media outlets dictate how athletes are perceived and remembered, whether they portray on-field triumphs or off-field controversies. These narratives influence individual reputations as well as the popularity and evolution of sports as a whole. As this analysis has shown, the media is not merely a passive mirror of reality; instead, it plays a dynamic role in shaping both public perception of athletes and the cultural landscape of sports overall. The challenge ahead lies in striking a balance between the media's storytelling capabilities and a commitment to fairness, accuracy, and respect for the individuals behind public personas.

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APPENDIX

Age:

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46 and above

Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

How often do you follow sports-related news?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Don't follow

What is your primary source of sports news?

- Television sports channels
- Newspapers
- Social media
- Online news websites
- Other:

Media Influence on Athlete Perception

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Have you noticed differences in how sports channels, newspapers and platforms portray the same athlete?

- Yes

- No

In your opinion, which media platform provides a more balanced view of an athlete's achievements and controversies?

- Television sports channels
- Newspapers
- Both equally
- Neither
- Other:

Do you think media coverage of an athlete's personal life affects their professional reputation?

- Yes, significantly
- Yes, somewhat
- No, not at all

Which aspect of an athlete's life do you think gets the most attention from the media?

- On-field performance
- Off-field behavior (lifestyle, controversies, etc.)
- Both equally

Do you think media plays a role in making certain sports more popular than others?

- **Yes**
- No
- Maybe

Have you observed that media coverage of certain athletes leads to popularization of respective sports?

- Yes
- No
- Other:

In your opinion, which media platform is more responsible for popularizing a sport based on a sports personality's success?

- Television sports channels
- Option Newspapers
- Social media

- Other:

Do you believe that some sports receive more media attention only because of a few well-known athletes?

- Yes
- No
- Other:

In your opinion, what could media platforms do to provide a fairer and more balanced representation of sports and athletes?

- Your answer